
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2020

by J Gibson BUEP MP

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H1515/W/19/3236593

Stapleford Abbots Golf Club, Horseman Side, Navestock, Essex RM4 1JU

- 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 Stapleford Abbots Golf Club against the decision of Brentwood Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00679/FUL, dated 3 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is the "Installation of a Car Hand Wash within the existing Car Park. Change of use of a small area of Car Park to a Car Hand Wash".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description in the above header has been taken from the original application form. The Council's decision notice describes the proposal in further detail as the "use part of car park for hand car wash and siting of detached cabin".

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it; and
 - if the proposal is inappropriate development whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Inappropriateness of development

4. The appeal site is the Stapleford Abbots Golf Club car park and is located within the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) defines inappropriate development as a proposal which would be harmful to the Green Belt under Paragraph 143. Paragraph 145 expands upon

this by specifying that the construction of a new building should be considered inappropriate, noting specific exceptions. Criteria under item b) of Paragraph 145 offers scope for appropriate facilities for outdoor sport uses to be provided within the Green Belt, as long as such facilities would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purpose of including land within it.

5. The appeal proposal involves the construction of a storage cabin and the use of part of the existing golf course car park to establish a hand car wash facility. Although intended to serve the members of the golf club, such a facility would not represent an appropriate nor logical extension of the outdoor sport use as intended under the Framework or Policies GB22 and GB23 of the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan (RLP) (adopted August 2005). Policies GB22 and GB23 relate specifically to outdoor sport activities and the facilities which appropriately support them. Furthermore, the construction of the storage cabin would inherently reduce the current level of openness experienced within the car park given the absence of such structures.
6. The appeal proposal would therefore represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Openness and Green Belt purposes

7. Great importance is attributed to Green Belts under Paragraph 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, which are the defining characteristics of Green Belts. Policies CP1, GB1, GB2, GB22 and GB23 of the Brentwood RLP collectively reflect this objective and apply it within the local context.
8. The car park is prominently located along the frontage of Horseman Side in front of the main club house building. The car park currently represents an open environment except on those occasions when occupied by parked vehicles. The construction of the proposed cabin for the hand car wash would introduce a conspicuous built development into this environment, the permanence and appearance of which would be unlike anything else in view. The building would consequently harm the spatial and visual openness which the car park currently offers.
9. I note that some vegetation along the eastern extent of the car park provides a degree of screening of the proposed development from the neighbouring property. Notwithstanding this, the proposed development would still be visible within the site and along the public highway.
10. Accordingly, the proposed hand car wash and storage cabin would harm the openness of the Green Belt. It would therefore conflict with Policies CP1, GB1, GB2, GB22 and GB23 of the Brentwood RLP and thus contradict the purpose of the Green Belt to restrict urban sprawl and protect the countryside from encroachment.

Other considerations

11. I note that the proposed car wash facilities would offer members of the golf club a convenient service while using the golf course. However, such benefit would be limited to personal circumstances which seldom outweigh valid planning considerations such as harm to the Green Belt.

12. The economic benefit of employing two people to operate the proposed car wash is also acknowledged. Given the scale of the contribution however this would garner minimal weight.

Conclusion

13. In accordance with Paragraph 143 of the Framework I have determined that the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development and would by definition harm the Green Belt. The proposal would have an adverse effect on openness and in accordance with Paragraph 144 of the Framework I have attributed substantial weight to this harm.
14. The personal circumstances of club members and the employment of two people attracts minimal weight. The Green Belt harm has not been clearly outweighed by other considerations. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Gibson

INSPECTOR