



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 July 2019

by Eleni Randle BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Z2830/W/19/3227197

The Grange, Blakesley Road, Adstone, NN12 8DT

- 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 Mrs Angela Cairns against South Northamptonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/2018/2425/FUL dated 23 October 2018 was refused by notice dated 20 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is erection of agricultural-style barn to store agricultural/equestrian vehicles and machinery.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue to be considered is whether the proposed building, at the submitted scale and size, is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture or other essential need.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is between two existing, modern, rural buildings which are located outside of the earlier group of farm buildings to the rear of the farmhouse itself. At the time of my visit I noted there are a number of existing buildings as outlined in the submission documents before me. The appeal site would be limited in visibility from the public realm, due to the existing built form on site, and it is located within a Special Landscape Area. The site is stated to be for personal equestrian and residential use which would not fall within the definition of agricultural use¹.
4. During my site visit I noted that the building to the South West of the appeal site was utilised as an indoor riding arena. I entered the building immediately East, which the proposal would adjoin, and noted that there was a limited number of large round hay bales stacked on the right-hand side along with some machinery and equipment. Also within this building were four stables sectioned off and equestrian equipment, rugs etc. hung in the left-hand side, front, corner. At the time of my visit I noted the majority of the appellant's vehicles, machinery and equipment listed in the submissions sporadically parked on and around the appeal site and wider yard area.

¹ Section 336 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990

5. It is acknowledged, from the submitted planning history, that the site has, to an extent, evolved. I do not have any information before me relating to application ref: S/2016/1413/FUL which allowed the demolition of an agricultural building at the site or when this building was removed. I have no explanation as to why the loss of storage space, in what was a relatively recent application, was not considered an issue at the point of application or why alternative provision to replace the lost floor area was not sought earlier. I do not find that the consent S/2016/1772/FUL (permitting the erection of the indoor riding school and conversion of the stone barns into stables) would directly increase the requirement for vehicles, machinery and equipment to a level which exceeds the capabilities of the existing buildings. There may be an increase in equipment such as jump wings and poles, however, these would not command a large area.
6. The appeal site stands within a total of twenty-seven acres with some hay baled from the land. A figure of 200 round hay bales, stated to be taken after the horses have grazed the land, appears optimistic and unevidenced. Whilst I can appreciate the land needs to be managed for its stated use the listed machinery does appear excessive for the management of the stated area of land, which is all down to grass and utilised, privately, for eight horses. The stable buildings (S1 and S2) provide seven stables. There were a further four stables within the existing barn adjacent to the appeal site at the time of my site visit. Separation of new horses when purchased or ill is likely good practice, however, the turnover of horses for personal use is very unlikely to justify four separate stables taking up space which could be utilised for storage in a building of this nature.
7. It is acknowledged that a number of the existing buildings have low-eaves and small entrances which will undoubtedly limit the appellant's ability to store larger pieces of equipment. Despite this there are a number of smaller items, including bedding which is in small bales, feed, rugs, quad bikes etc. which could most likely successfully utilise these existing buildings and free up space within the larger building and lean-to which are more suitable for the storage of larger pieces of equipment. The desire to separate machinery with hot engines and exhausts from hay and bedding is noted, however, the majority of equipment listed would not fall into this category and smaller items such as quad bikes and sit on lawn mowers could be stored in the lower buildings (as demonstrated in the appellant's submitted photographs) and tractors could be accommodated in the lean-to, even if temporarily whilst cooling, to reduce and manage such risk. The lean-to which adjoins the existing, large, barn is of sufficient height and bay width to store larger equipment such as tractors and is pictured in submissions housing the larger, Claas tractor.
8. It is acknowledged that the lean-to is open fronted which allows some weather in as well as not providing a lockable facility. I have nothing before me to support that alterations to the existing lean-to building, such as the installation of doors, could not take steps to improving the existing buildings to enable them to serve the desired purpose. Similarly the provision of an additional roller shutter door on the existing storage building could likely assist in machinery being extracted more easily when required (much of which will be seasonal use depending on the particular item). Exploration of such options I consider to be key to support that the capacity, and capability, of the existing buildings has been exhausted and exceeded.

9. The site is already relatively well secured with residential properties in close proximity and two sets of electronically controlled gates off the main entrance. The threat of rural crime is noted and indeed is a countrywide problem, however, there is no evidence before me to suggest it has been a historic problem at the appeal site. Storage outside does expose equipment to the elements, however, the open storage of farm machinery is not an uncommon practice within the open countryside, nor is the parking of horse boxes. The visual improvement arising from the proposal, in a site noted to have limited visual impact, would have limited weight in favour of the proposal. I do not find the movement of cars out of the courtyard to significantly improve the setting of the listed buildings in accordance with paragraph 200 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the Framework).
10. Whilst stated to be a modest building it is a similar size to the existing, adjacent, storage building. Though it may well be desirable for the site, I am not convinced, based on the justification before me, that there is an *essential* need or that it is necessary or justifiable for a building of this size and scale or that the capability of existing buildings has been exhausted. Paragraph 83 of the Framework seeks to enable sustainable growth and expansion of rural business through well-designed new buildings however, the proposal is not one which supports a rural business but is one stated to be for personal use.
11. The proposal would conflict with South Northamptonshire Local Plan 1997 (LP) Policy EV2 which requires development for recreation to be essential when located within a Special Landscape Area, LP Policy EV5 which also requires the erection of a farm building to be essential. I also find conflict with LP Policy RC12 due to the scale of the proposal, taking into account the existing storage and stabling, failing to represent small-scale horse-related development. I do not find that the proposal would conflict with LP Policy EV7 as I do not find that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Special Landscape Area and no issue with character, appearance or significance of the Conservation Area is noted within the Council's delegated report.
12. The proposal would also conflict with West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) 2014 (JCS) Policy SA which seeks to approve applications that accord with the JCS and other relevant policies. I do not find direct conflict with JCS Policy S10 given the reason for refusal was essentially based upon justification and scale. The Council have not submitted full information relating to the Council Corporate Priorities (CCPs); however, it is stated the priorities are based upon key actions including delivery of the Local Plans, protecting built heritage and protecting the natural environment. Given the reasons for refusal, based upon the evidence before me and my findings, I do not see how the proposal would fail to have regard for the CCPs.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons outlined above, and taking account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR