



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2024

by J Hobbs MRTPI MCD BSc (hons)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M2325/W/24/3338061

**Primrose Cottage, Singleton Road, Weeton With Preese, Lancashire
PR4 3PA**

- 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 Mrs Janet Graham against the decision of Fylde Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/0394.
 - The development proposed is for a dry storage building for logs and bedding straw.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. On the application form the appellant has indicated that works have started on the proposal, but not finished. During my site visit I observed a partially constructed building. Although sections of the building have been constructed, I will refer to the proposal as a proposed building throughout my decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - whether the proposal complies with the spatial strategy set out within the development plan.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is located within a field to the rear of Primrose Cottage. The field accommodates a track and a stable building. The field is bordered by tall trees on three sides and opens to the north/west to provide long distance views of open fields. The largely undeveloped field, mature trees and views to the wider countryside create a rural, verdant character on the edge of Weeton with Preese. The site is part of the transition between the village and the countryside.
5. The proposed building would be modest in scale and would include a flat roof, which would reduce the height of the building. However, it would be brick-built with timber cladding and would include a significant amount of glazing in the west elevation. The proposed building would have a domestic appearance, which would appear at odds with its use as a dry store and with the wider rural character.

6. Moreover, the proposed building would be sited next to the track but toward the middle of the site. This would extend built development into the open part of the field and would not relate to the existing buildings within the field. The siting of the proposed building and introduction of built development, within the open part of the field, would be harmful to its verdant character.
7. The proposed building would be short, on private land, and well-screened from public areas. Nonetheless, the design of the proposed building is still an important consideration. Even if a development is not in public view, it does not justify a design which does not reflect the character and appearance of an area.
8. I conclude that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would be contrary to Policies GD4, GD7 and ENV1 of the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 (incorporating Partial Review), December 2021 (LP). These policies indicate that development will be expected to be sympathetic to surrounding land uses; take the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the character of the area; and development will have regard to its visual impact, amongst other matters.
9. Furthermore, it would be contrary to paragraphs 88, 135 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These paragraphs indicate planning decisions should enable sustainable growth in rural areas through beautiful new buildings; ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character; and contribute to the natural environment by recognising the intrinsic beauty of the countryside.

Spatial strategy

10. The appeal site is in the 'Countryside' as designated by the LP. Policy GD4 of the LP sets out several circumstances where development in the countryside would be permitted. Given the nature of the proposal, it could only reasonably conform with exceptions a) and d), set out within the policy.
11. Exception a) specifies that development will be permitted where a building is needed for the purposes of agriculture, horticulture, or forestry, or other uses appropriate to a rural area, subject to it being sensitive to its surroundings, amongst other matters. The proposed use of the building as dry storage for logs and bedding straw would meet this exception. However, for the reasons outlined above, the proposal would not be sensitive to its surroundings. Therefore, the proposal would fail to comply with exception a).
12. Exception d) specifies development that is essentially needed for the continuation of an existing enterprise, facility or operation, subject to it not harming the character of the surrounding countryside, will be permitted.
13. Based on the evidence, the lawful use of the field is as a paddock area. However, I acknowledge the evidence demonstrating that the appellant supplies logs to people throughout the year. Moreover, I note there is a general need for secure storage to prevent crime in rural areas. Therefore, the use of the building for dry storage could be justified. Nonetheless, there is no substantive evidence explaining why the need for additional storage has arisen and why it is required to ensure the continuation of the existing enterprise. Also, given the scale of the proposal, it is not clear how a modest increase in storage capacity would ensure the existing enterprise's ongoing viability.

14. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated that the development is essentially needed for the continuation of an existing enterprise. Furthermore, it would be harmful to the character of the surrounding countryside, for the reasons given above. Therefore, the proposal would fail to comply with exception d).
15. Overall, the proposal would not comply with the spatial strategy set out within the development plan. The proposal would be contrary to LP Policy GD4, for the reasons given above, and to paragraph 88 of the Framework, which indicates that planning decisions should enable the sustainable expansion of businesses in rural areas, through well-designed new buildings.

Conclusion

16. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Hobbs

INSPECTOR