

Application No: 14/4518C

Location: SOMERFORD PARK FARM, HOLMES CHAPEL ROAD, SOMERFORD, CW12 4SW

Proposal: Retrospective application for retention of a new stable building with ancillary groom's accommodation

Applicant: Simon King

Expiry Date: 26-Dec-2014

REASON FOR REPORT:

The proposal is a major development requiring a Committee decision.

SUMMARY:

It is considered that the principle of the proposed development is not acceptable as the proposal has a harmful impact upon the character of the existing countryside and landscape and is therefore contrary with Local Plan Policies PS8, GR1, GR2, GR4, E5, RC5 and PG5 of the development plan as well as Policies PG5 and SD2 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version and advice within the NPPF. The proposed use of the site is likely to have a minimal impact upon matters relating to highway safety, residential amenity or ecology and therefore the scheme is acceptable in this regard. However, these considerations are insufficient to outweigh the visual harm of the proposals. a recommendation for refusal is made.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE

PROPOSAL:

This application seeks full planning permission for the retention of a new stable building with ancillary groom's accommodation at Somerford Park Farm, Holmes Chapel Road, Somerford. The application is retrospective.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

The application relates to the existing, large equestrian facility, situated on the north eastern side of Holmes Chapel Road, Somerford. The land is designated in the local plan as being

within the Open Countryside. There are residential properties to the west and open countryside to all other directions.

This is an extensive equestrian facility that attracts many visitors to the area. Full planning permission was granted under planning ref; 12/2794C for the erection of a veterinary building. The building has been erected; however, the construction is larger than that shown on the approved plans. Additionally, it is now proposed that the building be used for stables and grooms accommodation rather than as a veterinary practice as originally envisaged.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

Somerford Park Farm has an extensive planning history; however, the most recent and relevant are:

14/1118C - Erection of a stable block comprising 20 no. stables with tack / feed / wash / store areas; bulk straw and chipping storage and a muck room – Approved 23-Apr-2014

12/2794C - Erection of veterinary building – Approved 12-Oct-2012

11/0561C - Erection of a Satellite Stable Block Comprising 20no. Stables with Tack / Feed / Wash / Store Areas; Bulk Straw and Chipping Storage and a Muck Room – Approved 28-Jul-2011

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy:

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Of particular relevance are paragraphs 17 and 28.

Development Plan:

The Development Plan for this area is the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005), which allocates the site within Open Countryside under Policy PS8.

The relevant Saved Policies are: -

- PS8 Open Countryside
- GR1 New Development
- GR2 Design
- GR5 Landscaping
- GR6 Amenity and Health
- GR9 Accessibility, servicing and provision of parking
- RC5 Equestrian Facilities
- NR1 Trees
- E5 Employment Development in the Open Countryside

The relevant saved Local Plan policies are consistent with the NPPF and should be given full weight.

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

PG5 Open Countryside
SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles
SE 1 Design
SE 4 The Landscape
EG 1 Economic Prosperity

CONSULTATIONS:

Highways:

No objection

Environmental Protection:

No objection subject to an informative relating to contaminated land.

Natural England:

No objection

PARISH COUNCIL:

Somerford Parish Council: No comments received at the time of writing this report.

REPRESENTATIONS:

Neighbour notification letters were sent to all adjoining occupants and a site notice erected.

A representation has been made from 1 neighbouring property objecting to this proposal on the following grounds:

- Building is too tall
- Principle of development not acceptable
- Building overshadows objector's property and causes loss of amnity
- Intrusive
- Noise disturbance
- Scale of the development is too large
- Proposal detrimental to local ecology
- Existing floodlighting is not subject of the application

APPRAISAL:

The key issues are:

- Principle of the development
- Design, Siting and Scale
- Amenity
- Highways & Parking
- Ecology

Principle of Development

The site is designated as being within the Open Countryside, where Local Plan Policy PS8 states that development involving facilities for outdoor sport, recreation are acceptable in principle provided that they preserve the openness of the countryside.

Local Plan Policy RC5 deals specifically with proposals for equestrian facilities and states that proposals will be acceptable where they do not adversely affect; ecology; landscape; agricultural land; amenity and provide adequate parking provision and is linked to the bridleway network.

Local Policy E5 allows for the expansion or redevelopment of an existing business, appropriate to a rural area or essential for the continuation of operations which are already on site where there are no suitable existing buildings which could be re-used.

The existing operation is a commercial operation and employs over 35 full time equivalent staff. Whilst a building in this location has previously been accepted as being appropriate in this rural area, it was for much lower building (in terms of its overall height) and therefore the size and scale was much reduced. The building as erected is much more intrusive and it is considered that it does not preserve the openness of the countryside or respect the landscape. This will be explored below.

Additionally, the building was to be used for veterinary purposes and not for stabling or groom's day accommodation which is the use proposed as part of this application. It is important to note that in recent years, the enterprise at Somerford Park Farm has already benefitted from permission to create a number of stables. It is considered that the need for such stabling is not necessary and could be accommodated by the proposal which granted planning permission for the erection of 20. no stables and received approval under planning ref; 14/1118C. As such, the proposal is considered to be at variance with Local Plan Policies PS8, RC5 and E5.

Design, Siting and Scale

The proposed building is of portal framed construction and the general design and style is one that has been found to be acceptable in the vicinity. However, the building occupies a prominent position where it is clearly visible from Holmes Chapel Road. The most significant public views are obtained when approaching the site from the east with the large expanse of light coloured roof prominent. Whilst the approved building would also have been visible, the impact would have been much less owing to its lower height and therefore reduced scale.

Mitigation planting is proposed and would provide some screening benefit although this would take time to achieve and this in itself would also appear stark and intrusive. Further, being deciduous, the planting would have reduced screening benefit in winter.

Overall, the proposal fails to recognise or respect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and is therefore contrary to the advice within the NPPG (para 17) as well as the relevant local plan policies.

Amenity

Policy GR6 requires that new development should not have an unduly detrimental effect on the amenities of nearby residential properties from loss of privacy, loss of sunlight or daylight, visual intrusion, environmental disturbance or pollution and traffic generation access and parking.

The proposed building is sited be in excess of 40 metres distance away from the nearest residential property to the south, referred to as 'The Woodlands'. Owing to this distance, the proposal would not materially harm this neighbour's residential amenity by reason of loss of light, visual intrusion or direct overlooking.

Further, having regard to existing equestrian operations at the site, use of the building would not give rise to harm with regard to noise. The Council's Environmental Protection department has assessed the application and has offered no objection to the proposal. As such, it is not considered that there would be any adverse impacts on residential amenity.

Highways & Parking

Policy GR9 states that proposals for development requiring access, servicing or parking facilities will only be permitted where a number of criteria are satisfied. These include adequate and safe provision for suitable access and egress by vehicles, pedestrians and other road users to a public highway.

The proposal would not lead to any loss of parking spaces and there would be no alteration to the existing access. There would be an adequate level of parking provision within the site and the wider equestrian complex. In the absence of any objection from the Strategic Highways and Transportation manger, the proposal is therefore considered to be in compliance with Policy GR9 of the adopted local plan.

Ecology

The original application (ref; 12/2794C) was supported by an extended phase one habitat survey that was undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced ecological consultant. Given that the previous proposal was found to be acceptable in this regard and given that the building has already been erected, it is not considered that the proposal would materially harm species protected by law. This has been confirmed by the Council's Nature Conservation Officer.

The River Dane Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is nearby the site; however, Natural England does not consider that the development would have any adverse impact on the SSSI. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in ecological terms.

Planning Balance

The proposal is contrary to development plan policies PS8, GR1, GR2, GR5, RC5 and E5 of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005 as well as Policies PG5 and SD2 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and therefore the statutory presumption is against the proposal unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reason:

- 1. The scale, height and massing of the development results in a building which detracts from the openness of the countryside and has an adverse impact on the landscape and the character of the area. It is therefore contrary to the Local Plan Policies PS8, GR1, GR2, GR5, RC5 and E5 of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005 as well as Policies PG5 and SD2 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version and advice within the NPPF.**

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