The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 November 2016

by Helen Hockenhull BA(Hons) B.Pl MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 18 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/U2370/W/16/3153600
Momens Farmhouse, New Lane, Eagland Hill, Pilling, PR3 6BA

- 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 John Hodgeson against the decision of Wyre Borough Council.
- The application Ref 16/00209/FUL, dated 26 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 April 2016.
- The development proposed is the erection of 1 detached dwelling (Infill).

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council's second reason for refusal stated that insufficient ecological information had been provided with the planning application to determine the potential harm or impacts of the development on protected species or ecology in the area. The appellant as part of his appeal submission has provided an Ecological Appraisal which the Council considers adequately addresses this matter. The Council advises that they wish to withdraw this reason for refusal. Accordingly I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are:

    - whether the location of the development would be consistent with the principles of sustainable development having regard to national and local planning policies;
    - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Sustainable development

4. The appeal site forms part of the side garden to Momens Farmhouse which is located in the open countryside in the small hamlet of Eagland Hill. It lies approximately 2.4 miles south east of Pilling and 3.6 miles to the east of Garstang. The site is bounded by the existing farmhouse and other agricultural and ancillary buildings to the east and by neighbouring residential dwellings to the west. Open fields lie immediately to the north of the site with residential

properties beyond and to the south on the other side of New Lane is open agricultural land.

5. Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) aims to promote sustainable development in rural areas and states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances. None of these apply in this case.

6. Saved Policy SP13 of the Wyre Borough Local Plan 1999 restricts development in the open countryside and sets down a number of exceptions where development would be acceptable. Whilst this Policy pre dates the Framework, I consider it to be broadly consistent with Paragraph 55, seeking to avoid isolated new dwellings in the countryside. Criterion E of Policy SP13 refers to the development of single infill plots within established built up frontages of not less than five dwellings. Whilst the appeal site complies with this criterion, it does not form one of the exceptions within paragraph 55 of the Framework. Accordingly I attribute limited weight to this policy as the development must be considered against the sustainable development principles of the Framework.

7. The site lies in the small hamlet of Eagland Hill. There are no shops or facilities in the hamlet and I am advised by the Council that the Church is no longer in use. There is also no public transport serving the community. I have had regard to the advice in Paragraph 55 of the Framework, that development in one village may support services in a village nearby. In this case, the site lies approximately 2.4 miles from Pilling and 3.5 miles from Garstang where shops and facilities can be accessed. I observed on my site visit that the local roads are undulating, generally single track with passing places, have limited if any verges, are unlit and have no footways. They have limited forward visibility in places and are subject to the national speed limit. They would not provide a safe pedestrian route and having regard to the distance to Pilling, I consider it unlikely that potential future occupants would walk to access the services it provides.

8. Whilst cycling may form an alternative mode of transport, having regard to the nature of the local roads and the distances involved, I do not consider that cycling would be the preferred mode of transport. Future occupants are more likely to use the car especially in the evenings or in poor weather. Whilst occupants of the proposed dwelling would make use of the services and facilities in nearby settlements which would support their viability, they would more than likely do so using unsustainable transport means. Furthermore, as the development proposed is for a single dwelling, I do not consider that it would enhance or maintain the vitality of the nearby settlements to any significant degree.

9. I therefore consider that by reason of its location and lack of pedestrian connectivity to nearby settlements that the proposal would result in the increased need to travel by car and would not lead to a sustainable form of development. The proposal would be contrary to Policy SP13 of the Wyre Borough Local Plan and paragraph 55 of the Framework which seeks to avoid isolated new homes in the countryside.

Character and appearance

10. The appeal proposes a two storey detached dwelling with accommodation in the roofspace and a detached double garage. Two small piked dormers would be provided in the front and rear roof spaces and the dwelling would be constructed in red brick with a natural slate roof. Eagland Hill is characterised by two storey detached dwellings of a mix of designs and styles including dormer bungalows and more traditional dwellings.

11. The proposed dwelling would occupy a large plot and have a footprint comparable to neighbouring properties, in particular Hill Crest to the west. It would have a height to the ridge of around 9 metres and would provide three floors of accommodation. Other dwellings in the locality are generally lower in height and do not have dormers providing living space at third floor level. I consider that the height of the proposed dwelling together with the proposed dormers would result in the property being out of character with neighbouring dwellings. The proposal would appear dominant and incongruous in the street scene. It would not comply with Saved Policies SP13 and SP14 of the Wyre Borough Local Plan 1999 which aim to achieve a high standard of design and amenity. These policies are generally consistent with the principles of good design outlined in paragraph 17 and Section 7 of the Framework.

Other Matters

12. Both main parties agree that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. In line with paragraph 49 of the Framework relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. There is also a requirement to consider development proposals in light of paragraph 14 of the Framework which advises that where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole.

13. The Framework states a presumption in favour of sustainable development, seeking to achieve economic, social and environmental gains. I acknowledge that there would be some economic gains from the development in terms of construction jobs and the need for materials. In addition, the dwelling would contribute to the supply of housing in the area and future occupants would support local services and facilities in Pilling and Garstang. However as the proposal is for a single dwelling these gains would be very limited. Whilst these factors give some support to the development, I consider that they would not outweigh the harm I have identified in respect of the sites unsustainable location and effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

14. Notwithstanding the benefits of the scheme including the contribution to the supply of housing, I consider that the proposal would not be consistent with the principles of sustainable development as it would result in a dwelling in the open countryside in a location with poor accessibility. Furthermore the design

of the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the locality.

15. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I dismiss this appeal.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR