



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 April 2024

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F4410/W/23/3328151

Land adjacent to Thana, Mosscroft Lane, Hatfield, Doncaster DN7 6BD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Andrew Plumb against the decision of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 22/02618/FUL.
 - The development proposed was originally described as 'storage unit to replace existing timber unit which is in serious disrepair.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would be suitably located, having regard to i) relevant development plan and national planning policy, and ii) the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Policy

3. The appeal site comprises a field on Mosscroft Lane adjacent to a dwelling, Thana, within the same ownership. The field has two road frontages either side of a pair of detached dwellings in separate ownership. The field wraps around to the rear of these dwellings and was laid to grass at the time of my visit. A timber barn stands in the field, directly behind one of the dwellings, The Homestead. The barn is in a dilapidated state, with wall and roof coverings largely missing and the roof supported by metal props. Effectively, only the timber frame remains and the building appears as a skeletal and unstable structure. It would be replaced with a modern, steel portal framed building.
4. The appeal site is located within the Countryside Policy Area (CPA) under the Doncaster Local Plan (September 2021) (the DLP). Policy 25 of the DLP addresses development within the CPA. As the proposal is to replace rather than convert the existing building, Part 1 of the policy is not applicable, nor are Parts 2 and 3 which relate to the provision of dwellings. The relevant section is Part 4, which supports new non-residential development in the CPA where a series of criteria are met. This includes A) where the rural location of the enterprise is justifiable to support a prosperous rural economy.
5. The appellant's statement of case sets out that the existing building has stood on the site for over 70 years, previously used for keeping livestock but more recently used for storing straw grown on the wider field and a tractor and other

equipment. It is indicated that the former asbestos roof was removed some 2-3 years ago and the tractor is now stored in the open. Separately, the appellant refers to owning some 12 acres of land nearby leased to a local farmer, for which there would be nowhere to keep any farm implements or store any produce, hay or straw if they wished to cultivate this land themselves.

6. The Council states that the purpose of the building is instead for the applicant's personal hobbies of keeping geese, chickens, and vintage agricultural equipment. It states that under an earlier application¹, it was specified that there was no intention to use the building for commercial purposes, a point clarified by the appellant's agent during the course of that application.
7. The evidence before me does not indicate any substantive agricultural or other rural commercial enterprise supported under Policy 25. There is no detail of the extent of hay cutting which takes place or where it is currently stored. The concern over having somewhere to store hay from the other 12 acres is hypothetical, and not evidence of an actual need. Even though unrelated to a commercial operation, neither is there any substantive detail regarding the number of geese/chickens and vintage farm equipment or where they are presently kept that would enable an assessment as to whether the proposed building were needed and if its scale were commensurate with its intended use.
8. I recognise that a building has existed on the site for a long time, though it appears unfit for conversion. Even if it were, under Part A of Policy 25 it would still be subject to the requirement that its location is justifiable to support a prosperous rural economy, for which no justification has been advanced. Moreover, despite the accounts of its past use, it no longer appears to be in active use and does not offer evidence of an ongoing rural enterprise.
9. For these reasons, I conclude that the site's location has not been demonstrated to be justifiable to support a prosperous rural economy, and so conflicts with Policy 25 of the DLP, and with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which supports new rural buildings that enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas.

Character and Appearance

10. Part 4(C) and (D) of Policy 25 require the size and scale of new buildings to be commensurate with an existing or new use and with the rural character of the area; and that there is no significant adverse effect on the landscape. The proposed replacement building would be rectangular in footprint with a steel portal frame and a shallow pitched roof. The walls would have a low brick plinth with green steel cladding above to the elevations and roof slopes. A large roller shutter door would feature on one side of the building.
11. Whilst such a design is employed for modern agricultural buildings, the proposed unit would not be located within the context of other farm buildings but would stand in an isolated position in the middle of the field, surrounded most closely by residential dwellings. In this context, it would appear more akin to a large, industrial building, to which would be added a more formal access track and hard surfaced parking area to one side of the building. Together, the

¹ 21/03511/FUL – Original description given on application form: "Replace existing timber framed storage unit with steel clad portal framed unit to store vintage farm equipment, straw & food for chickens & geese. This is not a commercial unit. Mr and Mrs Plumb are retired. The existing timber unit is badly damaged & unusable"

development would have a significantly more urbanised appearance compared to the more modest scale and form of the existing timber building.

12. I accept that the existing building is not a positive feature, but its low height, now skeletal form and recessed position serve to reduce its visibility from the public realm. In contrast and noting that the size has been reduced from earlier iterations, the proposed building would be taller in height and substantially bulkier in size than the existing, with materials that would lend it an overtly modern appearance that would draw the eye to a much greater extent than the existing building. As set out above, no justification for the size of the building has been advanced by the appellant.
13. Even acknowledging that the proposed building would be set slightly further away from the neighbouring dwellings than the existing building, it would still appear as a dominant and intrusive structure when viewed from the neighbouring rear windows and gardens, and one which would alter the rural, natural character of the field to a more developed, urban one.
14. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would fail to accord with criteria 4(C) and (D) of Policy 25 of the DLP required to justify development within the CPA. Though not specifically cited by the Council, there would also be conflict with Policies 33, 41 and 46 of the DLP which require proposals of high quality design that respond positively to their context and respect the character of the locality. There would also be conflict with the Framework's recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and its aims for high quality design.

Other Matters

15. The appellant refers to planning permission existing for the existing building. The evidence before me does not specify an actual permission for the building. Nevertheless, the proposal seeks a demonstrably different structure which I am required to assess against relevant development plan policy, which does not support the unrestricted replacement of existing buildings in the countryside. Moreover, even if the existing building were restored, it would not have the same adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area as the proposal. Therefore, such a fall-back position, if feasible, would not represent a more harmful option that would weigh in favour of the appeal scheme.
16. The appellant refers to a planning permission² granted nearby at Ancient Lane. I am not furnished with full particulars of this decision but note the description that it was agricultural in nature, and so contrasts from the purposes of the proposed building in this case. As such, this decision does not alter my conclusions above, which I have reached on the specific evidence before me.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons set out, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole. Material considerations in this case do not indicate that planning permission should nevertheless be forthcoming despite this conflict. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

K. Savage INSPECTOR

² Council Ref 19/03086/FUL