

---

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2016

**by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC**

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

**Decision date: 09 December 2016**

---

**Appeal Ref: APP/E0915/W/16/3157533**

**The Barn, Whamtown, Blackford, Cumbria CA6 4EH**

- 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 Malcolm Hutchinson against the decision of Carlisle City Council.
  - The application Ref 16/0276, dated 30 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 July 2016.
  - The development proposed is erection of 1 no. dwelling.
- 

## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the development varies between the application form and the subsequent documents. I note from the correspondence that the proposal was revised from the two dwellings stated on the application form to one dwelling. For clarity, I have used the description on the decision notice, and I have based my consideration of the appeal on drawing 01-H-Wt-101115-a, which shows a single proposed dwelling.
3. Since the submission of the appeal, the Council has adopted the new Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030 (CDLP, November 2016). I have therefore considered the appeal against the relevant policies in that document.

## Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and whether the proposal would meet objectives to promote sustainable development.

## Reasons

### *Character and appearance*

5. The appeal site is located on garden land associated with the property at The Barn. The existing plot would be divided, and the proposed new dwelling would be located immediately south of The Barn. The existing landscaping features would be retained, and divisions would be minimised to retain the openness of the space.
  6. The proposed dwelling has been designed to resemble a longhouse barn, of the type that would have housed people and livestock under the same roof. The
-

- design would feature a hipped roof with overhanging eaves, and a palette of materials including slate, red sandstone, vertical larch boarding and render.
7. The new dwelling would be located close to the existing cluster of buildings which sit informally around a courtyard, with vehicle access from the south. These buildings appear to comprise a former farm group, with a number of the structures having been converted for residential use. Vernacular farm buildings are often arranged in such clusters, and a number of diagrammatic examples are given from the Historic England (formerly English Heritage) document entitled 'The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A guide to good practice' (September 2006).
  8. The property at The Barn, whilst clearly associated with the courtyard group, has its own separate access, which would also serve the new dwelling. The development would be visually separated from the courtyard buildings by a tall hedge, and the separate access would further emphasise its lack of integration into this group. The development would therefore be an incongruous addition which would detract from the coherency of the traditional layout of the adjacent buildings. The appellant contends that the proposal would constitute infill development. However, infilling is generally considered as development within an otherwise continuous frontage. In this case, the appeal site is within an established mature garden area, and so, in my view, would not represent infill development.
  9. In terms of form and materials, the new dwelling would also depart from the local vernacular. The adjacent buildings which I was able to see on the site visit were simple in form, built of brick or stone with plain pitched roofs. Elsewhere in the vicinity, I saw that local buildings tend to be built of a single material, either brick or red sandstone. There is no evidence before me to show that the proposed mixture of materials for the elevations, or the distinctive proposed roof form, are typical of the area. The Historic England document covers a variety of vernacular structures found throughout the country. It does not follow that a vernacular form from one region can successfully be integrated into another region which displays different local characteristics.
  10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not reflect local architectural features, in terms of form, materials, or spatial relationship to the existing courtyard buildings. In failing to reinforce local distinctiveness, the development would thus unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore be contrary to CDLP Policy HO 2, which, amongst other things, seeks to ensure that new housing development is of an appropriate design. It would also conflict with CDLP Policy SP 6, insofar as it seeks to ensure that development will respond to the local context and the form of surrounding buildings.

#### *Sustainable development*

11. Policy SP 2 of the CDLP sets out the scope for strategic growth and distribution of development needs in the area, which are to be met in the most sustainable manner. The appeal site does not lie within any allocated housing site. Section 8 of the policy states that, within the open countryside, development will be assessed against the need for it to be in the location specified. The appellant has not set out a case demonstrating any need for a new dwelling in this location, and so the proposal would fail to comply with CDLP Policy SP 2.

12. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at paragraph 55, states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Isolated dwellings in the countryside should be avoided, unless they comply with the special circumstances set out in paragraph 55. In this case, although the development would be close to several existing dwellings, the location is otherwise surrounded by open fields, and is physically separate and therefore isolated from the nearest settlements and services. The proposal would not fulfil any of the special circumstances in paragraph 55, and so would conflict with it.
13. In respect of windfall housing development, CDLP Policy HO 2 sets out a number of criteria for the assessment proposals within or on the edge of villages within the rural area. It requires that housing should be located where there is good access to one or more villages with services. The site is located in the area of Whamtown, which comprises a number of sporadic buildings. There are no services in the immediate vicinity, and Whamtown cannot reasonably be considered to constitute a settlement. To the south of the site is Blackford, whose limited facilities include a school, playgroups, a church and a WI. It is stated that the school lies at a distance of approximately 1.6km from the appeal site. A number of other services in the wider area are identified.
14. However, I observed on my visit that the road to the south of the appeal site is narrow, and there appear to be no dedicated footpaths or cycle routes along it. The road also appears to be unlit, which would make walking or cycling unattractive options particularly during the winter months, or in bad weather. I understand that bus services are available within a mile or so of the appeal site, but there would be little option other than to drive from the site in order to use the bus services. In the absence of sustainable modes of transport to access the local facilities, it is highly likely that future occupiers of the development would be heavily reliant on the use of the private car to satisfy the majority of day-to-day needs.
15. I accept that there are already a number of dwellings close to the site, and the contribution of a dwelling to the housing supply is to be given weight. The NPPF recognises that, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. However, the appeal site is not located within a village, and in any case, one new house would, at best, make only a marginal contribution to the economic vitality and social activity of the local rural community.
16. My attention has also been drawn to a number of other developments in the area, one of which is pictured. However, there is little detail before me as to the circumstances in which these developments were found to be acceptable, and so I cannot be certain that they offer a direct parallel to the proposed development. In any case, I have considered the appeal scheme on its own merits. I note that no objections to the proposal have been received from the occupiers of the neighbouring dwellings, but this has not led me to a different conclusion.
17. I therefore find that the proposal would unacceptably fail to promote sustainable development, and would conflict with CDLP Policies SP 2 and HO 2. It would also conflict with CDLP Policy HO 6, which sets out criteria for other housing in the open countryside. Furthermore, the proposal would conflict with the requirements of the NPPF.

**Conclusion**

18. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into consideration, I consider that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Elaine Gray*

INSPECTOR