

Item 4h **12/00092/FUL**

Case Officer **Matthew Maule**

Ward **Eccleston And Mawdesley**

Proposal **Retention of an electrical meter building**

Location **High Heys Farm Langton Brow Eccleston ChorleyPR7 5PB**

Applicant **Mr & Mrs Karl Whaite**

Consultation expiry: **22 March 2012**

Application expiry: **2 April 2012**

Proposal

1. This application seeks permission for the retention of an electric meter building at High Heys Farm, Langton Brow, Eccleston. The building is situated approximately 45m to the north east of High Heys Farm house. It is 5m in length and 4.1m in width and has a pitched roof with a ridge and eaves height of 3.2m and 2.1m respectively. The building is faced with concrete blockwork, black corrugated roof sheeting and timber window frames and doors.
2. The electric meter building serves the farmhouse, farm, dog kennels and cattery and also the aeration pumps for the fishing lake.
3. The electric meter building is situated approximately 45m to the north east of High Heys Farm house. High Heys Farm house is a two-storey detached dwelling faced with stone, grey roof tiles and UPVC window frames. To the north west of the electric meter building are three fishing lakes that are within the applicant's ownership, beyond which are open fields. To the west of the electric meter building are agricultural buildings, stables, a kennels and a cattery. To the south, and at a lower level than the electric meter building, is a lake, a detached farm house and a number of agricultural buildings.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that this application is granted retrospective planning approval.

Main Issues

5. The main issues for consideration in respect of this planning application are:
 - Design
 - Impact on the amenity of neighbours
 - Impact on the character and openness of the Green Belt.

Representations

6. One letter of objection has been received. This letter asserts that the building is unnecessarily large and is situated away from the facilities that it serves. It is therefore argued that the building would have an unnecessary impact on the Green Belt.
7. The letter also queries whether the building is being used for the purpose described and whether it is compliant with the electrical installation regulations.

Assessment

Design

8. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning. It advises that Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

9. The importance of ensuring that new development is well-designed and built to a high standard is also emphasised by policy DP7 of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Similarly, policy GN5 of the Local Plan underlines the importance of securing high standards of design in new development. It states that the design of proposed development will be expected to be well related to their surroundings and that the appearance, layout and spacing of new buildings should respect the local distinctiveness of the area.
10. The Chorley Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) recognises that good design results in the creation of accessible, safe and secure development which relates well to its surroundings. It also asserts that new development should respect the scale, design and materials of surrounding buildings.
11. The electric meter building is relatively modest in scale. Whilst the proposed building is not located particularly close to High Heys Farm house, it would not be particularly prominent from Langton Brow and it is noted that the building occupies the position of a previous electrical meter building.
12. There is a range of buildings associated with High Heys Farm of various designs and scales in the surrounding area. It is considered that the proposed choice of materials for the building is acceptable. The building is of simple design and it is considered that the building is of an appropriate scale for its function. It is therefore considered that the design of the building is acceptable.

Impact on the amenity of neighbours

13. The electric meter building is relatively modest in scale. It is approximately 45m from High Heys Farm which is owned by the applicant. There are no other dwellings within 120m of the building. It is also noted that there have been no objection to the proposed development on the basis that it would have a negative impact on the amenity of occupants of neighbouring properties. As such, it is considered that the retention of the electric meter building would not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on the occupants of neighbouring properties.

Impact on the character and openness of the Green Belt

14. Paragraph 87 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It recommends that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt and stipulates that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations
15. The NPPF advises that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate development unless it is for, inter alia, appropriate facilities for sport and outdoor recreation, the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building, or the replacement of a building provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.
16. Policy DC1 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review outlines the instances in which development maybe permitted within the Green Belt. Policy DC1 states that planning permission may be granted for essential facilities for sport and outdoor recreation.
17. The electric meter building is relatively modest in scale. It has a footprint of 20.5m² and a volume of approximately 54.3m³. The building is therefore of a smaller scale than a standard domestic double garage. It is considered that the building is of an appropriate scale for its function. The building does however occupy an elevated position above the farm house and is visible from the access road to the property.
18. The applicant has submitted a statement in support of the application. This notes that the electric meter building is essential to the agricultural enterprise, the farmhouse, stables, kennels and cattery. The applicant has also noted that the building is essential for the

management of the fishery as the fishing lakes requires daily oxygenation in order to keep the water and fish stocks healthy. It is however noted that, as stated above, the electric meter building would not just serve the fishing lakes but would also serve the farmhouse, farm, dog kennels and cattery. The degree to which it constitutes an essential facility for outdoor sport / recreation is therefore uncertain.

19. Notwithstanding the above, the applicant's statement also draws attention to the fact that the electric meter building occupies the same position as a previous electrical meter building and photographic evidence of this building has been appended to the applicant's statement. This previous electric meter building appears to have been of a similar scale to the replacement building that has been erected and it is recognised that the NPPF states that the replacement of a building does not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt if the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces. The applicant has also asserted that the previous building was in a poor state of repair and had become dangerous due to serious water leakage. The applicant has also stated that consideration was given to putting the electric meters within the house but that this had to be discounted due to the extortionate cost.
20. As a result, irrespective of whether or not it is accepted that the building is an appropriate facility for outdoor recreation, it is considered that there are very special circumstances that would justify the harm to the Green Belt and that the proposal may also be considered to be permissible under the requirements of the NPPF as the building would not have a significantly greater impact on the character and openness of the Green Belt than the building it replaced. Accordingly, it is considered that the impact of the proposal on the character and openness of the Green Belt should not constitute a reason for refusal.

Overall Conclusion

21. The retention of the electric meter building would not result in any significant harm to the character and appearance of the existing building or the surrounding area, nor would it cause any significant harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents. In addition, it is considered that the proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on the character and openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with policies DC1 and GN5 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review. Accordingly, it is recommended that the application be approved.

Other Matters

Non- material planning considerations

22. A letter of objection has queried whether the installation is compliant with the electrical installation regulations. Nevertheless, as this is addressed by other legislation this is not considered to constitute a material planning consideration.

Planning Policies

National Planning Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework

Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review

Policies: DC1 and GN5

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Design Guide

Planning History

Application Number-

Ref: 01/00218/FUL

Decision: WDN

Decision Date: 7 August 2001

Description: Two storey side extension, front porch, front and rear dormers and raising of roof ridge.

Ref: 01/00443/FUL **Decision:** PRRRTF **Decision Date:** 5 July 2001
Description: Rebuilding and replacement of 23 kennels,

Ref: 01/00694/FUL **Decision:** PERFP
Decision Date: 19 December 2001
Description: Replacement dwelling,

Ref: 02/00483/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 16 July 2002
Description: Formation of fishing lake,

Ref: 03/00172/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 16 April 2003
Description: Formation of fishing lake and car parking area,

Ref: 12/00031/FUL **Decision:** PCO **Decision Date:**
Description: Retention of car park and access track

Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission
No Conditions

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