



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2019

by Tim Crouch DipUD MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/W/19/3228827

Public open space adjacent to Priory Lane, Lynwood Chase, and Flemish Place, Warfield

- 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 Mr Paul Rodger against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/01072/FUL, dated 31 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 12 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is a storage building for maintenance of recreational land.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are, firstly, whether the proposal results in the meaningful loss of open space, and secondly, the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Meaningful Loss of Open Space

3. The site forms part of approximately 1 hectare of designated public open space. It is grassland with landscaping borders on the boundaries to adjacent housing. A footpath runs through the centre of the space connecting residential areas together.
4. The open space is privately owned but with management responsibilities for the upkeep of the area. The proposal seeks to introduce a storage building to house tools and equipment necessary for this maintenance. The appellant identifies that this will include a tractor and mower trailer attachment, strimmers, hedge trimmers and other equipment as required.
5. The building proposed would cover 66 square metres (m²) according to the appellants figures, 58m² according to the Council. It would also be positioned close to the footway in a central location, eroding a significant area of useable open space, as well as some of the buffer planting.
6. I am aware that Policy CS8 of the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) (CS) states that development will be permitted which "retains, improves and maintains existing recreational facilities". However, the

proposal would result in a significant erosion of the area and in a central location. Therefore, whilst the machinery proposed to be accommodated may be used to 'maintain' the open space, the development itself would not.

7. I recognise that the appellant considers the area to be lost to the building is not significant in proportion to the size of the overall open space, but I consider that it is, whichever floor area is used, given the open nature of the space. This would be amplified by its positioning close to the footpath which is more likely to be an area of use. Whilst convenient, I am also not convinced that the storage of machinery on site necessarily results in an improvement to maintenance or a 'higher quality and more usable open space' per se, especially given the landscape management plan with the performance requirements (including frequency of cut and length of grass, weeding to be done by hand) clearly set. Policy CS7 of the CS and paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (the Framework) also resist building on open space unless in specific circumstances where the area is surplus, re-provided or reused, which is also not the case with the proposal.
8. However, I do recognise that in some cases storage buildings can form part of open space where necessary and where they do not impinge on the usability, setting or coverage of such important public areas. In this case, the proposal covers a significant area of space and no detail has been provided regarding other locations or opportunities for storage (on or off site). Whilst an indicative storage layout of equipment has been shown on the floorplans, information has also not been provided to show the arrangement options, shape of building or alternatives to clearly identify that this would be the minimum size building required, as contended by the appellant.
9. Therefore, the proposal would result in the meaningful loss of open space. Consequently, it would be contrary to policies CS7 and CS8 of the CS and paragraph 97 of the Framework which taken together, and amongst other objectives, seek to retain public open space.

Character and Appearance

10. The building would be positioned close to the footpath and entrance to the open space from the residential area to the north. This would be clearly in view on the approach and screen the openness of the open space which currently provides an undeveloped setting for the existing development.
11. The building, with a ridge height of over 4 metres and significant length, would appear dominant and out of scale with the open surroundings in which it sits. This relationship would be exacerbated by the design, with blank walls on each side resulting in a stark appearance. I note that it would be subservient in scale and mass to the residential development to the north, but these are separated and read in a different built up context. I also recognise that additional planting could be introduced, however this would not be sufficient to mask the scale and impact of the building given its positioning, and itself would further screen the valuable open outlook into the space from the residential development.
12. Therefore, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, it would be contrary to saved Policy EN20 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (2002). This requires development to be in sympathy with the appearance and character of the local environment and appropriate in scale, mass, design, materials, layout and siting, both in itself

and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views. It also seeks to avoid the loss of important open areas.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tim Crouch

INSPECTOR