



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2022

Decision by C Rafferty LLB (Hons), Solicitor

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/U2370/W/21/3287819

Middle Holly Field, Forton PR3 1AH

- 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 Latham against the decision of Wyre Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00557/FUL dated 27 April 2021 was refused by notice dated 14 July 2021
 - The development proposed is the erection of a replacement B8 storage and distribution building following the demolition of an existing building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site address has been taken from the appeal form, due to the limited information provided in this regard on the application form.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the development would accord with planning policy for development in the countryside.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a field on Middle Holly with a detached building. It is located in an area designated as countryside where, despite the presence of other development, a largely rural, open and tranquil character remains. The proposal seeks to replace the building with one of larger dimensions. This would be used as storage to allow for the expansion of the appellant's rural business.
5. Policy SP4 of the Wyre Local Plan 2019 (the Local Plan) contains a list of development types considered appropriate in the countryside. This includes the expansion of business in rural areas in accordance with Policy EP8, which states that such expansion will be supported where: (a) the scale and nature of the activity is not detrimental to the character of the area; and (b) any new building and supporting infrastructure is necessary.
6. With regards to the necessity of the proposal, the parties agree that the need for storage in connection with the appellant's business has been established, and that the distance between the storage and the main business site is not unreasonable. Based on my observations, I have no reason to disagree. The appellant's business requires the vertical storage of artificial trees of up to 15 feet in height. I therefore agree that the proposal is necessary for such storage.

7. Nonetheless, the proposal would introduce a sizeable structure at the site. Although it would have the same footprint as another building for which planning permission has been granted in this location, it would be greater in height such that it would be a more visually prominent addition to the surrounds. While located at the bottom of a ridge it would remain in an elevated position. In addition, although some screening would be provided by hedging, it would be visible in the immediate locality, particularly travelling along Middle Holly due to the gap in hedging for the entrance.
8. Despite its featureless design, as result of its height in such close proximity to the roadside the proposal would read as a dominant structure that would disrupt the surrounding open feel. It would be experienced primarily alongside the modest, single storey structures opposite, serving to exacerbate its dominance in the streetscene and resulting in the proposal appearing incongruous in context. Even acknowledging the larger development further along Middle Holly, in the immediate location the overall sizeable dimensions of the proposal would be visually jarring, harming the open and rural character of the surrounds.
9. In addition, while the storage use at the site would continue, such that the nature of activity would be unchanged, I have no detailed information as to the scale of activity that would take place with the proposal in place. In allowing for additional storage of taller products it has the possibility to significantly increase activity at the site that could disrupt the largely rural and tranquil feel. This would be at odds with the surrounding character through increased vehicle movements, shipment deliveries or frequency of loading and unloading the storage unit. In the absence of substantive evidence as to the scale of activity at the site as a result of this growth, I am unable to conclusively determine that the scale and nature of this activity would not be detrimental to the character of the area.
10. In accordance with Policy SP4, the appellant has not put forward any substantial public benefits of the proposal that would outweigh harm to the open and rural character of the countryside. I acknowledge that it would support a rural business and have economic benefits in this regard. However, I have no substantive evidence before me as to the precise scale of such benefits and, as such, do not consider that these would outweigh the harm identified above.
11. For the reasons given, I find that the proposal would fail to accord with local planning policy for development in the countryside, being Policies SP4 and EP8 of the Local Plan which seek to protect the countryside and manage the rural economy.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has referred to other developments nearby of similar scale to the proposal. While limited information on these or their comparability to the proposal is provided, I viewed the developments on my site visit. Each building referred to by the appellant is well-screened from the public highway, with the agri-commercial buildings in particular being set back some distance from the road. As such, they are not as imposing in the immediate surrounds as the proposal. I therefore attach limited weight to this reference to development elsewhere, which would not outweigh the above identified harm.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given, the proposal would not accord with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the appeal should be

determined other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Rafferty

INSPECTOR