



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 February 2025

by Mr S Rennie BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1625/W/24/3350885

Site Of Former Reliance Works, Downton Road, Bridgend, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 2AT

- 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 Merlin Construction Ltd, against the decision of Stroud District Council.
 - The application Ref is S.24/0136/FUL.
 - The development proposed is an industrial unit.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Appellant has submitted amended plans with this appeal. However, the amendments would be a significant change from that before the Council at determination of the planning application. Although there are some similarities, there are many substantial differences. It would be inappropriate to accept such substantial differences, as it effectively amounts to a different proposal. Furthermore, there has been no re-consultation on the amended plans. This could deprive those who should have been consulted on the changed development of the opportunity of such consultation. It is acknowledged that local residents have been consulted on the appeal, but they would not have been aware necessarily of the amended plans and could have reasonably assumed the proposals were as before the Council at planning application stage.
3. For these reasons, I have considered the original plans which the Council determined the planning application on, for this appeal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed industrial building on the character and appearance of the area;
 - Whether the proposal allows for safe and suitable access for all users, including for larger vehicles; and whether adequate parking provision would be incorporated;
 - The potential for noise from the proposed development to effect neighbour amenities.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The proposed industrial building would essentially be a rectangular block taking up much of the site. It would have a shallow pitched roof and a typical industrial appearance.
6. The site has industrial areas to the east, but is otherwise in a residential area. It is also in a prominent position, adjacent to Downton Road, which appears to be the main road through this Bridgend area, linking Bristol Road to the north with other villages and countryside areas to the south of Bridgend.
7. The proposed building would not appear as an industrial building set within an industrial area. It visually relates more to the adjacent houses, with the river close to the south. As such, the prominence of the site makes it more visually sensitive for development.
8. In this case, the basic large block approach to the design would appear oppressive in this setting, whilst also being incongruous in the context of the adjacent dwellings. The design does not incorporate any substantive variation in the roof form or on the elevations. Furthermore, the substantial size and footprint of the building as proposed within the site would not allow for much landscaping opportunity to help screen or soften the visual impact of it. This is an indicator of the proposed building being cramped on the plot.
9. I acknowledge that there have been previous consented industrial developments, which may have had similarities to that proposed with this appeal. However, I have considered the proposal on its merits and considered the issues based on the evidence before me. I also understand that the previous consent has lapsed.
10. It is recognised that an industrial unit was previously on the site, though from the evidence it was of a different design and scale to that proposed. It was built many years ago and did not necessarily have the same surroundings and issues to consider at that time. It was also demolished several years ago, with the site currently clear of development. As such, this does not set a precedent for the proposed building.
11. For these reasons, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to policy CP14 of the Stroud Local Plan. This policy requires that development be of an appropriate design and appearance, which integrates and is respectful of the surroundings, amongst other things.
12. There are some listed buildings and a Conservation Area near to the site, but as the Council set out, the proposed development would not harm the setting of these heritage assets.

Highway Safety

13. The site is accessed off a private access road close to the junction with Downton Road. With the originally submitted proposals there were not sufficient levels of detail provided that demonstrate that the access and visibility splays are sufficient to support an industrial use, which could include larger vehicles such as HGVs. These details are needed to ensure that highway safety is maintained as a suitable level.

14. A further issue is the tight and narrow parking areas, which appears that it may mean that vehicles would need to reverse out of the site, particularly on the eastern side, which could have adverse highway safety implications. There is also a lack of sufficient space for HGVs or for loading areas, typically required to serve industrial units. Cycle space parking has also not been clearly provided. This could result in inappropriate parking, maybe by HGVs for example, outside of the site on adjacent roads, which could have adverse highway safety consequences.
15. I understand that there may not have been HGV parking for the previous Reliance factory, but that was an old building. The proposed development should allow for modern levels of parking and HGV use.
16. Based on the amended plans the Highways Authority stated that the industrial units would likely generate approximately 9-10 two-way trips, which would not be significant enough to warrant concern on the impact on the surrounding wider highway network. From the evidence before me, this should also apply to the original proposed scheme, with there not likely to be any adverse significant impact to the highway network through trip generation.
17. Nonetheless, due to the lack of visibility information and inadequate parking provision the proposal could have adverse highway safety impacts, thereby being contrary to policy CP13 of the Stroud Local Plan. This policy requires development to provide appropriate vehicular parking and not be detrimental to and, where possible, enhance road safety, amongst other things.

Noise Pollution

18. The Applicant has submitted a Plant Noise Assessment by Aran Acoustics. However, this has been based on the amended plans not being considered with this appeal. The layout of the original plans differ from that amended. Therefore, the results of the Noise Assessment may have been different if it was undertaken based on the original plans. As such, I cannot give much weight to the conclusions of this report.
19. There are dwellings close to the proposed industrial building, such as at No 11 Abbots Way. A noise assessment based on the original plans is necessary to demonstrate that noise would not be at an unacceptable level for adjacent house occupiers.
20. Without this issue adequately assessed it has not been demonstrated that there would not be a noise issue as a result of the proposed industrial development adjacent to dwellings. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies CP14 and ES3 of the Stroud Local Plan. These policies require that development would have no unacceptable adverse effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupants and that there should not be an unacceptable level of noise generated, amongst other things. Limiting hours of operation or other similar conditions imposed would not be sufficient as excessive levels of noise could cause an issue in the daytime also, if neighbouring occupiers are at home at these times.

Planning Balance

21. The proposal would make an efficient use of previously developed land, providing an economic boost through job creation for example. However, all benefits are outweighed by the adverse visual impact to the character and appearance of the

area, the highway safety issues and the potential for significant noise pollution. This means that the proposal is contrary to the aforementioned policies of the Local Plan. This indicates that the proposed development should be refused.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

Mr S Rennie

INSPECTOR