

Application No: 19/4290C

Location: Land to the west of PEXALL ROAD, BRAMHALL HILL, CONGLETON

Proposal: Reserved matters for access, appearance, landscaping, layout, scale relating to planning application 19/0739C - Outline application for an agricultural workers dwelling (permanent)

Applicant: Mr & Mrs David and Julie Platt

Expiry Date: 06-Dec-2019

SUMMARY:

Outline planning permission was granted for the construction of an agricultural worker's dwelling. This application was approved with all matters reserved. This current application seeks approval for the reserved matters: access, scale, appearance layout and landscaping.

The proposed details for the layout, landscaping and access are acceptable. However the proposed dwelling, as a result of its scale and appearance would appear at odds within its countryside setting and the character of the surrounding built form, and as such, is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE

REASON FOR REFERRAL

The application for outline planning permission was considered at the Northern Planning Committee in June 2019. At that time, members requested any subsequent reserved matters application also be considered by the Northern Planning Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The site lies within the open countryside as identified in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan. The site currently comprises an open field used for grazing and a dirt access track. Planning permission and prior approval have been granted for agricultural buildings on the site.

There are hedgerows along the road boundaries.

There is an existing field access onto Pexall Road.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks reserved matters permission in relation to; access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for an agricultural workers dwelling, granted outline permission under 19/07290C.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

19/0739C – approved subject to conditions - 6 August 2019
Outline application for an agricultural workers dwelling (permanent)

19/0706M – prior approval not required – 5 March 2019
Access track

18/3787C – approved – 26 September 2018
Erection of an agricultural building

18/3072C – prior approval not required – 28 June 2018
Prior notification of agricultural storage building

15/4315M – refused – 18 November 2015
Outline application for the erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling

POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

PG 2 – Settlement Hierarchy
PG 6 – Open Countryside
SD 1 – Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD 2 – Sustainable Development Principles
EG 2 – Rural Economy
SE 1 – Design
SE 3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
SE 4 – The Landscape
SE 5 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
CO 1 – Sustainable Travel and Transport

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (MBLP)

DC6 – Circulation and Access (new development)
DC8 – Landscaping for new developments
DC9 – Tree Protection
DC23 – Green Belt and countryside – permanent agricultural dwellings
NE11 – Habitats

OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019)

CONSULTATIONS EXTERNAL TO PLANNING

Highways - No objections

North Rode Parish Council – Advise that they are pleased to see proposed dwelling would be constructed from Cheshire brick with a slate roof. However, they have concerns regarding the general design and appearance of the dwelling, which is not in keeping with the other simpler traditional farmhouse designs.

Advise a traditional and simpler duo-pitch roof design would be more in keeping with the locality. The significant areas of glazing are also not considered to be in keeping with a traditional farmhouse design/agricultural workers dwelling.

If approved, they recommend permitted development rights should be removed and the dwelling should be subject to the occupancy condition imposed by 19/0739C.

REPRESENTATIONS

None Received

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of development

Outline planning permission 19/0790C established the principle of an agricultural worker's dwelling on the site.

Reserved Matters

Access

MBLP Policy DC6 requires new developments to provide safe and convenient access for vehicles and pedestrians, as well as providing adequate parking and turning for vehicles.

The proposed plans show the new dwelling to use the proposed farm access, approved under prior approval 19/0706M.

Highways have been consulted on the application. They have raised no objection to the proposed access arrangements, confirming that there would be sufficient space on the site to accommodate parking and turning areas.

The provision of the access, parking and turning areas could be controlled by a condition, requiring their provision before occupation.

Scale

CELPs Policy PG 6 deals with the Open Countryside. The key objective of this policy is the preservation of the countryside.

It sets out the types of development, which may be carried out in the open countryside and includes development that is essential for the purposes of agriculture. MBLP policy DC23 sets out the criteria which must be met for permission to be granted for a new dwelling within the countryside.

Planning permission 19/0790C established the principle of a dwelling on the site. However, the impact of the development on the wider countryside needs to be considered and balanced against the needs of the farm, and whether a dwelling of the size proposed is essential to the working of the farm.

The ground floor of the dwelling would provide the following accommodation: kitchen/living room, dining room, lounge, WC, farm office, boot room, pump and downstairs shower room. At first floor there would be four bedrooms, an ensuite and a bathroom. The proposed dwelling would have a floor area of around 180sqm. A detached double garage is also proposed.

The applicant has advised that the proposed dwelling is required to meet the essential need of the established farming enterprise that is being relocated from New Pastures Farm. They advise that the proposed dwelling would provide accommodation commensurate with the role of the farm manager with a young family. However, no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that this is the level of accommodation required to attract a suitably skilled agricultural worker or farm manager.

While MBLP policy DC23 does not specifically refer for a need for the dwelling to be commensurate to the holding, CELPS policy PG 6 does require the development to be essential.

Emerging planning policy RUR 3 from the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) relates to agricultural worker's dwellings. This requires the size and siting of the dwelling to be strictly commensurate with the existing functional need and states that new dwellings should not significantly exceed the gross internal floor space for the intended number of bedrooms. For a four bedroom property, the guideline figure is between 90 and 130sqm.

The supporting information to this draft policy advises that larger dwellings will be more expensive from the outset. If the dwelling is outside of the range affordable by the local workforce, this could undermine the purpose of the restrictive occupancy condition.

