
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2020

by Tim Wood BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 27 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/19/3235038

Ye Olde Plough and Lower Park Farm, Church Road, Cranford, Hounslow TW5 9RY

- 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 B M Coaches and Rental Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00257/E/P6, dated 30 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is the change of use of land at Ye Old Plough from agricultural and forestry (Sui Generis) and Lower Park Farm from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) and amalgamation with land at Foy's Yard to a create coach storage yard (Sui Generis); new dormer windows to Lower Park Farm; associated works including erection of portacabins, hardsurfacing, boundary treatment and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The development has already been undertaken and I had the benefit of observing it at my site visit.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are;
 - Whether the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt
 - Whether there is any other harm to the Green Belt
 - The effects of the use on nearby residents
 - Whether the loss of the dwellings is acceptable
 - The effects of the development on the setting of the nearby listed building
 - The effects of the proposed level and layout of parking
 - The effects on noise, air quality and drainage.

- Would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt

4. The appeal site consists of 2 areas referred to as Lower Park Farm and Ye Olde Plough. Both were formerly dwellings; the latter having been fire-damaged and removed, the former remains on site and is converted to offices. These areas have been amalgamated with an area referred to as Foy's Yard.
5. The development that has been undertaken, which is the subject of the appeal has resulted in additional buildings being established at the site, along with a number of portable-cabin style buildings. From the submitted drawings I can see that extensive areas of grass and some belts of trees have been removed and replaced with a large area of hard-surfacing.
6. The appellant acknowledges that the development represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is clear that the development is inappropriate and the NPPF advises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. I attach substantial weight to this in the determination of the appeal.

Whether there is any other harm to the Green Belt

7. The additional buildings within the site have a considerable and negative effect on the openness of the area. The extensive area of hard-standing accommodates a considerable number of vehicles, including large coaches. In my judgement this also has a significant negative effect on the openness of the Green Belt here. The NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy is to keep land permanently open and that the essential characteristics of the Green Belts are their openness and permanence. I consider that significant harm arises due to the negative effects on the openness of the Green Belt.

The effects of the use on nearby residents

8. The Council indicates that the increased activity of vehicles along Church Road give rise to disturbance to residents of The Hartlands site. I have taken account of the survey information in relation to vehicle movements and noise which has been submitted by the appellant and I note that the Council has not sought to contradict or supply any counter-evidence of its own. On the basis of the evidence before me, I consider that the noise arising from the additional vehicles would be insufficient to disturb residents at The Hartlands site.

The effects of the loss of the residential use

9. Policy 3.14 of The London Plan states that the loss of residential uses should be resisted. The appellant indicates that the dwelling formed by Lower Park Farm was vacant and run-down; additionally, they indicate that as it is surrounded by business uses, it is unsuitable for residential use. Whilst I note the commercial nature of the surroundings, much of this has been brought about by the development which is the subject of the appeal, which has been undertaken without planning permission. Even so, I acknowledge that the

proposal only relates to one dwelling (on the assumption that the fire-damaged house was lost) and its contribution to the local housing stock would be limited. Whilst the conflict with Policy 3.14 adds to my concerns, I acknowledge that this may have been insufficient to dismiss the appeal by itself.

Setting of listed building

10. The Old Rectory, which is Grade II listed, sits approximately 50 metres to the west of the appeal site. The building is said to consist of some 17th and 18th Century components but to be of mainly Victorian age. It is a handsome building which once provided a home in association with St Dunstan's Church. Its significance derives from its age and its architectural evolution. The Council have not alleged any harm in this respect but state that they have insufficient information to assess the effects of the proposal. I note that they have not chosen to comment on the appellant's submitted heritage statement and so do not contradict its conclusions.
11. Undoubtably its setting has changed significantly over the years and the presence of the M4 motorway and other significant roads has divorced the building from much of its historic links. There is little visual connection between the appeal site and the listed building and there is only a very weak association with the appeal site as it once formed an agricultural use. In my judgement, the appeal site does not contribute to the significance of the listed building and the appeal scheme has no negative effects in this respect.

Parking

12. The Council considers, amongst other things, that the level of parking provision has not been justified. From my consideration in relation to this narrow point, it seems to me that the appellant is best placed to judge the operational needs of the establishment and from what I saw at the site visit, the spaces are well-used and there is no overflow parking on the adjacent roads. Therefore, I raise no concerns in this respect.
13. The appellant's transport evidence addresses the issue of 2 larger vehicles passing on the adjacent road. Taking account of the low levels of traffic and the visibility afforded to drivers, I consider that the likelihood of this occurring is low and that if/when it did arise, drivers could easily wait at an appropriate point to allow safe passing to occur.
14. In relation to the provision for cycle storage and electric vehicle charging points, if permission were to have been given, these could have been secured by suitable conditions.

Noise, air quality and drainage

15. The Council does not raise specific matters of harm in relation to these matters but states that the appellant should have submitted assessments of these subjects. The appellant has now done so with the appeal documents and the Council has not undertaken any assessment or consideration of their contents. On the basis of the evidence before me, I am satisfied that the proposal would not have any harmful effects on air quality and noise. In relation to drainage, the submissions confirm that on-site drainage exists and that further investigations in relation to the need for attenuation could be employed, as required by a suitable condition, if permission were to be granted. In these circumstances I see no conflict with Policy EQ3 of the Local Plan.

Would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations

16. The appellant sets out the contribution to the local economy that the business makes, in terms of employment and other financial contributions. I have taken account of these submissions. The appellant has also referred to their submissions that no harm arises in relation to noise, vehicle movements, heritage significance and others. However, I see these as neutral and not benefits.
17. I consider that the harm to the Green Belt as a result of the inappropriate nature of the development and its unacceptable effects on openness are significant, contrary to Policy GB1 and the provisions of the NPPF. I have taken account of the uses of nearby sites and their visual effects but find that neither these nor any other matters are sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development are not present.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed.

S T Wood

INSPECTOR