



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 2 March 2021

by Robert Walker BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/M0655/W/20/3264131

Land at Summit Close, Summit Close, Stretton WA4 4NN

- 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 Jack Thwaites against the decision of Warrington Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/36115, dated 13 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is planning application for an agricultural building to store farm equipment.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There is a small difference between the description of development given in the planning application form and decision notice. I have used the description from the planning application form in the banner heading above which accurately describes the proposal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether or not the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;

Reasons

Green Belt

4. Policy CS5 of the Council's Core Strategy (CS) (2014) stipulates, amongst other things, that development proposals within the Green Belt will be approved where they accord with relevant national policy. Paragraph 145 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt is inappropriate development. However, it lists certain exceptions which are not regarded as inappropriate including, amongst other things, buildings for agriculture (paragraph 145 (a)).
5. The proposed building would be used for storage, primarily for agricultural machinery and produce, in connection with the wider agricultural land holding.

In this regard, the proposal would be in accordance with paragraph 145 (a) of the Framework.

6. I therefore find that the proposal would not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Insofar as it relates to the Green Belt, there would be no conflict with Policy CS5 of the CS. As I have found that the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it is not necessary for me to consider whether any very special circumstances exist.

Character and Appearance

7. The appeal site is a small area of land between Summit Close, the A559 and a large roundabout which leads onto the M56 motorway. The land rises from Summit Close and, despite trees and planting along its boundary, is highly visible particularly on the approach to the roundabout from the A559 and from Summit Close.
8. Other than very small field shelters, this area of land has a natural, open quality. The appeal site, as a small pocket of largely natural land viewed in the context of the surrounding road network infrastructure and houses, makes a small but important contribution to the rural character and appearance of the area.
9. The erection of a large building would result in an erosion of this open area of land. It would be prominent from the A559 and would be an imposing structure in close proximity from Summit Close, despite the trees, due to the sharp change in ground level. The proposal would thus significantly erode the natural qualities of the site.
10. The proposed building would have the appearance of an agricultural building. However, it would not appear commensurate in size with the small area of land that it would be seen in. Although the appeal site is physically connected with the appellant's wider farmland, the proposed building would appear disconnected due to the position of the surrounding roads. Moreover, although adjacent to field shelters it would appear isolated from any farmstead or other farm buildings.
11. Farm buildings are common features in this rural area. However, in this instance, the erosion of the natural qualities of the appeal site, combined with the visual impact from the elevated, prominent and disconnected positioning of the building would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Although the harm would be very localised, it nonetheless weighs against the proposal.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would conflict with the requirements of Policies CC2 and QE7 of the CS and paragraphs 127 and 170 of the Framework. These stipulate, amongst other things, that development proposals in the countryside which accord with Green Belt policies set out in national planning policy will be supported provided that they respect local landscape character, both in terms of immediate impact, or from distant views.

Other Matters

13. The proposal would allow the secure storage of, amongst other things, a combine harvester. Although I have no substantive evidence before me regarding the size of vehicles and whether such vehicles can navigate Well

Lane, I recognise that it would be difficult for large farm vehicles due to its width.

14. The supporting information submitted with the application indicates that the building would be used to serve the land off Tarporley Road (A49) and the land south of the M56. The public footpath crossing the field off Summit Close would provide a constraint to the positioning of any building. However, it occupies a small section of land and I have no firm details as to why its location precludes a building other than along the length of the path. Given the building is intended for storage use rather than livestock, there is no clear reason why other residential properties have limited the position of the building to the proposed location.
15. Based on the evidence before me, I am unable to reach a firm conclusion, as to why this particular location, as opposed to any other part of the very large holding that the building would serve, is essential for the farm operations.
16. I accept that the area of land has less functional use to the farm due to its size, shape and position in comparison with other larger fields in the holding. Moreover, I have no reason to question the need for a building to expand the farm operations. Although not quantified, this would have benefits to the farm business and thus the rural economy.
17. Drawing the above together, it is not the purpose of this appeal to consider alternative locations. However, based on the evidence before me, I give limited weight to the need put forward for the proposed building in this particular location.

Conclusion

18. Although the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in this particular prominent and elevated location the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with the development plan when read as a whole.
19. I have taken account of the benefits of the proposal. However, none changes the balance of these findings and the harm I have identified. As such, I find there to be no material considerations, in this instance, that would indicate that the appeal decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
20. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Robert Walker

INSPECTOR