
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 July 2021

by John Wilde CEng MICE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/20/3262620

Land north of Honeystreet Village, Honeystreet, Pewsey

- 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 John Wyles against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01634/FUL, dated 21 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is change of use of part of an existing agricultural field to provide a village parking area for c20 cars with associated works and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for change of use of part of an existing agricultural field to provide a village parking area for c20 cars with associated works and landscaping at Land north of Honeystreet Village, Honeystreet, Pewsey in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/01634/FUL, dated 21 February 2020, subject to the conditions contained within the attached schedule.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a section of a field lying directly to the north of the settlement of Honeystreet within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In planning terms the site is within the countryside.
4. The site has a dwelling directly to the south and two agricultural buildings to the north, one of these being a relatively recently constructed substantial barn. The site already has a certain amount of chippings instead of grass and the entrance way to the barn comprises a large area of hardstanding. At the time of my visit there was farm machinery and an old caravan situated in the area around the barn. The site cannot therefore be considered to be situated in a pristine rural environment.
5. The proposed development would involve a central access way of crushed gravel laid over a geomembrane with parking on grass, contained by split logs or sleepers laid horizontally. Hedgerow fencing would be planted on the west and east sides of the site, and a certain amount of tree planting would be

- undertaken. There would also be a pedestrian bridge built over the existing ditch at the south-east corner of the site.
6. Core Policy 51 (CP 51) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (CS) makes clear that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. The policy also echoes paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework in requiring that great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing landscapes such as AONBs. Policy 57 of the CS requires a high standard of design that responds positively to the existing landscape features.
 7. I have been provided with two Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs), one denoted as a Landscape Report by LanDesign Associates on behalf of the appellant, and one denoted as a Landscape and Visual Appraisal by WH Landscape on behalf of Alex Oliver. These reports look at both the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed car park.
 8. The former LVIA concludes that the proposed development would produce a slight adverse landscape affect which would be mitigated by the proposed planting and a slight adverse visual affect, but only when in use. The latter LVIA concludes that the impact of the proposed development in both landscape and visual terms would be adverse.
 9. At the time of my visit the site was barely discernible from the adjacent road due to the vegetation growth on the verge. I acknowledge that that there is no guarantee that this could not be cut down but it seems to me that this is unlikely to be cut down for the whole duration of the summer, when the car park would be most likely to be used. I also note that further planting is proposed to prevent visibility of the site from the road.
 10. From the south, views of the site are impeded by the wall of Vale Cottage and by existing tree planting. A View of the site would be available from the entrance, which is also the existing entrance to the relatively new large barn, but in time this view would be lessened considerably by the proposed planting, which would lap around to the north and north-east.
 11. Views from the footpath to the north that runs east-west would be impeded by the existing buildings and this would also be the case for views from further to the north. I also consider that as the proposal is for a car park and cars and other vehicles are relatively low in height compared to buildings, the existing structures bordering the site would be far more dominating and intrusive in longer views than any parked cars. Given the relatively small scale of the proposal I do not accept that the proposed planting would itself have a detrimental effect on the wider landscape character.
 12. To my mind the parcel of land north of Vale Cottage, including the appeal site, has already changed considerably in nature due to the erection of the large barn and its associated hardstanding. This change is acknowledged in several places within the WH Landscape LVIA, which states that *the visual character of the paddock has been changed as a result of the construction of the hardstanding, with what was once an agricultural field now appearing as a large storage yard.*

13. I consider that in arriving at their conclusions WH Landscape have underestimated the change that has already taken place in the vicinity of the appeal site and to an extent downplayed the beneficial effect that the proposed mitigation would have. I am also mindful that the proposed development will not result in large areas of hardstanding or in the erection of buildings, with much of the grass on the site remaining. It will also be for a transitory use, much less used in winter months when the vegetation coverage is less. I also note that the proposed use could be carried out for 28 days in any one year under permitted development rules, so could conceivably be used every weekend for 14 weeks during the summer months.
14. Overall therefore I consider that the proposed development will protect the landscape character of the area and that any negative impacts will be mitigated as far as possible through the design and landscape measures proposed. Therefore no conflict with policy CP 51 would occur.
15. There is some concern that the proposed development would accelerate the process of coalescence with Alton Barnes to the north. However, to my mind, whilst I accept that the barn to the north of the appeal site is agricultural in nature rather than urban, it has already moved built form further towards Alton Barnes. The proposed car park would not therefore exacerbate this further.
16. My attention has been drawn to concerns regarding road safety for those people utilising the proposed car park, given that there is no footway into Honeystreet. I acknowledge that the situation would not be ideal, but the proposal contains a bridge in the south-east corner of the site, thus reducing the length of road that pedestrians would have to negotiate. Furthermore, the distance to the facilities in Honeystreet would be short, there is a verge on the opposite side of the road, traffic is relatively light and I also note that the road forms part of the White Horse Trail, a popular route for walkers and cyclists.. Overall I do not consider that this is an issue that can be determinative in the appeal.
17. The Council point to the ownership of the appeal site, that there is no guarantee that the proposed parking area would actually be a community benefit and that it could attract extra car users to the village. However these matters do not outweigh the fact that I have found that the proposed development would be in accordance with the development plan.
18. My attention has been drawn to the Grade II listed building known as Mill House. However, this is over 30m away from the proposed car park and there is built form in between. The Council's Conservation Officer considers that the proposal would have a neutral effect on the setting of the listed building and I have been given no significant evidence that would lead me to a different conclusion.

Conditions

19. The conditions contained within the attached schedule are those suggested by the Council. In the interest of the final appearance of the development I have imposed conditions relating to landscaping, and for certainty I have imposed a condition detailing the submitted drawings.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons, and having taken into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

John Wilde

INSPECTOR

Schedule of conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Dwg No -01 Site location plan and site plan, Landscape report (by LanDesign Associates ref 1103/DOC 1/Issue 3, Landscape Report (by LanDesign Associates ref 1103/DOC 2/Issue 2.
- 3) No development shall commence on site until a scheme of hard and soft landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the details of which shall include: -
 - a. location and current canopy spread of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land;
 - b. full details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development;
 - c. a detailed planting specification showing all plant species, supply and planting sizes and planting densities;
 - d. finished levels and contours;
 - e. means of enclosure;
 - f. car park layouts;
 - g. all hard and soft surfacing materials;
- 4) All soft landscaping comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the completion of the development; All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.