



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2024

by J Pearce MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/W/24/3343318

**A120 Veterinary Hospital, Standon Road, Little Hadham, Hertfordshire
SG11 2DF**

- 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 & Mrs Ali against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/24/0059/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of redundant storage buildings, timber apex shed and concrete walls. Erection of new single storey buildings containing workshops (use class E(g)), together with the provision of new parking spaces and 4 EV charging points.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. In Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the one given on the original application form.
3. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024 and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The parts of the Framework most relevant to the appeal have not substantively changed from the previous version. As a result, I consider that there is no requirement for me to seek further submissions in respect of these matters, and I am satisfied that no party's interests would be prejudiced by taking this approach. Where references are made to paragraph numbers of the Framework, these are references to the most recent version.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for the proposed development having regard to development plan policy and the accessibility of the site.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a group of buildings accessed from the A120. The buildings at the site include those used for a veterinary centre and dog groomers with further buildings the side of the veterinary centre. The site is

outside of the settlement of Little Hadham and is designated by the East Herts District Plan 2018 (DP) as being within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

6. The proposal is for the erection of two buildings to accommodate four units to be used for workshop purposes following the demolition of the existing buildings. Policy GBR2 of the DP seeks to maintain the Rural Area as a valued countryside resource and sets out the type of development that will be permitted. This includes new employment generating uses where they are sustainably located, in accordance with Policy ED2.
7. Policy ED2 of the DP supports proposals that create new employment generating uses where they are appropriately and sustainably located. In addition, Policy ED1 provision of new employment uses will be supported in principle, where they are in a suitable location where access can be achieved by a choice of sustainable transport. Furthermore, Policy TRA1 requires that development proposals should primarily be located in places which enable sustainable journeys to be made to key services and facilities to help aid carbon emission reduction.
8. The site is detached from the nearest settlement of Little Hadham, which is accessed from the site via the A120. The appellant states that the closest bus stops to the site are located 1200 metres away from the site within Little Hadham. The bus stops are provided with relatively infrequent services to larger settlements, including Hertford and Bishop's Stortford. The A120 is heavily trafficked and is subject to a 60mph speed limit. Moreover, the A120 has no dedicated footpath or cycleway and there is no street lighting. Consequently, given the distance to the bus stops from the site, the inconvenience of the walking and cycling route and the infrequent services, it is not realistic to expect that users of the appeal site would travel by bus whilst the walking and cycling routes would not offer attractive alternatives to the private car.
9. The submitted Transport Technical Note¹ (TTN) forecasts that the proposal would be likely to generate 19 trips per day. While this is a limited amount of vehicle movements, it does not demonstrate that the site is a suitable location for the proposal having regard to the need to locate development at sites that offer a choice of transport options. Moreover, a wide range of users could potentially occupy the buildings if this development were permitted, and different types of businesses or enterprises would likely result in varying levels of associated traffic generation. Given that eight car parking spaces are proposed, I cannot conclude that the proposal would not result in a significant number of vehicle movements to and from the site.
10. The Framework expects planning decisions to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas. Paragraph 89 of the Framework recognises that sites to meet local business needs in rural areas may have to be found in locations that are not well served by public transport. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that there is a local need for workshop floorspace to be located on the appeal site that cannot be met in locations which are well served by public transport.
11. My attention has been drawn to the planning permission granted under application reference 3/23/1985/FUL for the demolition of an agricultural barn

¹ Dated November 2023, prepared by EAS.

and erection of a replacement building to be used for use Class B8 at the site. While I have been presented with only limited details of this scheme, I note that that development was for a specified business where the Council could consider the precise nature of the proposal, including the number of vehicle movements and employment benefits.

12. The appellant has suggested that a condition could be included that requires the Council to agree to any future occupiers or requires future business occupiers to provide a Travel Plan. However, such a condition would not alter the accessibility of the site and would not make the proposal acceptable in planning terms. Accordingly, it would not meet the tests set out in Paragraph 57 of the Framework.
13. I conclude that the site would not be a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to development plan policy and the accessibility of the site. The development therefore conflicts with Policies GBR2, ED1, ED2 and TRA1 of the DP, as set out above.

Other Matters

14. The proposal would contribute to the rural economy through the potential for employment creation. However, there is no definitive evidence before me that demonstrates the level of employment that would be created by the proposal. Given that the proposal is for a small number of workshops, the economic benefits of the scheme would be unlikely to be significant.
15. The proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area and would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In addition, the proposal could provide increase biodiversity and the buildings may encourage energy efficiency. Nevertheless, these would not outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

16. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

J Pearce

INSPECTOR