
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 October 2018

by Felicity Thompson BA(Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th December 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/M2325/W/18/3205916

**Preese Hall Farm, extension of Todderstaff Road, Weeton with Preese
PR4 3HT**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr John Loftus against the decision of Fylde Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 17/0591, dated 13 July 2017, was refused by notice dated 29 January 2018.
 - The development proposed is described as retrospective change of use of agricultural land for the siting of B8 storage containers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the appeal was submitted the Government has published a new National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Both main parties were given an opportunity to comment on any relevant implications for the appeal, and any comments received have been taken into account.
3. I am aware that the policies from the Fylde Borough Local Plan As Altered (October 2005) referred to by the Council in their decision notice, have been superseded by policies from the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 which was adopted since the appeal was submitted. The Council have clarified that the relevant policies in respect of the development are policies GD4 and GD7. The appellant was given an opportunity to comment on the new policies but no comments have been received.
4. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the original planning application form however; I note the Council's decision notice and Section E of the appellants appeal form include reference to the siting of 100 storage containers.
5. The use has been implemented and therefore I have determined the appeal on the basis of the submitted plans and what I observed on site.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site is accessed via a private road and sits in a rural landscape, surrounded to the north, west and south, beyond the adjacent buildings, by agricultural land. The appellant has referred to the Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment (LLCA) and acknowledges that the site makes a positive contribution to the landscape character types within which it falls. Notwithstanding the LLCA, there is no dispute that the land falls within the defined countryside which Policy GD4 of the Fylde Council Local Plan to 2032 seeks to protect.
8. The site consists of an area of land about 0.35 hectares and is sited immediately adjacent to substantial former agricultural buildings, which I understand are in use for B2 and B8 purposes. Nevertheless these buildings retain their appearance as agricultural buildings and as such visually conform to what would be expected to be seen in a rural, agricultural landscape. To the east of the site there appears to be an open storage use in operation, which includes the storage of caravans and vehicles. However, I understand that this is subject to an on-going enforcement investigation by the Council.
9. The containers have an industrial appearance which when seen in large numbers have an incongruous appearance which is significantly at odds with their rural surroundings. Whilst I appreciate that wider public views of the site are limited and the visual impact of the containers is reasonably localised in its extent, they nevertheless represent a harmful intrusion which causes harm to the character and appearance of this countryside location. As such the development is contrary to policies GD4 and GD7 of the Fylde Council Local Plan to 2032 which together seek to protect the intrinsic value and rural character of the countryside and avoid demonstrable harm to the visual amenities of the local area by requiring development to be sympathetic to and avoiding demonstrable harm to the visual amenities of the local area. It would also conflict with the aims of the Framework to enhance the natural and local environment.
10. I have had regard to the planning history of the site and nearby buildings and am aware that the Council have permitted a number of diversification schemes, including those referred to above. Despite comments made by the appellant, I have little evidence before me which demonstrates that the land subject of the appeal was in use for non-agricultural related uses prior to the current use. Furthermore, nothing in the planning history or based on my site observations lends support to the appeal scheme.
11. The appellant considers the land to be typical and unremarkable grassland and states that it was prone to flooding and drainage problems and was unusable for agricultural land. Notwithstanding this and the Council's previous approval of diversification schemes, it does not automatically follow that permission should be granted for any diversification scheme at the expense of protecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Felicity Thompson

INSPECTOR