



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 June 2025

by **Samuel Watson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/24/3354735

Upper Haselor Farm, Haselor Lane, Worcestershire WR11 2QZ

- 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 Phil Williams against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref is W/24/00634/FUL.
 - The development proposed is a change of use for the conversion of an existing agricultural building to support a B8 storage use together with engineering works and landscaping to create an associated area of hardstanding for open storage and vehicle circulation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. At the time of my visit the development had already started. The appeal therefore seeks retrospective permission for the development, and I have determined the appeal accordingly. I have removed the phrase “retrospective” from the description in the header above as it is not a description of development.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and landscape.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a former paddock, barn and a yard area associated with the wider farm. At the time of my site visit there were food trucks and trailers within the yard and, within the former paddock, processing equipment. I understand this machinery to be waste balers and compactors. The former paddock has been levelled and a loose surfacing material has been laid out. The surrounding area is predominantly characterised by fields and orchards with only very sporadic development. This development is largely made up of agricultural buildings and residential dwellings. I did, however, note during my site visit that some former agricultural buildings within the area had been converted for other purposes.
5. The area containing and surrounding the appeal site is identified as Village Farmlands with Orchards. This landscape type is described as a gently undulating, agricultural landscape made up of fields, with a focus on orchards on southern slopes. The Council, through their Landscape Character Assessment seeks to conserve and restore the traditional orchards, hedgerows and field margins characteristic of the area.

6. The hardstanding and changes to the land levels of the former paddock do not reflect, and are not sympathetic to, the surrounding landscape. The loss of the slope and the use of hardstanding means that instead, it is an incongruous feature that appears more akin to plots typically found in and around industrial estates and business parks. Whilst this area of hardstanding is relatively small compared to the surrounding landscape, it is nevertheless detrimental to its appearance. This harm is exacerbated by the storage of machinery and plant across the former paddock area. Whilst at the time of my visit there were only a few examples present at the time of my visit, I have no reason to believe that this area could not be further filled. Moreover, the units present at the time of my visit were large and prominent features that did not present an agricultural appearance characteristic of the surrounding area.
7. I am mindful that the trees and hedgerows surrounding the site would go some way to soften the appearance of the site in views. The existing planting cannot be relied upon to block views of the stored equipment as they could be cut, removed or die back. Moreover, the equipment stored at the time of my visit was visible above the height of the hedgerows. I cannot ascertain from the submissions before me that the proposed planting would be effective in screening the development and, even if so, it would take some significant period of time to mature sufficiently to provide screening.
8. The additional storage within the yard area appeared to be distinct from that within the former paddock. As noted above, at the time of my visit there were a number of vans and trailers that had been converted to serve food. The yard is screened from distant views by two barns and the courtyard of buildings that surround the farmhouse itself. Although the storage of this type of vehicle is not typical of a farm, its screened location and small scale mean that its effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area is not unacceptable. Moreover, I am mindful that this yard area could have been formerly used for the parking of agricultural vehicles as part of an agricultural holding.
9. Similarly, the use of the barns for the storage of machinery and plant in association with the waste equipment provider business would not affect the character and appearance of the wider area and landscape.
10. The development has not, by way of its use of hardstanding, changes to land levels, and the storage of large equipment, protected the character and appearance of the surrounding area and landscape. The development therefore conflicts with Policies SWDP2, SWDP8, SWDP21 and SWDP25 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (the DP). These policies collectively, and amongst other matters, require developments to be of a high quality design that is appropriate in scale and type so as to protect or enhance the surrounding landscape and key features. The proposal would also conflict with Section 15, including Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework which similarly seeks to protect valued landscapes and appreciate their intrinsic character and beauty.

Other Matters

11. There is some disagreement between the parties as to whether the proposal would generate employment or only move existing employment from outside the district.

However, even if the new employment was accepted, its contribution towards the local economy would be very limited.

12. The appellant has raised that, as a result of the development there would be no harm to heritage assets, the living conditions of neighbours, highway safety, protected species or flood risk. While this may be the case, a lack of harm is not a benefit in itself and this has not, therefore, been determinative in my considerations.
13. A recent permission for a storage use adjacent to the appeal site has been brought to my attention (ref: W/24/02461/FUL). Although similar, the proposal would primarily make use of existing buildings with a more compact outside area being additionally used for access and storage. Moreover, I have not been provided with the full details and facts of this decision. Whilst other planning and appeal decisions are capable of being material considerations, all decisions turn on their own particular circumstances based on the facts and evidence before those decision-makers at the time. Therefore, I cannot make any meaningful comparisons to the appeal scheme before me, which I must consider on its own merits.

Conclusion

14. The development harms the character and appearance of the surrounding area and landscape, and conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Samuel Watson

INSPECTOR