Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2025

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 January 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W1715/W/24/3349658
Hound Corner Fruit Farm, Hamble Lane, Netley Abbey, SO31 5FT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Peter Harding against the decision of Eastleigh Borough Council.
- The application Ref is H/24/97283.
- The development proposed is described as proposed new entrance to site (amendment to approved application H/23/95895).

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character of the countryside and settlement gap.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is within a strip of countryside between Burlesdon, Netley and Hamble-le-Rice, which is designated as a settlement gap in the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 (LP). It is an area of countryside that is characterised by flat pasture land and woodland. The appeal site is situated on the edge of a small cluster of houses and a substation which front onto Hamble Road, with a health centre to the rear of them.

4. The physical front boundaries and entrances to the substation and adjacent dwellings are set back from the street behind deep verges, or in relation to the substation the existing access to the appeal property. They comprise a combination of hedges, tall metal railings with security wire tops, brick walls, tall fences and a mixture of tall metal and timber gates. The highway to the front of the substation and adjacent dwellings is dominated by a roundabout and associated signage, bollards, railings, raised curbs, road markings, street lights and telegraph poles.

5. Beyond the junction and to the front of the appeal site the highway narrows and the level of street signage and other infrastructure materially diminishes. Also, on the southern side of the road is a native rural hedgerow interspersed with trees. As a result, when exiting the roundabout there is a distinct sense of leaving the built-up urban fringe and entering the countryside. The trees along the appeal sites frontage contribute to this transition, as did the former traditional hedgerow shown

on the photographs set out in the appellants planning statement and referred to in the council's documentation. This hedge has since been removed and replaced with a young Laurel hedge, which is not reflective of the traditional native species which are an integral part of the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.

6. Together and amongst other things policies DM1, S5 & S6 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 (LP), state that proposals should take full and proper account of a site's context and be compatible with its character, appearance, and land uses. Developments should avoid adverse impacts on rural character and the intrinsic character of the landscape. They should also avoid undermining the visual separation of identified settlement gaps, whose objective is to limit urbanisation and so protect the separate identity of settlements.

7. The proposed brick wall and associated piers have already been constructed. Whilst they are partially screened by the new Laurel hedge, where they can be seen they have an uncharacteristic suburbanising impact on the street scene. Due to their combined solid nature and height the proposed gates would add to the suburbanising impact of the walls and associated piers. As a result, the proposal would materially and unacceptably harm the character of this small stretch of countryside and the settlement gap. It would also undermine the objectives of the settlement gap.

8. I agree that the proposed entrance would be safer than the existing entrance which is located close to the roundabout. However, in this instance this is a matter to which I give limited weight. This is because planning permission has already been granted for a new vehicular entrance in this location. With the approved scheme the entrance would be flanked by hedgerow and the proposed metal gates would be both lower and have the appearance of traditional farm gates. As a consequence, the approved scheme would be visually softer and would respect the character of this part of Hamble Lane.

9. For these reasons I find that the above harm would clearly outweigh the privacy and security benefits for the appellant and their family that would that would result from the proposal. It is also not a matter that could be satisfactorily addressed through the imposition of conditions.

10. I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character of the countryside and the settlement gap. Accordingly, the proposal would conflict with LP Policies DM1, S5 &S6.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR