



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2026

by V Goldberg BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/W/25/3373041

Shoulder Of Mutton Shaw, Warren Road, Cobham, Kent ME2 1HG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant approval required under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 6, Class E of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Graham Pidduck against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 20250817.
 - The development proposed is a forestry building for timber handling / cutting with welfare facilities (toilet, washroom etc.) and secure dry store of large equipment.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Main Issues

2. Under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 6, Class E of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the GPDO), planning permission is granted for, the carrying out on land used for the purposes of forestry, development reasonably necessary for those purposes including the erection of a building. In this case, the Council refused prior approval, on the basis that the building was not considered reasonably necessary for forestry.
3. The assessment of whether the building would be reasonably necessary was based on the size of the application site and the allegation that the land is not used for forestry. The main issue is therefore whether the land is used for forestry and if so, whether the proposed building would be reasonably necessary for those forestry purposes.

Reasons

Whether the land is used for forestry

4. The appeal site comprises a triangular parcel of woodland accessed from Warren Road. Although it is claimed that there is no evidence the land is used for forestry, planning permissions granted in 2005¹ and 2010² for storage containers to support woodland maintenance, indicate an established pattern of forestry activity.

¹ 20041077- Renewal of temporary planning permission for the continued siting of a single replacement steel storage container in connection with maintenance of the woodland- approved on the 18th of February 2005.

² 20090698- siting of a second storage container in connection with the maintenance of the woodland and formation of hardstanding- approved on the 2nd of March 2010.

5. In the absence of a statutory definition of 'forestry' within planning legislation, the Council rely on the Cambridge Dictionary definition, which describes it as "the science of planting and taking care of large areas of trees." Activities involved in maintaining and managing woodland would therefore fall within this meaning. The earlier permissions granted to support woodland maintenance further demonstrate that the Council has historically regarded the site as being in forestry use.
6. While it is alleged that the appeal site is not large enough to be used for forestry, the GPDO imposes no minimum land area for Class E. I note the findings of the Barkham appeal³ in which the Inspector considered that land used for the purposes of forestry would typically cover an extensive area. However, in that appeal, the site was considerably smaller than the appeal site. Therefore, whilst size may be a relevant consideration, it is not determinative, and absence of a prescribed minimum area within the GPDO would indicate that smaller parcels of land could reasonably fall within the scope of Class E, provided they are used for forestry.
7. The appellant confirms full-time, active woodland management, including daily work addressing ash dieback, and the Council does not dispute this. Such activity clearly aligns with the care and management of trees. On the evidence before me, I am satisfied that the land is used for forestry.

Whether the proposed building would be reasonably necessary

8. The proposed building would be substantial in scale and particularly tall, with a height of 10 metres. While the appellant states that the building is required to accommodate large quantities of felled timber and heavy machinery, the modest size of the woodland suggests that such volumes of timber are unlikely to arise. Although uncut felled timber might justify the length of the building, insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate why a building of this height is necessary for forestry purposes. This is especially relevant given the machinery and storage containers on site are of limited height and could be accommodated within a significantly lower structure.
9. The proposed building would provide secure storage, welfare facilities, shelter for working and consolidate existing containers and machinery within one structure. However, the existing storage containers and machinery are modest in size and would not require a building of the scale and height proposed to achieve the objective of consolidating these items.
10. Whilst the test for whether a building is reasonably necessary for forestry purposes does not require consideration of alternative arrangements, it does require evidence that the proposed building is genuinely needed for the intended use, rather than being merely preferable. Based on the evidence before me I am not satisfied that a building of the size and scale proposed is reasonably required for forestry purposes.
11. For the above reasons, it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that the proposed building is reasonably necessary for forestry. Therefore, it would not be permitted development.

³ APP/X0360/C/19/3234843 and APP/X0360/C/19/3229306

Other Matters

12. Reference is made to the enforcement history of the site and the requirement to remove the RV that was used for welfare purposes. Whilst the presence of the RV may be indicative of a need for a welfare shelter, an alternative solution of an appropriate size and scale could equally achieve the same aim.
13. Whilst the Council did not attend the site when determining the application, the decision was based on the submitted plans and supporting documentation and was justified and reasonable.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

V Goldberg

INSPECTOR