



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2024

by H Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y0435/W/23/3327498

Land opposite 34A Newport Road, Wavendon, Milton Keynes MK17 8AE

- 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 Arthur Braddish against the decision of Milton Keynes City Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00275/FUL, dated 2 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 15 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of a machine store and associated access and hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the application was determined, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) was published on 19 December 2023. However, as any policies that are material to this decision have not fundamentally changed, I am satisfied that this has not prejudiced any party. I have had regard to the latest version of the Framework and new paragraph numbers in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a large undeveloped open field with mature vegetation to its rear boundaries. The site is located opposite a detached dwelling at 34A Newport Road with access off a private road known as Simons Paddock.
5. The Council state that the site forms part of the Wavendon Clay lowland farmland landscape character area. The Council's landscape character assessment for this area seeks to ensure that open views across the landscape character area to the Brickhill Greensand Ridge are retained.
6. Policy NE5 of the Milton Keynes Council Plan:MK 2016 – 2031 (2019) (Plan:MK), states that where development in the open countryside is acceptable under other policies within the plan, it will need to be undertaken in a manner that respects the particular character of the surrounding landscape.

7. There are existing buildings relatively close to the appeal site, forming the residential properties fronting the private road. Nevertheless, the site is set back and separated from these properties by the private road. The absence of development in the site and its verdant appearance means it forms part of, and assimilates into, the wider open agricultural landscape. Therefore, the appeal site in its current state contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area.
8. The proposed single storey building would feature a tall central entrance with a gable roof, connected to a larger structure with a half-hipped roof and a taller mid-section. Its solid structure and height would create a prominent presence on site, resulting in a noticeably large and bulky appearance with a domestically styled roof form.
9. At its highest point, the ridge height of the proposed building would be around 5.6m. In contrast, the building's eaves height would be around 2.2m. The appellant states that the ridge height is necessary to provide appropriate clearance for access and egress of large machinery and to enable it to be stored in an area with decent clearance levels.
10. However, the proposed ridge height would be disproportionately taller than the height of the building's main entrance. In addition, the building's eaves height would be lower than the height of the main entrance. The low eaves height and the sloping roof form could therefore restrict manoeuvrability and storage of tall machinery inside the building. The evidence before me does not show the height of the machinery. As such, there is no justification for the substantial height differences between the building's main entrance, its lower eaves height, and the taller roof ridge height.
11. Consequently, the proposal would introduce a sizeable building on an undeveloped parcel of land that provides a natural visual break from the built-up urban form. The siting, scale and mass of the proposed building would be out of keeping with the current undeveloped appearance of the site and the spacious character of the wider agricultural landscape. Furthermore, its design and siting south of the private road would fail to harmonise with the existing buildings.
12. The hardstanding material that would be used for the proposed turning area would further emphasise the man-made appearance of the resultant development. The visual effect of the proposal would be obvious and incongruous within the existing undisturbed agricultural field.
13. I saw that there would be relatively close-range views of the proposal from the nearby public right of way. There would also be views of the proposal from the nearby private driveway serving the residential properties. Although over a greater distance, there would also be glimpses of the proposal from the recreation ground, and from Newport Road, especially as there is limited vegetation screening the field along the roadside boundary.
14. Although the appellant proposes a landscaping scheme to provide some degree of screening, the proposal would nevertheless be likely to be visible from the surrounding area, particularly when trees and vegetation are not in leaf during the winter months. Such planting would also take time to mature and could not be guaranteed to survive or be maintained in the longer term.

15. The proposal would use materials, such as black weatherboarding, that would be similar to that commonly used for agricultural stores and could be reasonably secured by condition. Conditions could also be imposed to restrict the use of the proposed development and remove the ability to implement permitted development opportunities. However, these aspects would not overcome the harm identified above.
16. For the reasons given, the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore fail to accord with Policies D1, D2, D3 and NE5 of the Milton Keynes Council Plan:MK 2016 – 2031 (2019). Collectively, these policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure development responds appropriately to the site and surrounding context, and the layout, massing/scale, and appearance of the building exhibits a positive character and respects the surrounding landscape.

Other Matters

17. Without a secure place to store machinery, the appellant suggests that he will not be able to efficiently manage the land in the future. However, the appellant has not outlined what other security measures have been explored as an alternative and why they would not be sufficient. As such, there is no substantive evidence that this matter could only be addressed by the proposed development.
18. I acknowledge that the appellant is a committed member of the Wavendon community and uses land within his ownership for public events. He has also undertaken biodiversity improvements in recent years, such as the planting of around 130 new trees. Laudable as this is, it does not negate the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area.
19. My attention has been drawn to a previous planning approval for a machinery store that would be taller than the proposed building (ref: 22/02577/FUL). However, this previous approval relates to a proposal that was positioned within proximity of other agricultural buildings. It is therefore not directly comparable to the proposal before me, which would encroach onto undeveloped land that is open and separated from the existing dwellings. Each case must be decided on its own merits, and I am not fully aware of all the circumstances relating to this previous approval. Nonetheless, I have determined this appeal on its own merits, and its site-specific characteristics.
20. The appellant states that land to the north and south of the appeal site have been designated under a strategic housing land allocation for the urban extension of Milton Keynes. Nevertheless, there is no evidence before me to indicate that the appeal site is to be released for development. I therefore attribute little weight to this matter.

Conclusion

21. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and there are no material considerations worthy of sufficient weight that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR