

Proposed Three Cottages for Holiday Accommodation at Hargate Hill Equestrian Centre Charlesworth

The Proposal

The proposed development consists of three holiday cottages at an equestrian centre at Hargate Hill Farm Charlesworth. They would provide accommodation primarily for visitors with an interest in horse riding who wished to take advantage of the facilities of the centre, but also for those who wished to take holidays in a countryside location other activities.

The Site

The site of the proposed cottages is that of an existing redundant barn which has now reached the end of its economic life and is in poor condition. It is located close to the family home of the applicant and proprietor of the Centre, Hargate Hill Farm house. It is part of a range of barns and stables which are due for renewal. Planning permission has been granted for one of these.

The holiday cottages would stand on the west side of the access to the farm house. The new stable block which would replace the outworn stables would be on the east side. Between, a landscaped courtyard would provide access to the farmhouse, with paved areas to either side to provide car parking for the cottages and a setting between the buildings.

There are constraints to the site. To the west is a steep earth bank approximately four metres high. The back of the new holiday dwellings would face on the bank with living rooms at first floor level to take advantage of the westerly aspect. The front elevation of the cottages cannot stand any further forward than the existing barn because there are doors and windows to another dwelling of recent origin, occupied by a permanent member of the staff of the Equestrian Centre.

Design

The design of the proposed cottages is intended to reflect its rural setting and its context amongst farm buildings of simple style. The existing barn is of steel frame with asbestos sheet cladding to walls and roof and minimal openings. It is inappropriate for conversion because of its style and condition. However the elevational design of the cottages retains the character of an agricultural barn as far as possible consistent with the need to provide window and door openings, and to provide an attractive unit of accommodation to holiday makers. The proposed cottages would remain part of the Equestrian Centre in perpetuity.

The existing asbestos barn is 16.5 metres long by 6.3 metres wide with a ridge height of 7.3 metres. The proposed three cottages would occupy a larger footprint of 20.2 metres by 8.0 metres. It would have a ridge height of 7.1 metres. They would be detached from the existing staff dwelling alongside by a passage approximately 1.0 metre wide. This would permit access to the rear for the first unit.

Two of the cottage units would have three bedrooms, one of which would be adapted for the disabled; and one would have two bedrooms. The outer two units would have

living accommodation on the first floor, with balconies, whilst in the central one it would be on the ground floor. At ground floor level to the rear, each unit would have a small patio projecting a little over four metres from the back of the dwellings.

The elevations are designed to have the appearance of a 'barn conversion' that is one which would form part of the range of farm buildings alongside which it would stand. The window openings are minimised, and have an irregular distribution. Facing brick would be used and either natural or artificial slate to the roof. The existing staff dwelling is of facing brick, and most of the new stable buildings at the Centre have used brick and profiled metal cladding which provide a consistent visual appearance and one which is appropriate in a rural setting.

The development of the site for three cottages for holiday letting is consistent with the scale of activity at Hargate Equestrian Centre which has 150 horses and an extensive range of stables, schooling rings, and teaching facilities. They would provide an opportunity for block bookings by a number of visitors to take advantage of group tuition and supervised horse-riding on to the bridleways within and around Hargate Hill. Three cottages would also make the best use of the existing footprint of the barn which they would replace.

National Planning Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004) sets out the objectives of the Government in the control of development in the countryside. It aims to raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of sustainable communities and economic growth, good quality development which enhances local distinctiveness, and continued protection of the countryside for the benefit of all.

To promote more sustainable patterns of development locations in or next to existing towns and villages should be chosen. The use of greenfield land should be discouraged or its use minimised. A range of uses should be promoted to maximise the potential benefits of the countryside fringing urban areas, and providing appropriate leisure opportunities to enable urban and rural dwellers to enjoy the wider countryside.

Paragraph 5 of the Statement encourages local planning authorities to support a wide range of economic activity in the countryside, taking a lead from priorities expressed in Regional Spatial Strategies. At paragraph 19 the Government supports the idea of the replacement of suitably located buildings of permanent design and construction in the countryside for economic development purposes. The replacement of buildings should be favoured where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion, for example where the replacement building would bring about an environmental improvement in terms of the impact of the development on its surroundings and the landscape.

Paragraph 32 of the Statement provides guidance on equine related activities:

'Horse riding and other equestrian activities are popular forms of recreation in the countryside that can fit in well with farming activities and help diversify rural economies. In some parts of the country horse training and breeding businesses play

an important economic role. Local planning authorities should set out in their LDDs their policies for supporting equine enterprises that maintain environmental quality and countryside character. These policies should provide for a range of suitably located recreational and leisure facilities and, where appropriate, for the needs of training and breeding businesses. They should also facilitate the re-use of farm buildings for small-scale horse enterprises that provide a useful form of farm diversification.'

The statement contains references also to the importance of strict control of the design and appearance of new development, particularly in locations subject to local landscape designations. These have been observed in the design of the proposals.

Local Planning Guidance

Policy OC.3 Special Landscape Area Development Of the Local Plan for the Borough of High peak says:

'Within the special landscape area defined on the proposals map, development in accordance with policies OC1 and OC2 will be permitted, provided that it will not detract from the special qualities and character of the special landscape area. Where development is permitted in the special landscape area the developer will be required to have special regard to the landscape quality of the area in relation to siting, design and landscaping.'

Policy OC.2 allows for the creation of essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation in the North Derbyshire Green Belt. The openness of the green belt should be maintained. The proposed holiday cottages closely follow the footprint of an outworn agricultural building which is harmful to the visual amenities of the green belt. They would be consistent with a rural enterprise which itself depends on, and maintains, the openness of the countryside in which it stands.

The application proposals would be an integral part of the Equestrian Centre. They have been drafted with regard to national and local planning policy on the importance of the design of the proposals with respect to the needs of the economy of the countryside and its local visual qualities.

Conclusion

This statement describes the matters required by DCLG Circular 01/2006, namely the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the proposed development. They are fully illustrated in the submitted plans. National and local planning policy has been observed.

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