



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 September 2019

by A Denby BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/19/3229385

Wm Morrisons Supermarkets PLC, Broad Street, Cambourne, CB23 6FY

- 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 WM Morrison Supermarkets PLC against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/3756/18/FL, dated 28 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 28 November 2018.
 - The development proposed is erection of a Use Class A1/A3 drive thru' coffee shop (167sq.m) with car parking, drive thru' lane, hard and soft landscaping, refuse area, and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The site is located within the north-east section of a large area of car parking which serves the village centre. It is in close proximity to the sole vehicular access to the car park and adjacent a main pedestrian link which runs through the car park towards the High Street. The site currently consists of car parking and a recycling point, which is separated from the parking area by fencing and mature landscaping.
4. The landscaping is a positive feature on the approach into the car park. It provides screening of the recycling point and the large expanse of car parking beyond. From the wider area it aids in breaking up views of the adjacent retail units, though due to their size it does not restrict or obscure views of them. In addition, as it is the most substantial area of landscaping within the wider car park it provides some visual relief from the large areas of hard surfacing.
5. The appeal scheme would result in the loss of this existing landscaping and, in order to maintain the current number of parking spaces amendments to the existing landscaped verges adjacent to the main north-south pedestrian link are also proposed. These verges include tree planting and this arrangement is repeated along the pedestrian link and on the other side of the main vehicular access, creating a tree lined boulevard through the site.

6. This is an attractive feature of the surrounding area and provides an important visual link through the car park, aiding legibility and connectivity across the village centre. Although the proposed plans still indicate trees in this location it is not clear that these could actually be retained as part of the proposals as the plan appears to show they would be within parking spaces.
7. Whilst the building has an active frontage to the existing retail units to the north-east, it effectively turns its back on the main thoroughfare. It would be the drive thru' element, with a largely blank elevation, and back of house features, such as the bin store, that would be the most visible aspects of the development. The main activity in this area would therefore be the movement of cars in the drive thru' and this would not add to the vitality of the centre. The relocated recycling point would also be within a more visible location, though it is acknowledged that it is to be consolidated as part of the proposals.
8. In addition, due to its design and layout it does not respond positively to the surrounding area. The proposed building would be in close proximity to and viewed directly against a backdrop of the much larger, adjacent development.
9. Considering this and its notably smaller size and scale, and differing design, utilising a much darker colour palette of materials it would appear at odds with the existing development. Whilst there are buildings lower in height and scale, such as the petrol filling station, these do not have the same relationship to adjacent development as that proposed at the appeal site.
10. Furthermore, the layout of the adjacent car park, with a single access and limited pedestrian connections through to the building from the main thoroughfare, would give the appearance of the building having its own curtilage. It would not act as a 'steppingstone' between development but rather a visual and physical barrier and would appear isolated in the context of the adjacent development and wider village centre.
11. The proposed building would therefore be a prominent and clearly visible feature from the surrounding area, at odds with the established layout and design of adjacent development. It would remove existing landscaping features that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. The proposed areas of replacement landscaping are minimal and would provide little mitigation to address this harmful effect.
12. The proposal would therefore not accord with Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018, which seeks to ensure that proposals integrate, and are compatible with, their surroundings, including the provision of high-quality landscaping and public spaces. The proposal would also not accord the high-quality design requirements of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework. (the Framework)
13. A design brief for the settlement centre has previously been produced, though it is acknowledged that this was some time ago, and current Policies within the Local Plan do not require adherence to it. This allows for the centre to grow and diversify as required by paragraph 85 of the Framework and it is evident that the Council have previously shown some flexibility in its application as the DIY Store/Garden Centre indicated on the '*Cambourne Settlement Centre Briefing Plan*' has been developed with an amended configuration and for other uses.

14. Nevertheless, I have considered the appeal scheme on its own merits and, as detailed above I have found that the proposals result in harm to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area and conflict with the current Local Plan and the design policies of the Framework.
15. The addition of a commercial facility, where people can meet, would provide more choice in the local area and may complement existing uses, adding to the vitality and viability of the village centre. It is also noted that the proposed occupier would require a prominent and visible location. However, as detailed above due to the proposed layout and design the development would not respond positively to the surrounding development or village centre as a whole, and therefore any benefits would be limited.
16. I note that the Framework supports the efficient use of land and the proposal would provide investment and employment both during construction and the operation of the development. However, any benefits arising from construction would be modest and temporary and I do not consider any benefits of the scheme would be sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

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

A Denby

INSPECTOR