The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 February 2020

by D Hartley BA (Hons) MTP MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F4410/W/19/3238119
Thorne Depot, Chambers Mill, Low Mill Hill, Selby Road, Thorne, Doncaster DN8 4JD

- 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 H Wilson against the decision of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.
- The application Ref 18/01792/FUL, dated 18 July 2018, was refused by notice dated 19 July 2019.
- The development proposed is change of use from grassland to vehicle parking including re-surfacing and erection of boundary fence.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

3. The appeal proposal relates to the use of an undeveloped and grassed area which fronts Selby Road for the purpose of parking vehicles in association with the adjacent business (Interserve). The land would be finished with a SUDS compliant limestone hardcore and would include a 2.4 metre high boundary palisade fence. The appellant says that the car park is needed so that they can free up space on the Interserve main site for materials storage and as part of the growth of the business.

4. The area falls outside of the defined settlement boundary of Thorne and within land defined as a 'Countryside Policy Area' in the adopted development plan for the area. I was able to see on my site visit that this part of the countryside included a more sporadic pattern of development with a limited number of buildings (including the water works site opposite) being set well back from Selby Road and separated from it by mainly vegetation and relatively low timber post and rail fencing. Consequently, and when driving along Selby Road, I could see that there was some consistency in terms of the boundary treatment and the provision of green/undeveloped spaces running alongside the highway. Such characteristics add positively and distinctively to the character and appearance this part of the countryside.

5. Owing to a combination of the proposed car park surface material, the parking of vehicles, the provision of a 2.4 metre high palisade fence and the location of the development, I consider that the proposal would represent a harsh, visually intrusive and unacceptably urban form of development in this countryside setting. The development would be positioned tight up against Selby Road and hence would be conspicuous when viewed by passers-by. It would significantly detract from the aforementioned positive characteristics of the area.

6. I do not doubt that Interserve want to expand and that allowing the appeal would have some positive economic consequences. I also acknowledge that Policy CS3 of the adopted Doncaster Council Core Strategy 2012 (CS) supports a *'limited extension'* in the countryside and that saved Policy ENV 4 of the Doncaster Unitary Development Plan 1998 (UDP) supports a *'small scale extension or expansion of an existing source of employments'*. However, and even if I were to take the view that the proposal was a small or limited extension or expansion, for the reasons outlined above the proposal would not accord with the full requirements of these policies.

7. Indeed, Policy CS3 requires that development should *'protect and enhance the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character'.* I have found that significant harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, saved Policy ENV 4 is subject to the limitations in saved Policy ENV 11 of the UDP including that such a proposal is *'essential to the continuation of the business'* and is *'appropriate to the rural area'*. In character and appearance terms, the development would not be appropriate in this rural area and, furthermore, I agree with the Council that whilst it would be convenient to store all materials on one contiguous site, it might nevertheless be possible, subject to a less restrictive and wider search of alternative sites, to store some of the cones, signage, fencing and other materials in a less sensitive location.

8. I have considered the appellant's view that some of the development plan policies are out of date and hence should not be afforded full weight. I do not consider that the referenced development plan policies are entirely inconsistent with policy in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the Framework). Indeed, paragraph 170b of the Framework states that decisions should contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by *'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'*. The referenced development plan policies are generally consistent with paragraph 170b of the Framework and, for the above reasons, I therefore find that the proposal would not accord with this part of the Framework.

9. I do not doubt that it would be convenient to use the appeal site for car parking purposes and hence to free up space on the Interserve site for additional storage/operational purposes. To this extent, the proposal would have some economic benefits thereby according with the economic objective of the Framework. However, any such benefits would be tempered by the fact that I am not persuaded that the appeal development is *'essential to the continuance of the business'* as required by Policy EN11 of the UDP. Indeed, it may be possible to find additional space elsewhere to the meet the needs to the business. Furthermore, and in any event, the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of this countryside location would be significant and this is a matter of overriding concern.

10. I conclude that the proposal would not fully accord with the design, character and appearance requirements of Policies ENV2, ENV4 and ENV11 of the UDP or with policies CS1, CS3 and CS14 of the CS. In addition, the adverse impact of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the economic benefits of the proposal when considered against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Therefore, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

D Hartley

INSPECTOR