

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2022

by P Eggleton BSc(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 March 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/K2610/W/21/3278810

Land off Salhouse Road, Rackheath, Norwich NR13 6LD

- 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 D Topalli against the decision of Broadland District Council.
 - The application Ref 20210441, dated 9 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is change of use of land to hand car wash facility with associated fixtures and fittings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The proposal would result in the provision of a hand car wash facility. The site has an agricultural setting with fields to three sides. Opposite the site is a large area of woodland. The site lies in the open countryside and is distinct from nearby settlements.
 4. At one end of the site to the west, there is an area with a high steel security fence and gate which I understand to be the area described by the council as being used for the reclamation of building materials. I am unclear why this area forms part of the site. The plans do not indicate the trees and vegetation within the site but it would appear that the areas both immediately to the east and west of the proposed compound would not be altered.
 5. At present, although the part of the site that would form the compound is relatively devoid of planting, it is generally unnoticeable when driving along Salhouse Road given its position between the two small areas of trees and vegetation. The site is currently not out of keeping within this agricultural and woodland setting, other than the reclamation area to the west.
 6. This proposal would include a new vehicle access. Although the details are limited, it is clear from the requirements of the Highway Authority that it would need to be of a significant and formal construction which would extend into the site. As trees and vegetation have not been shown on the plan, it is not clear
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that the long visions splays could be accommodated without the removal of some of these features. Given the proximity of trees to the highway, I share the planning officers concern that trees and vegetation would need to be removed. In any event, the access, the area required to allow vehicles to circulate and the cabins and canopy, would result in the compound having a significantly changed and relatively urban character. Cars parked and those using the facility would add to these changes. Once developed as proposed, the site would be at odds with and would detract from the character and appearance of this area. Although the appellant has suggested that additional planting could be introduced, including hedgerows, no proposals have been submitted. I am not persuaded that this would significantly alter the impact or reduce the harm.

7. As the proposal would undoubtedly result in considerable harm to the character and appearance of this area, it would conflict with Policies GC4 and EN2 of the Development Management DPD 2015. This is because the limited details do not represent a high standard of design and fail to have regard for the environment and the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would also be in conflict with Policy ENV5 of the Rackheath Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2037 as it fails to demonstrate that landscape character has been considered; and has been used to influence the development's layout and design. These policies are consistent with the objectives of the *National Planning Policy Framework* and can therefore be afforded full weight.
8. It is suggested that five jobs would be created. This would result in economic benefits and as the site is not too distant from the nearest communities, this may benefit those residents and also the local services, such as local shops within them. New commercial activity gains support from the *Framework* which requires that significant weight be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. The *Framework* also accepts that in rural areas, sites may need to be outside settlements in locations that are not well served by public transport. However, this proposal does not meet the requirement of the *Framework* that such development needs to be sensitive to its surroundings.
9. Overall, there are matters that weigh in favour of this proposal, particularly job creation and other economic benefits. However, the proposal has not had sufficient regard for the countryside setting and it would result in considerable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Even if it were demonstrated that trees would not be lost and a comprehensive landscape plan would be put in place, this would not significantly reduce this harm. Whilst I afford significant weight to the economic benefits, the matters in favour of the proposal would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm. I therefore dismiss the appeal.

Peter Eggleton
INSPECTOR