

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 February 2017

by David Cross BA (Hons), PGDip, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 6 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/16/3164937

Northumberland Canine Centre, West Moor, C133 High Hedley Junction to West Moor Junction, Felton, Northumberland NE65 9QE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Miss Jacquie Hall against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00021/FUL, dated 2 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 17 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is permanent siting of a static caravan to be used for storage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. At the time of my site visit, the static caravan was in place. I have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

3. I consider the main issue is whether the proposal represents a sustainable form of development with due regard to the effect on the character and appearance of the area and to any rural economic benefits.

Reasons

4. The Northumberland Canine Centre consists of a large building set behind a hardcore surfaced car park adjacent to the highway of the C133. It is located in an open agricultural landscape which contains other sporadic buildings. Although of a utilitarian appearance, the Centre has a character which is representative of a large agricultural building and is therefore appropriate within this open rural setting.
 5. I saw that the static caravan is located adjacent to the car parking area to the front of the main building. Although the caravan is used for storage in association with the business, its light colouring, temporary character and residential appearance are at odds with the agricultural character of the site and surrounding area. Whilst the caravan is well-screened when approached from the west along the C133, I saw that the screening in views from the east is more limited and that the caravan is readily visible from the highway. The
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static caravan therefore appears as an incongruous feature which does not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of this rural location or minimise adverse visual impact on the local environment.

6. In relation to the visual context of the site, my attention has been drawn to a commercial engineering workshop and agricultural machinery hire premises immediately to the west of the appeal site. However, whilst this adjacent site is not particularly attractive, I saw that the external storage of pallets, goods, machinery and associated paraphernalia is not untypical of a rural enterprise and that this site is not out of character with this countryside location.
7. I recognise that the appellant's business makes a valuable contribution to the rural economy of the area. However, although the appellant states that the use of the caravan for storage supports this business, I saw that the storage area within the caravan was limited due to its internal residential layout. I also saw that the main building on the site has a spacious internal layout including two training areas and an administrative/circulation area. Given the limited storage available within the caravan and the spacious nature of the main building, no substantive evidence has been provided to me to demonstrate how the use of part of the main building for storage would have a significant impact on the operation of the business.
8. In support of the appeal, the appellant refers to paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which requires planning policies to support a prosperous rural economy, seeking to support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. However, paragraph 28 goes on to state that this support is through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings, neither of which would apply in this case as the proposal represents the use of land rather than a building. Paragraph 28 also states that development should respect the character of the countryside and, for the reasons stated above, I consider that the static caravan would conflict with this.
9. I therefore conclude that, on balance, the visual harm caused to the countryside by the static caravan would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits to the business and the rural economy and that it would not therefore represent a sustainable form of development. The proposal will be contrary to Policy 2 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy¹ which, amongst other things, requires development to respond to the character of the wider setting. The proposal will also be detrimental to the natural and built environment of the area and will therefore be contrary to the environmental role of sustainable development identified in the Framework. The proposal will be contrary to the development plan, and this conflict will not be outweighed by other material considerations including the provisions of the Framework.

Other Matters

10. Notwithstanding the description of the proposal as being for the "permanent siting of a static caravan..." the appellant has indicated that she would be prepared to accept a temporary permission so she can continue to use the caravan in the short to medium term. However, no indication is given as to a

¹ Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy Pre-Submission Draft (October 2015)/Schedule of Major Modifications (June 2016).

specific timescale that the appellant considers would be suitable. I am also mindful that the business has been in operation on this site since May 2014 which means that the appellant has had ample opportunity to establish the storage needs of the business and put in place suitable arrangements. On this basis, and having regard to the identified harm arising from the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, I do not consider that a temporary permission would be reasonable.

11. I have also been referred to a static caravan at Howdens Glebe some distance to the west. However I do not have full details this development, including its lawfulness or otherwise, and therefore cannot be certain that it establishes a precedent for this form of development in the area. In any case I have determined this appeal on its own merits.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, it is concluded that the appeal is dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR