



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2025

by **B Astley-Serougi BA(Hons) LLM MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/W/24/3345766

Waldringfield Golf Club, The Clubhouse, Newbourne Road, Waldringfield, Suffolk IP12 4PT

- 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 R Shipp of M & C Engineering against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/23/4619/FUL.
 - The development proposed is change of use of part land of former golf clubhouse to form car sales area & detached portakabin.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was issued on 12 December 2024. Whilst some paragraph numbers have changed, the relevant paragraphs and parts of paragraphs identified as directly affecting this case have not been amended. Therefore, in this case it has not been necessary to consult the parties on the revised Framework.
3. The application form states that the development was completed in November 2022. I saw during my site visit that the change of use had taken place as well as the construction of the detached portakabin. This accords with the plans before me. I have therefore considered that the development has already taken place, as did the Council.
4. The description of development on the application form refers to the development as 'proposed'. I have removed words not in relation to acts of development.

Main Issues

5. The main issue is whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the development having regard to the Council's spatial strategy and its approach to development in the countryside.

Reasons

6. There is no dispute between the parties that the site is in the countryside for planning purposes. Policy SCLP3.2 of the SCLP seeks to direct development to existing settlements and Policy SCLP3.3 outlines defined boundaries within which development is acceptable in principle.

7. The appeal site does not fall within any settlement boundary. Similarly the site does not fall within the boundary of a neighbourhood plan, consequently there is no support for the appeal scheme under Policy SCLP4.1 of the SCLP.
8. Policy SCLP 4.5 of the SCLP supports the reuse of rural buildings and farm diversification. However, the use of the site for car sales does not fall into these categories. Whilst the adjacent land is in employment use, the Council say that the appeal site has not been allocated or identified for employment uses.
9. The appellants say that they accept that the new use of the site 'does not fit directly with the identified policies that it has been determined against'. This accords with my findings above. Their position is that there would be no material harm arising from the development.
10. The appeal site was once part of Waldringfield Golf Course which covered a much larger area. There are some employment uses in the wider area including the small industrial site, Chapel Works. The site could also be regarded as previously developed land.
11. The Council cites concerns about access by car transporters as a further reason why the car sales use would be more appropriately located in accordance with its planning policies in a settlement or on an existing employment site. However, in this respect given the lack of objection by the local highway authority and my observations on site, I am satisfied that the site can be adequately serviced.
12. Bringing all of these points together, whilst the use may not be harmful in terms of the site context, it would nevertheless undermine the Council's spatial strategy which amounts to planning harm. Furthermore, the evidence provided by the appellant does not demonstrate why the use could not be accommodated in accordance with the Council's spatial strategy.
13. In conclusion, the appeal site is not a suitable location for the development having regard to the Council's spatial strategy and its approach to development in the countryside. Therefore, the development conflicts with Policies SCLP3.2, SCLP3.3, SCLP4.1 and SCLP 4.5 of the SCLP insofar as they seek to ensure, amongst other things, that proposals for new employment are in suitable locations.

Other Matters

14. In 2023, designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England and Wales became 'National Landscapes'. The appeal site falls within the Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heath National Landscape (SECHNL).
15. Paragraph 189 of the Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 requires that relevant authorities must now 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. This replaces the previous duty on relevant authorities to 'have regard to' their statutory purposes. I have a statutory duty to consider whether the appeal scheme would further the statutory purposes of the SECHNL. There is limited development associated with the appeal scheme and consequently it does not result in an adverse impact on the SECHNL.

Conclusion

16. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

B Astley-Serougi

INSPECTOR