
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 August 2020

by S D Castle BSC(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 December 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/P1560/W/20/3249724

Wellwick Farm, Colchester Road, St Osyth CO16 8HR

- 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 David Lord against the decision of Tendring District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01900/FUL, dated 16 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 07 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is change of use of land for the storage of static caravans and the laying of a porous hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The development plan for Tendring consists of the Saved Policies of the adopted Tendring Local Plan 2007 (LP). The Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond Publication Draft (DLP) is an emerging policy document, currently with Section 1 requiring modification before Section 2, which contains district-specific development management policies, can be examined. The policies of the DLP therefore have limited weight at this time.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is an area of agricultural land located adjacent to the northern edge of the cluster of buildings that form Wellwick Farm. The site forms a small part of a much larger arable field that adjoins the site to the north and east. A public footpath is located along the western boundary of the site and separates the site from another large arable field to the west. The fields surrounding the site are predominantly flat and open, with often only limited, intermittent and low hedgerow planting dividing one field from another. The site and the surrounding fields contribute positively to a wider rural landscape character of scattered farmsteads within an open plateau of agricultural fields.
5. Whilst there are numerous examples of caravans located within the surrounding area, including at Oaklands Holiday Park to the west of the site, they are not predominant or defining features in the rural landscape character

- of the area. As such, the storage of caravans on the currently undeveloped and open site would relate poorly to the identified landscape character of the area, representing a harmfully urbanising impact that fails to reinforce local distinctiveness.
6. In terms of visual impact, given the open nature of the surrounding fields, there are extensive views of the site from much of the length of the adjacent public footpath as it continues northward to Frowick Lane. Other public views of the site are more intermittent and distant, including from Clay Lane to the east. Given its close proximity to the site, the greatest visual impact would be experienced by footpath users as they approach the site from the north. I acknowledge that the caravan storage would be viewed in the context of the buildings and structures at Wellwick Farm, including existing commercial uses and visual detractors such as the telecommunications mast. There would also be some very limited intervisibility with the caravans at the Oaklands Holiday Park. This context would reduce the visual impact of the caravans when viewed from the footpath. Notwithstanding these factors, the proposed extent of caravan storage would appear harmfully intrusive within its predominantly open field landscape setting. Given the substantial length of footpath from which the development would be visible, I am not persuaded that this visual impact would be a fleeting experience for footpath users.
 7. I acknowledge that the proposed boundary landscaping would assist in lessening the landscape and visual impact of the caravan storage. It would also assist in screening the existing area of hardstanding at Wellwick Farm upon which some static caravans and large vehicles were positioned at the time of my site visit. The boundary landscaping, at the height and density required to screen the caravans, would, however, project into the existing open field, relating poorly to the wider open landscape character and appearing visually discordant. Furthermore, the harmfully urbanising impact of the proposal on the area's intrinsic landscape character would not be fully mitigated by visual screening. As such, I find unacceptable residual landscape and visual harm would remain even once the proposed boundary planting had matured.
 8. I have had regard to the proposed developments¹ drawn to my attention by the appellant. The holiday homes to the south of Wellwick Farm appeared to be under construction at the time of my site visit. Given the separation distance to the site, the intervening buildings at Wellwick Farm, and the projection of the proposal into the open countryside, these developments would not significantly reduce the identified landscape and visual harm of the proposal.
 9. The proposal is, therefore, harmful to the character and appearance of the area contrary to LP Policies QL9, QL11 and EN1, which taken together require that, amongst other things, new development should make a positive contribution to the quality of the local environment and should protect local character, including landscape character, and distinctiveness. The proposal would also be contrary to DLP Policy SPL3 which requires that all new development (including changes of use) should make a positive contribution to the quality of the local environment and protect or enhance local character. Furthermore, the development would be contrary to paragraphs 124 and 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework in so far as they seek the creation of well-designed

¹Appellant's Statement – Appendix 3 (18/01476/DETAIL) and Appendix 4 (18/00940/FUL & 19/00910/FUL)

places that add to the overall quality of an area and are sympathetic to local character, including landscape setting.

10. The Council's refusal reason also cites LP Policy QL10 but does not adequately substantiate any conflict. This policy relates to meeting the functional needs of new developments. As such, it is of limited help in my consideration of the main issue and I have not found conflict with the policy.

Other Matters

11. I have considered the Council's argument that the grant of planning permission would set a precedent for other similar developments. However, each application and appeal must be determined on its individual merits and I give very limited weight to the Council's concern in this regard.
12. I acknowledge that the close proximity of the site to a number of existing holiday parks would provide an opportunity to reduce the need for large vehicles to transport static caravans over longer distances for storage purposes. I have, however, been provided with little substantive evidence in this regard and can therefore accord this consideration only limited weight. I also give some limited weight to the bio-diversity gains that, subject to an appropriate planting specification, would result from additional boundary planting. These considerations are not, however, sufficient to outweigh the harms and conflict with the development plan that I have identified.

Conclusion

13. Overall, there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, of sufficient weight to outweigh the identified conflict with the development plan, nor do they indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.
14. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

S D Castle

INSPECTOR