
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2015

by Karen L Ridge LLB (Hons) MTPL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 12 February 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/A/14/2218959

Land at Strawberry Fields Farm, Dorrington, Church Stretton, Shropshire

- 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 D Crow against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref. 14/00022/FUL, dated 2 January 2014 was refused by notice dated 14 April 2014.
 - The development proposed is the erection of an agricultural storage shed.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of an agricultural storage shed on land at Strawberry Fields Farm, Dorrington, Church Stretton, Shropshire, pursuant to planning application Ref. 14/00022/FUL, dated 2 January 2014 and subject to the following conditions:
 - (1) The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
 - (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plan numbered SA14309/01 dated November 2013.
 - (3) Prior to commencement of development details of the colour of the external materials of the agricultural storage shed hereby permitted shall be approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the materials shown on the approved plan and the colours approved by the local planning authority.
 - (4) The building hereby permitted shall be used solely for the purposes of agriculture as defined by section 336 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Procedural matters

2. An application for costs was made by the appellant against the Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the agricultural shed on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a square shaped parcel of land contained within a larger agricultural land holding. The appellant confirms that the site is located within an area identified as Estate Farmlands, characterised by gently rolling lowland and valley floor landscapes, with ordered field patterns in a managed agricultural landscape.
5. The proposed storage shed would be sited a short distance south of an existing agricultural shed which was granted planning permission in 2012 and serves the same agricultural enterprise. The larger holding sits adjacent to the main road and an existing access track winds its way from the road up to an area of hard-standing surrounding the existing building. An earth bund some 2 metres high runs along the road frontage to the larger site, wrapping around to the south of the appeal site. There is some young planting on top of the bund to assist with screening.
6. The Council's delegated report notes that the existing area of hardstanding is much larger than that which was previously approved. It further states that the earth bund was not shown on the plans.
7. At the time that permission was given for the existing shed the farm comprised 73 acres. The appellant confirms that this holding has now increased to some 93 acres and there is a need for a second shed to store farm equipment and machinery. A second shed would allow the machinery to be stored separately from the hay bales and would thus reduce the risk of fire from sparks from machinery igniting hay bales.
8. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2011. CS policies CS5 and CS6 seek, amongst other things, to protect the countryside and ensure that development is appropriate in scale and design. Policy CS13 is supportive of rural enterprise and CS17 seeks to protect and enhance the local character of the natural environment. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that policies should seek to support economic growth in rural areas and to promote the development and diversification of agricultural businesses.
9. Whilst the new shed would have the same footprint as the existing shed, it would have a ridge height of around 8 metres which is some 4 metres less than the existing shed. It would be made of profile sheet cladding with a fibre cement roof and two roller shutter doors. Whilst it would have a utilitarian appearance, it would not be dissimilar to other modern agricultural sheds. The current shed is dark green in colour which assists in assimilating it into this landscape. The colour of the proposed shed could similarly be controlled by condition.
10. With the earth bunds in place the upper parts of the building would remain visible from the A49 road, especially from the southern approach. Without the earth bunds there would be clear views of the new building, together with the existing shed. However, in these views the smaller building would be seen in the foreground with the larger shed behind. From the northern approach both buildings would become visible on leaving the built up area of Dorrington for a short stretch of the A49. To the east of the appeal site is a small body of water with a wooded area and railway line further east which serve to limit longer distance views into the site.

11. Views of the new shed would be fairly localised, predominantly from a small stretch of the A49 passing the site. Even then the shed would be seen as part of a larger agricultural operation. Whilst a second large shed would intensify the built development associated with the farm, but taken together I conclude that the two sheds side by side would not appear incongruous in this managed landscape. As such I conclude that the proposal would not be unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the wider landscape.
12. The Council contend that there is insufficient justification for the building as required by policy CS5. However, to the extent that this policy requires justification for the new shed, this is inconsistent with national policy in the Framework which is more recent. I shall therefore place more weight upon the later national guidance. In any event the appellant has set out the reasons for requiring two separate storage sheds in connection with the growing farm enterprise.
13. For all of the above reasons I conclude that the proposal is in conformity with the local plan and national policies outlined above. The appeal shall be allowed.

Conditions

14. The Council has suggested conditions in the event that I am minded to allow the appeal. In the interests of good planning I shall impose the usual conditions regarding the time limit for commencement of development and requiring that development be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans. The third suggested condition related to the colour and finish of the external materials. I could find no reference to a suggested colour and have therefore amended the condition to ensure that the Council approves the colour of the external materials of the building. Given the purposes for which the shed is sought, it is necessary to limit its use to an agricultural purpose.

Karen L Ridge

INSPECTOR