



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 August 2020

by Rachael Pipkin, BA (Hons), MPhil, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/W/20/3253867

Land at Tail Mill, Tail Mill Lane, Merriott, TA16 5PF

- 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 Patrick Quinn against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref: 19/00810/FUL dated 21 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 4 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as '2 no. commercial steel portal frame buildings with the provision for car parking, access and turning areas. The proposed buildings are to provide employment opportunity for SME businesses and to the local residents of Merriott'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Patrick Quinn against South Somerset District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located outside the village of Merriott adjacent to a cluster of development including both housing and commercial uses around Tail Mill. The main part of the appeal site is directly adjacent to an existing large commercial building. It is positioned away from Tail Mill Lane but linked to it by a strip of land through an adjacent open field. Tail Mill Lane links the A356 to the east to the existing development around Tail Mill. It is a country lane, enclosed by low hedgerows and fences broken up by a couple of gated accesses to the surrounding fields and paddocks which contribute to the rural character of the surrounding area.
5. The proposed development would be accessed via a new road off Tail Mill Lane utilising an existing opening within the boundary hedgerow. This would bisect two existing fields to form four irregular parcels of land as the road curves to join the main part of the appeal site. The proposed road would be bunded and

planted to give the road the appearance of a country lane and to provide some screening.

6. The formation of the access road would introduce an urban feature which would appear incongruous cutting across open and undeveloped fields, even if these are of limited quality for agricultural or other purposes. It would be quite separate from the existing development around Tail Mill and the main part of the appeal site which sits comfortably adjacent to an existing commercial building. As such, the proposed road would visually expand the urban form beyond the established developed area.
7. Whilst screened, it would nevertheless be evident from public viewpoints that this is an access road as traffic passes along it, particularly higher sided commercial vehicles that would be associated with the commercial use of the appeal site. This would be harmful to the rural character of the area.
8. I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2015 which requires development to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Other Matters

9. The existing access to the site is through the cluster of residential development and is considered unsuitable due to a blind corner as well as the heavy goods vehicles associated with the site passing in close proximity to the residential uses which may cause conflicts between road users. The appeal scheme proposes that this existing route is stopped up and that all heavy goods vehicles will utilise the new access instead. This would improve highway safety and would be a significant benefit of the scheme.
10. Whilst the highways authority has found the scheme acceptable, the location of the proposed road is however harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, I have been provided with no evidence that this is the only way to provide access to the proposed commercial buildings whilst realising the benefit of the scheme as I note the wider area of land is in the ownership of the appellant. The public benefits arising from the closure of the existing access do not outweigh the harm I have identified.
11. I have been made aware of the appellant's frustrations with the Council in the handling of his planning application. However, this is essentially a procedural matter that does not relate to the planning merits of the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Rachael Pipkin

INSPECTOR