

12/02409 Pins Ref 2193815	Edgington House, Upper Green, Inkpen, Hungerford, RG17 9QL.	Proposed demolition of an existing stable and storage building and its replacement with a new purpose built building incorporating garden equipment and machinery storage, loose boxes and tack/hay barn.	Dele. Refusal	Dismissed 10.07.2013
---------------------------------	---	---	---------------	-------------------------

Main Issue

The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area, which is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

Inkpen is characterised by narrow rural lanes, agricultural buildings and informally sited dwellings, with undeveloped gaps between groups of houses, which provide views through to the open countryside. The Appeal site is consistent with this pattern. It occupies a prominent position close to the junction of Bell Lane and Rooksnest, where together with the pond and paddock to the west it forms an open rural gap between Edgington House and the dwellings further to the west. The pond is identified as an important landscape feature in the Inkpen Village Design Statement (VDS).

Policy ENV29 of the West Berkshire Local Plan allows for new equestrian buildings provided they have been designed to blend in with the rural surroundings and their scale and location would not cause material harm to the amenities of users of the countryside. In addition, sufficient space is provided for ancillary storage on a scale appropriate to the number of horses being accommodated.

The existing building on the Appeal site is modest and functional in its form, design and appearance and is typical of equestrian buildings found within the countryside. It respects the rural character of the immediate and wider area and the AONB. The existing building provides appropriate accommodation for horses/ponies and their associated tack, equipment and feedstuffs and is generous in size, having regard to the limited size of the associated paddock. In particular the stables meet with the internal space standards recommended by the British Horse Society, they all have equestrian windows and stable doors that can be hooked open and there is a large eaves overhang to protect the stables and horses from direct sun and rain.

The proposed building would be taller and deeper than the existing building and would be domestic in its character and appearance. It would bear little resemblance to a typical equestrian building and would have a suburbanising impact on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area. Due to its size and domestic appearance the proposed building would change the rural character of the open gap between Edgington House and the dwellings to the west. It would be contrary to the VDS which states that new development should conserve and enhance the landscape character of the area and that the character and pattern of open spaces within the village and their connections to the surrounding countryside should be retained.

The proposed building would also provide very poor accommodation for equestrian use. The floor area of the internal stalls and the height of the field stable would fall below those recommended by the British Horse Society and there would be no eaves overhang to the field

stable. From the evidence submitted, the double entrance doors would be kept shut and locked for security reasons and so the internal stalls would receive little natural light. The proposed hay and tack store is restricted in size and the door to the field stable has not been designed to tie back. Although the floor plan shows a horse trailer stored within the central area of the building, the eaves of the building and the proposed doors are of insufficient height to facilitate this. This was evident from the height of the trailer that was parked on the Appeal site at the time of the Appeal site visit.

It has not been demonstrated that the parking of the Appellant's four wheel drive vehicle is an equestrian as opposed to a domestic use. Similarly the storage of garden equipment and machinery is a residential use. Whilst some of this equipment could also be used on the paddock, this would result in a mixed use. At the time of the site visit there appeared to be no equestrian machinery and equipment on the site.

Finally, the proportion of the building to be used for ancillary facilities is excessive to meet the needs of an equestrian enterprise comprising one paddock and three undersized stables.

Not only does the proposed building physically and in operational terms fail to resemble an equestrian building, it is noted that currently the existing building and associated equestrian land are not in equestrian use. No evidence of an intended equestrian use has been submitted. On the contrary, the area to the front of the existing stable building is manicured and domestic in appearance.

For these reasons the proposed development would conflict with policy ENV29 of the Local Plan. It would also conflict with and policy CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, which requires new development to be appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement pattern, form and character.

The building would be perceived and at least partially used for domestic purposes, thus involving a change of use to a mixed use of the land. The only policy drawn to the Inspector's attention which deals specifically with the extension of residential curtilages in the rural area is policy ENV22 of the Local Plan. Whilst this policy does not specifically refer to equestrian land, it allows for garden extensions where they would enable vehicles to be parked off the highway; to meet the Council's minimum garden space standards; where the resultant garden would be similar in size to others typically prevailing in the immediate vicinity. At the same time any extensions should not have an adverse impact on the landscape.

The proposal would not comply with the criteria in this policy, or the objectives of the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) – *Replacement Dwellings and Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside*. The SPG seeks to ensure that garages and residential extensions in general are not intrusive in the wider locality.

The Appellant's agent has suggested that a condition could be imposed which restricted the use of the site to equestrian only. Not only would this change the nature of the application, it would prevent some of the precise uses proposed and would not address the concerns relating to the appearance and appropriateness of the building. The changes that would be necessary to address these concerns would be significant and so could not be dealt with by condition.

Regarding security, although the proposed building could be designed to provide a higher level of security than the existing building, this would not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area and the AONB. Also, no evidence

has been submitted to demonstrate that the existing building could not be made more secure, or replaced with a modest, appropriately designed and secure stable building.

The Inspector concluded that the proposal would materially and unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area and the AONB. It would therefore conflict with the VDS, the SPD, policies ENV22 & ENV29 of the Local Plan and policy CS19 of the Core Strategy. It would similarly conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework which states that the environmental role of sustainable development is contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Also, new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area.

Decision

The appeal is dismissed.

Costs Application

An application for his costs by the appellant was dismissed by the Inspector.

DC