



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2025

by A Phillips MPlan BA CertHE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/W/25/3371409

Land to the west of Old Road, Breadwell, Pattiswick, Braintree CM77 8BJ

- 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 Christopher Hill against the decision of Braintree District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01181/FUL.
 - The development proposed is for the siting of 12 metal storage containers and change of use of land from agriculture to Class B8 (storage) use as a rural diversification initiative.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development as set out in the planning application form includes the term 'retrospective'. As this is not an act of development I have omitted it. However, I noted all 12 metal storage containers were on the site at the time of my site visit.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

4. The site while located between dwellings to the north and south, the character of the area is predominantly defined by the fields to east and west. There were also a range of agricultural buildings in the nearby vicinity of the site, including silo/tank buildings directly adjacent the site.
5. The proposal for 12 storage containers on existing hardstanding are of no architectural merit, nor are they typical of agricultural buildings. While the containers are set back and are only visible for a small distance, they fill a visual gap that connects the public realm to the wider countryside.
6. The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (Framework) paragraph 88 states that planning decisions should enable 'the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses'.
7. Policy LPP7 of the Braintree District Council Local Plan 2013-2033 Adopted February 2021 (Local Plan) states that small scale enterprises are allowed in the countryside, though limits this to reuse and conversion of existing buildings. It is noted that this policy is to allow farm diversification, which includes new income streams.

8. It is noted that the Council has not refused the application on the grounds of principle and on this basis accepts that this proposal is a rural enterprise linked to a farm, though has weighed the harm to rural character to be greater than the economic/public benefits. Though the Council's appeal statement places greater emphasis that the proposal does not constitute farm diversification. On this element, I conclude that the proposal would involve diversification for a farm unit as it creates an additional income stream to support the farm. However, given the limited evidence provided by the appellant only limited weight in favour of the proposal is given. The main issue remains does the harm to character and appearance of the countryside outweigh this diversification.
9. The storage containers are of a utilitarian design and that they infill a visual gap that allows the wider countryside to be experienced while travelling along this very rural road. While it is noted that farm machinery and materials would likely have been stored on this hardstanding, these would both be temporary and expected in an area defined by farming practices.
10. The proposal by virtue of its scale and design would lead to significant harm to rural character in the immediate local area, while the harm to the wider rural character would be limited.
11. The use of landscaping conditions would unlikely be able to obscure the proposal from the road, given that vehicular access would likely be needed to reach the containers. In addition, the proposal could be in situ significantly longer than any landscaping could be reasonably conditioned to remain and landscaping should generally be used to help blend development into the locality, not hide development. The use of granting the development on a temporary basis, does not overcome the harm to the rural character and there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that the farm economically only requires this development for a short period of time.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the local rural area. On this basis the proposal does not comply with policies SP1, SP7, LLP1, LLP7, LPP52, LLP63 and LPP67 of the Local Plan that in their entirety require proposals to be of high architectural quality, preserve or enhance the existing character of the area, protection of intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and while allowing conversion of existing buildings ensuring there is no harm to the character of the countryside.
13. The Council refused the development on policy LLP66 of the Local Plan. Following clarification from the Council, as well as the refusal only relates to character and appearance, this policy refers to biodiversity that is not relevant to the main issue.

Conclusion

14. 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.

A Phillips

INSPECTOR