As an emerging policy, which has not yet passed examination, it can only be attributed limited weight. It does however give an indication of the direction of travel and set out the reasons why dwellings approved for agricultural workers should be commensurate to the needs of the holding.

The proposed dwelling has a combined internal floor space of around 175sqm, significantly exceeding the figures quoted in the emerging SADPD.

It is not disputed that a family sized dwelling would be needed to attract a skilled worker. However, the proposed dwelling would be sizeable and with its three reception rooms and an ensuite would appear to go beyond what could reasonably be considered as necessary to meet the needs of the holding.

In support of their case, the applicant has put forward a number of appeals, where Inspectors have allowed dwellings of a comparable or larger size than the dwelling currently proposed. Full details of these cases have not been provided. It is not known whether the needs of the applicant's farm are comparable to the cases put forward. In any case, all applications have to be judged on their own merit.

The proposed dwelling would be a sizeable structure, which would be highly visible in its open countryside location. Its scale and height would undermine the open character of the countryside and it would fail to preserve the openness of the countryside. It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed dwelling needs to be of the scale proposed to meet the essential needs of the holding.

As a result of its scale and height, the proposal would fail to comply with the requirements of CELPS policy PG 6.

Appearance

CELPS Policy SE 1 states that development proposals should make a positive contribution to their surroundings. It seeks to ensure design solutions achieve a sense of place by protecting and enhance the quality, distinctiveness and character of settlements.

Amongst other criteria, Policy SD2 of the CELPS also expects all development to contribute positively to an area's character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness in terms of:

- a. Height, scale, form and grouping;
- b. Choice of materials;
- c. External design features;
- d. Massing of development - the balance between built form and green/public spaces;
- e. Green infrastructure; and
- f. Relationship to neighbouring properties, street scene and the wider neighbourhood

This is also reiterated within NPPF paragraph 127, which requires developments to be sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

The application site is surrounded by open fields. Dwellings within the surrounding area appear as incidental features, often surrounded by agricultural buildings as a result of their origins as farmhouses.

These properties have a simple and uncomplicated plan form, predominately rectangular or T' shaped. Materials within the surrounding area are generally Cheshire brick and slate.

The proposed dwelling would take its cues from a more complex, 'H' shaped plan, with asymmetric gables to the front and rear. These gables along with the gable to the single storey wing would give the proposed dwelling a much more prominent and dominating appearance within the surrounding area.

While the design in itself would be unobjectionable in an urban setting, it does not reflect the simpler form of the traditional buildings within the surroundings.

As a result of its appearance, the proposed dwelling would appear as a prominent and alien feature within its open countryside setting. It would fail to reflect the massing and external design features of development within the surrounding area. It would fail to contribute positively to the character and identity of the area and would not be sympathetic to local character or the surrounding built environment. It would fail to comply with CELPS policies SD 2 and SE 1 and NPPF paragraph 127.

Layout

The proposed plans show the proposed dwelling to be located within the northernmost part of the plot, with the detached garage in the southern corner. The proposed layout is considered to be acceptable.

Landscaping (incl trees)

CELPS policy SE 3 relates to biodiversity and geodiversity. It requires all developments to positively contribute to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity. Subject to condition requiring ecological enhancements, the proposal would comply with Policy SE 3.

The applicant has confirmed that none of the existing hedgerows around the site would be removed as part of the proposal. There are no trees either within or adjacent to the site.

The proposal includes a landscape plan, which shows a native hedge. Details have been provided of the species. However, no details have been included regarding maintenance or any planting within the site. In the event of any approval, full details of landscaping could be required by condition.

Other matters

The Council's Nature Conservation Officer was consulted in relation to ecology and advised that provided that no existing hedgerows shall be removed. This will be conditioned in the event of approval.

The site falls within a Flood Zone 1, the lowest category. In the event of approval, a surface water drainage scheme is recommended.

In relation to residential amenity, the site is not close to any existing neighbouring dwellings and as such, would not result in any amenity concerns. Sufficient private amenity space is provided for the future occupiers.

CONCLUSIONS

Outline planning permission was granted for the construction of an agricultural worker's dwelling. This application was approved with all matters reserved. This current application seeks approval for the reserved matters: access, scale, appearance layout and landscaping.

The proposed details for the layout, landscaping and access are acceptable. However the proposed dwelling, as a result of its scale and appearance would appear at odds within its countryside setting. For these reasons, the application is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons;

- 1. The proposed dwelling would be a sizeable structure, which would be highly visible in its open countryside location. Its scale and height would undermine the open character of the countryside and it would fail to preserve the openness of the countryside. It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed dwelling needs to be of the scale proposed to meet the essential needs of the holding. As a result of its scale and height, the proposal would fail to comply with the requirements of Policy PG 6 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy.**
- 2. The appearance of the proposed dwelling would result in a prominent and alien feature within its open countryside setting. It would fail to reflect the massing and external design features of development within the surrounding area. It would fail to contribute positively to the character and identity of the area and would not be sympathetic to local character or the surrounding built environment. It would fail to comply with policies SD 2 and SE 1 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and NPPF paragraph 127.**

In order to give proper effect to the Committee's intent and without changing the substance of its decision, authority is delegated to the Acting Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair (or in their absence the Vice Chair) to correct any technical slip or omission in the resolution, before issue of the decision notice.

