



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2022

by Samuel Watson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/22/3296748

Land Adjacent to The Smithy, Edstaston, Wem SY4 5RG

- 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 Danny Rogerson against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 21/05768/FUL, dated 7 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is the change of use to field to horse paddock, formation of a new access, erection of stabling for horses, installation of a packaged sewage treatment plant and other associated external works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A recent permission¹ has been granted on site for a similar, albeit smaller, scheme. This includes the conversion of the field for an equestrian use and the erection of a pair of stables served by a simple track. Although smaller, as the proposal would be very similar and achieve a similar outcome, I find that there is more than a theoretical possibility of this scheme being carried out. As such it is a fallback position and I have been mindful of it in my considerations below.
3. As part of the above permitted scheme, further information was submitted regarding the suitability of the land for agricultural and mineral extraction purposes. These submissions have satisfied the Council's concerns and consequently those parts of the reason for refusal have been withdrawn.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site is an open field set within a rural location primarily characterised by agricultural fields interspersed with sporadic development and wooded areas. I noted a number of dwellings that were immediately adjacent, or near, to the appeal site. At the time of my site visit it appeared that the field was being levelled. Nevertheless, it retained a relatively agricultural character

¹ 22/01825/FUL

in keeping with its surroundings. The proposal would include the erection of four L-shaped stables within the middle of the field, accessed via a gravel track with a passing area and large turning head.

6. The proposed change of use from an agricultural field to a use associated with equestrian activities would not significantly, or unacceptably, alter the character of the field. Consequently, I find that the change of use would be appropriate for a rural location, and I note that the Council found similarly in this regard.
7. However, as noted above the proposal includes a level of built development. The four proposed stable blocks would be a significant feature within the field, especially given their relatively central location in close proximity to the highway. Although stables are typical of rural areas the scale of the development in relation to the small field, is excessive and erodes the overall open and undeveloped character of the field and its contribution to the surrounding area. This is further exacerbated by the large areas of hardstanding associated with the access, parking spaces and turning head.
8. The permitted scheme, outlined above, would be set at the rear of the site against a backdrop of trees. Moreover, the scale of the built development is much smaller and the associated track, turning heads and passing areas are less prominent given their style, including the use of reinforced grass. Therefore, whilst the appellant may be permitted to carry out a similar scheme to that before me, the appeal scheme would be more harmful and therefore the fallback position does not justify allowing this scheme.
9. Consequently, the proposal would, given its scale, siting and layout, harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies CS5, CS6, CS16 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy and Policies MD2, MD12 of the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan. These policies collectively, and amongst other matters, require that developments are of a high quality design that respects the local distinctiveness, including the character of the countryside, and are appropriate to their setting. It also conflicts with the design aims of the National Planning Policy Framework including that set out under Paragraph 130 that seeks for developments to be sympathetic to the local character, including landscape setting, and maintain a strong sense of place.

Other Matters

10. I note that the appellant has referred to a number of potential benefits that could arise from the development. These include improvements to highway safety, neighbouring living conditions, the local economy, the well-being of the appellant's family, as well as a reduction in the number of motor vehicle movements associated with the site. I concur that all of these would be benefits, but given that the same benefits would also result from the extant permission outlined above, I afford them very modest weight.

Conclusion

11. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no other material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in

accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Samuel Watson

INSPECTOR