



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 May 2023

by F Harrison BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/X1355/W/22/3309307

Land to East of Greenland Lodge, Hamsteels Lane, Quebec DH7 9RS

- 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 Mrs Emma Agar against the decision of Durham County Council.
 - The application Ref DM/22/01469/FPA, dated 12 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 30 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is provision of welfare unit for stables and storage container for animal feed (temporary units).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I saw at my site visit that the storage container appears to have already been installed at the site, however the welfare unit has not. As such, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the submitted drawings.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site accommodates a stable block and hardstanding, associated with the adjoining grazing paddock and a commercial livery operation. Adjacent to the site is the residential property known as Blackthorn Lodge. The site lies within open countryside and a predominantly agricultural landscape. The character and appearance of the area is eminently rural, comprising an open expanse of agricultural fields with sporadic dwellings and farm buildings.
5. The proposal would introduce a modestly sized portacabin structure and steel storage container onto the existing area of hardstanding and would not encroach into the grazing paddock. The principle of the development is not disputed and the welfare unit and container's dimensions, low lying form and plain design would result in development which is not overtly prominent. Nevertheless, the industrial and utilitarian appearance would be out of keeping and incongruous for this open countryside location. The stark design and materials of the structures, particularly the portacabin, are at odds with what might reasonably be expected to be found in the open countryside. As such, the proposal would appear as an alien feature in the rural context of the locality.

6. The screening afforded by the existing stable block and boundary vegetation to the east largely mitigates the appeal scheme's presence in views from Hamsteels Lane. However, there would be clear and direct views from Greenland Road where there is limited screening owing to the general absence of hedging along Greenland Road and significant gaps in planting along the nearest field boundary to the west of the site. Despite the topography, with ground levels falling away from west to east towards the site, the proposal would be readily visible when viewed from Greenland Road, by those in cars driving past and pedestrians on the adjacent footpath.
7. I observed prolonged direct views of the appeal site when travelling along a large section of Greenland Road. As such, the appeal scheme would be a particular focal point in these views. Given the site's wider landscape setting, the proposal would represent a marked visual change and would have an urbanising effect, owing to the proposal's design and appearance. The intrusion of an urban form of development, noticeable in public views, would be detrimental to the intrinsic character of the open countryside. The appellant has indicated that they are willing to provide further planting to screen the site. However, there are no details of any landscaping scheme before me, and I must determine the appeal based on the submitted plans only.
8. Blackthorn Lodge adjacent to the appeal site, and the nearby Greenland Lodge are both well screened by mature hedging and trees, and I observed limited built development in the wider surrounding area. As such, the proposal would be viewed within a rural backdrop which would exacerbate the presence and incongruity of the appeal scheme. Despite the presence of the existing stables at the appeal site, the proposal is so markedly different in appearance that this would not mitigate the effect of the proposal which would instead appear jarring against the wider backdrop of the open countryside. Furthermore, even if the proposed structures are temporary and could be removed should the use cease or requirements change, the harm identified above would still be detrimental over the short-term.
9. For the reasons given above, the proposed development would be unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with policies 10, 13, 29 and 39 of the County Durham Local Plan (2020). These policies, amongst other things, require equestrian development to not unacceptably affect the character of the locality either individually or cumulatively and provide appropriate screening measures. Development should also be well designed, contribute positively to an area's character and the beauty or tranquillity of the countryside, and not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape.

Other Matters

10. The proposal would provide welfare facilities at the site, required in connection with the use of the site as a commercial livery. This is not disputed and is a clear benefit of the proposal. However, it has not been shown that the appeal scheme is the only way to achieve the appellant's aims, and as such, carries only moderate weight in the determination of the appeal.
11. The proposed development can achieve satisfactory access and there is no suggestion that it would significantly intensify the site's accessibility by unsustainable modes of transport. However, policy compliance on these

matters would be a neutral factor and would weigh neither for nor against the development.

Conclusion

12. The proposal conflicts with the development plan, read as a whole. There are no material considerations that have been shown to have sufficient weight to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

F Harrison

INSPECTOR