



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 June 2021

by Thomas Hatfield BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3425/W/21/3271586

Green Gable, Summerhill, Milwich, Stafford, ST18 0EL

- 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 Andy Plant against the decision of Stafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/33438/FUL, dated 16 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is retention of a single-storey implement store building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for retention of a single-storey implement store building at Green Gable, Summerhill, Milwich, Stafford, ST18 0EL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/33438/FUL, dated 16 November 2020, and the plan submitted with it.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are, firstly, whether the development would be consistent with local planning policy for rural areas and, secondly, the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

Planning policy for rural areas

3. Policy E2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough (2014) relates to new development in the rural areas. Whilst generally a restrictive policy, it encourages provision for the essential operational needs of agriculture, forestry, or rural businesses, and proposals which help to conserve or improve the rural environment.
4. The appeal site adjoins around 2.6 hectares of open land that is in the same ownership and is maintained as wildflower meadows and grazing land. These fields are largely surrounded by attractive mature trees and boundary hedgerows, and the appeal building houses tools and equipment that are used to maintain this land. It is a relatively small structure, with a built footprint of around 10 square metres, that is proportionate in scale to the management of this area of land. Whilst it is unclear whether the land forms part of a rural business, Policy E2 encourages "*provision for the essential operational needs of agriculture*" and does not require that such proposals form part of an agricultural trade or business. Moreover, the maintenance of the wildflower meadows, and the mature trees and hedges that surround them, clearly assists in conserving and improving the rural environment, as per part vi of Policy E2.

5. At the time of my site visit, the building contained various tools, equipment, and herbicide and pesticide containers. The Council assert that these could be stored in the adjacent dwelling rather than requiring a separate building. However, it is agreed that the appeal building is on agricultural land outside of the residential curtilage to Green Gable. Moreover, given the nature of these chemicals, it may not be appropriate to store them within a family dwelling.
6. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would be consistent with local planning policy for rural areas. It would accord with the relevant sections of Policy E2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough (2014) in this regard.

Character and appearance

7. The appeal building is a small shed that is constructed in profiled metal sheeting. It is green in colour and has a plain, functional appearance that is not dissimilar to other agricultural buildings in the vicinity. Moreover, it has only limited visibility from the surrounding area, being sited next to a mature tree and hedgerow, and is partly screened in views from the road by a covered reservoir to the west. It is also positioned near to an existing group of buildings, and it does not appear out of keeping with its rural surroundings in my view.
8. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would not significantly harm the character and appearance of the countryside. It would therefore accord with the relevant sections of Policies N1 and E2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough (2014). These policies seek to ensure, amongst other things, that new development is appropriately designed and respects the built vernacular character of the area.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Thomas Hatfield

INSPECTOR