



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 December 2024

by Robert Naylor BSc (Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 JANUARY 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J2210/W/24/3350682

Dene Meadows Duckpit Road, Waltham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 5QE

- 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 David Waller against the decision of Canterbury City Council.
 - The application Ref is CA/24/10007.
 - The development proposed is described as the erection of agricultural building.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. There are no changes to the natural environment section that are material to the scheme before me, thus no further comments were sought by parties. Consequently, I have determined the appeal having regard to the revised Framework, and any references are to this version.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed agricultural building on the landscape and scenic beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape and the designated Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV).

Reasons

Kent Downs National Landscape and AHLV

4. Paragraph 189 of the Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which has the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations. It continues, that the scale and extent of development should be limited to avoid or minimise adverse impacts in these areas. Policies LB1 and LB2 of the Canterbury District Local Plan (CDLP), adopted July 2017, also seek to conserve and enhance the Kent Downs National Landscape and the AHLV and avoid significant adverse impact on their natural beauty.
5. The Kent Downs National Landscape is made up of diverse special characteristics and qualities, which are set out in the Kent Downs AONB¹ Management Plan 2021 – 2026. The appeal site is located within the East Kent Downs Landscape

¹ On 22 November 2023, all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales became National Landscapes.

Character Area sub-area². The landscape character assessment identifies the key characteristics of this area as one of a relatively tranquil part of the Kent Downs National Landscape, with a strongly rural feel. Views are often linear and channelled by landform, with the area being sparsely populated and remote, with landscapes of long, rolling valleys and widely scattered farms.

6. The appeal site consists of a parcel of land close to a small cluster of existing agricultural buildings within an undulating rural setting. The site is accessed via a track that leads west from Duckpit Way and is bounded to the south by a well-established treed area. There are currently various structures, containers, agricultural machinery and other paraphernalia at the appeal site spreading westwards along the boundary of the site, away from the existing main agricultural buildings.
7. At approximately 12m in width, 24m in length and with an eave's height of 3.6m the proposal would be a large agricultural building, in excess of the existing buildings at the site. Furthermore, despite having open elevations, it would appear distinctly developed as there would be a considerable expanse of roofing consisting of profiled steel sheeting.
8. The appellant indicates that the proposal would provide much needed storage space within which to accommodate some of the aforementioned agricultural machinery and items. Nevertheless, I have been presented with limited information in respect to whether there is any increased need for the scale of the agricultural building proposed, or why the existing facilities and structures could not be utilised to accommodate the storage requirements proposed here. As such, there is no compelling evidence as to why such a large structure is required to store the agricultural items for a farm holding of this size.
9. The appeal site occupies a position that is visible from Duckpit Way and other public vantage points including footpaths CB397 and CB441, to the east and the north of the site, respectively. The current visual impact of the low-level and transitory agricultural items, often associated within such a setting, are minimal. However, the proposal would provide an increased quantum of built development, located away from the existing cluster of farm buildings, thus increasing visual harm through the sprawl of development in this area. This would be a significant shift in the scale and degree of permanent development found within the surrounding open and relatively undeveloped landscape, to the detriment of the rural landscape and its scenic beauty.
10. I acknowledge that the proposal would be located amongst a tree lined backdrop and would have a functional appearance representative of the agricultural feel of the area. The appellant further indicates that supplementary planting is envisaged at the site. Nevertheless, despite its sensitive positioning, the scale of the proposal would be conspicuous in appearance, and furthermore any additional planting would take time to become established, where it would afford the significant structure any modicum of screening. Consequently, the provision of the large building would be at odds with the character of the area, and thus would significantly diminish the existing special qualities which positively contribute to this part of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

² Landscape Character Assessment Update of the Kent Downs AONB (2020)

11. The appellant refers to similar developments at adjoining sites, and I noted at the site visit other agricultural holdings which were visible from the appeal site. However, I have been supplied with limited information in respect to the planning history or the planning context associated with these properties, as such it is unclear whether these schemes are directly comparable. Nevertheless, I have assessed the proposal on its own merits having regard to all of the evidence which is before me now.
12. The appellant also highlights that the scheme would avoid harm to biodiversity and seeks to restore or create semi-natural habitats and ecological networks. I have again been presented with limited information regarding these matters, and in any event, this would be an expectation of any development such that these matters do not weigh in favour of the proposal.
13. In view of the above, I conclude that the scheme would conflict with Policies SP1, SP4, DBE3, LB1 and LB2 of the CDLP, which collectively seek, amongst other things, to ensure that development integrates with the existing natural features, strengthening local distinctiveness and character, whilst conserving and enhancing landscape character and the special qualities of the Kent Downs National Landscape and the AHLV.
14. The scheme also conflicts with paragraphs 135 and 189 of the Framework which collectively seek, amongst other things, development that is sympathetic to local landscape character; and planning decisions that contribute to and enhance the local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Conclusion

15. Taking all of the above into account, the proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no other material considerations to indicate that my decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
16. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Naylor

INSPECTOR