



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2022

by J Symmons BSc (Hons) CEng MICE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/22/3305432

The Feathers Inn, C259 Hedley On The Hill Main Road Through Village, Hedley NE43 7SW

- 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 Ms Helen Greer against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02377/FUL, dated 11 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 18 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'carport on existing car park. There was previously a barn on this site and this was demolished to create three car parking spaces. This carport is to provide cover for the three car parking spaces and provide shelter for diners during COVID'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I noted on my site visit that the carport has been erected and this is generally in accordance with the drawings submitted. I have considered this development on this basis.
3. Since the Council reached its decision a new development plan known as the Northumberland Local Plan (Local Plan) was adopted in March 2022. The Council has confirmed that the policies cited in the decision notice have been superseded by Policies STP7, STP8, ECN16, QOP1, QOP2, TRA2 and TRA4 of the new Local Plan. Consequently, I have had regard to these policies in my decision. The parties have been provided with an opportunity to comment on this policy change in so far as it relates to the appeal proposal.
4. In response to the appellant's appeal statement, the Council agrees that the development could satisfy Policy STP8 of the Local Plan. This relates to the exception to inappropriate development at paragraph 149 (e) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) in respect of it being limited infill in the village. It concludes that the development is in accordance with Policies STP1, STP8 and ECN16 and the Framework and this would address the first reason for refusal. I have considered this matter and concur with this view. On this basis, the first reason for refusal relating to development in the Greenbelt has been addressed and I do not need to consider this aspect of the appeal further.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the development on;
- the character and appearance of the area; and
 - highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. Slate roofs are extensively used on buildings in the village and notwithstanding the open and natural appearance of the timber structure, the polycarbonate roof is not a traditional material in the village setting and is an inappropriate material within the local vernacular. While the roof is a lightweight structure, due to its northern orientation and front to back pitch, its clear finish and transparency do not reduce its visual prominence. Similarly, the elevated and setback position of the roof and the screening provided by the front wall, surrounding buildings and central tree do not reduce the corrugated material's appearance from the road and footpath.
7. While there are some examples of a similar corrugated roof material used on the nearby farm buildings these are limited to localised buildings which are not as highly visible as the development. The appellant indicates that the use of a slate or tiled roof on the carport would not have been appropriate as it would not withstand falling branches or extreme wind. However, no substantive evidence has been provided to support this view. Overall, the polycarbonate roof is not an attractive or high-quality material that respects the general village setting.
8. In relation to the photographic evidence of a previous barn on the site, the details of this are very limited. It is therefore not possible to compare how this structure may have related to the carport and its effect on the character and appearance of the area. In any event, it has gone, and I have considered this appeal on my observations and the other evidence presented.
9. I also recognise that the covered area offered an outdoor seating area at a time of need particularly during the covid pandemic and the associated restrictions on social gatherings. Nevertheless, if the area was to be now used only for parking as I have considered above, it seems to me that many of these benefits would be less significant.
10. The proposed pergola to the car park entrance would be a modest structure located over the carpark entrance. Although its size, orientation and separation from the main road would not make it visually intrusive in the streetscape, it would not reduce the character and appearance harm created by the carport.
11. In conclusion, the development adversely affects the character and appearance of the area. It does not comply with Policies QOP1 and QOP2 of the Local Plan which seek, amongst other matters, to ensure development positively contributes to local character and distinctiveness. The development also does not comply with paragraph 126 and 130 of the Framework which seek for proposals to be visually attractive and be sympathetic to the local character of the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

Highway safety

12. I agree with the Council and the appellant that imposing a planning condition to secure the space under the carport for parking use only would resolve the highway objection to the development.
13. In conclusion, the development does not harm highway safety and complies with Policies TRA2 and TRA4 of the Local Plan. These policies seek, amongst other matters, to ensure appropriate off-street vehicle parking is provided and safe use of the transport network is maintained.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

14. While I have found that highway safety could be acceptably resolved, this does not outweigh the harm I have found to the character and appearance of the area.
15. The development would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole. Material considerations, including the Framework do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Having considered all other matters raised I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Symmons

INSPECTOR