

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 December 2016

by Helen Hockenhull BA(Hons) B.PI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/U2370/W/16/3160013

Springfield House Farm, Burned House Lane, Preesall, Lancashire FY6 0PQ

- 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 Richard Parkinson against the decision of Wyre Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 15/01021/FUL, dated 21 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 24 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of redundant agricultural building into dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are:
 - whether there is a suitable alternative use for the building;
 - whether the location of the development would be consistent with the principles of sustainable development having regard to national and local planning policies.

Reasons

Alternative uses

3. The appeal site forms a redundant barn within the complex of buildings at Springfield House Farm. The barn fronts onto the A588 and is located in the open countryside. 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. This policy pre dates the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) however I consider it to be broadly consistent with it in particular Paragraph 55, seeking to avoid isolated new dwellings in the countryside.
 4. Saved Policy H6 concerns changes to residential use in the countryside and requires amongst other things that it should be demonstrated that no potential or demand exists for a commercial, industrial or tourism use in the locality or that the building is not required for an agricultural worker. This is aimed at promoting a strong rural economy in line with Paragraph 28 of the Framework.
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5. As part of the appeal submission the appellant has provided evidence from a Chartered Surveyor and Estate Agent that confirms there is little demand for commercial or industrial units within the locality and that there are premises available on nearby industrial estates. With regard to the potential for tourism use, I note the appellant's comments that this use has been considered but the development would not be large enough to provide a living wage. In addition the appellant would not have time to manage a tourism use if he continued his existing employment activities. Whilst this addresses the practicalities and viability of a tourism use for the appellant, it does not however provide evidence of whether there would be the potential or demand for a tourism use in this location.
6. I note that Springfield House Farm is no longer a dairy farm and that the appellant has diversified so that there is no requirement for an additional farm worker who may need accommodation on the site. Whilst this is accepted, the evidence before me does not demonstrate whether there would be demand for an agricultural workers dwelling in the local area.
7. Accordingly I consider that whilst it has been shown that there would be no potential demand for commercial uses for the barn, I am not satisfied that this has been adequately demonstrated in respect of tourism uses or for an agricultural workers dwelling. The appeal proposal would therefore be contrary to Saved Policies SP13 and H6 of the Wyre Borough Local Plan and emerging policy CS24 of the Wyre Core Strategy which aim to support the rural economy and restrict development in the open countryside outside defined settlements.

Sustainable development

8. Paragraph 55 of 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. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances. These include where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.
9. The barn is located in a prominent position next to the A588 and its conversion would ensure its long term use and maintenance. In addition the appeal scheme would improve the setting of the building particularly the frontage area adjacent to the road. This weighs in favour of the proposal.
10. In terms of its location, the appeal site is located approximately 1.8 miles from Preesall and around 2.5 miles from Knott End on Sea. I observed on my site visit that this is a busy road. I am advised by the Council that there is a bus stop located approximately 0.9 miles south of the appeal site at Park Lane. Here services to Knott End, Poulton and Blackpool run every 30 minutes and services to Fleetwood and Cleveleys operate every 90 minutes. Approximately half a mile north of the site a further bus stop provides services to Pilling, Knott End and Lancaster every 90 minutes.
11. The Council acknowledges that nearby bus stops are within reasonable walking distance. Whilst I agree that such distances may be manageable, the most frequent bus service would be from the furthest bus stop which is nearly a mile away. I noted on my site visit that Burned House Lane has no footways and there is no street lighting. There is also limited forward visibility at certain

points along its route. As a result I consider it would not provide a reasonable or safe pedestrian route particularly at night or in poor weather. Future occupants of the property would therefore tend to make use of the private car to access services and facilities in the nearby villages.

12. A further alternative to the use of the car would be cycling. Having regard to the distance to Pilling and Knott End I consider that this may form a feasible means of transport however again because of the unlit nature of Burned House Lane, this may discourage cycling particularly in the evening.
13. Whilst I am certain that future occupants would make use of the services in the nearby settlements and support the rural economy, they would more than likely do so by using the private car. This would also enable them to access services further afield. Accordingly, I do not consider that the development of one dwelling would enhance or maintain the vitality of the rural settlements of Pilling or Knott End to any significant degree.
14. In summary, I consider that by reason of its location and lack of safe pedestrian connectivity to public transport, the proposal would result in the increased need to travel by car and would not lead to a sustainable form of development. Whilst the reuse of the redundant barn for residential purposes and improvements to the setting of the building weigh in favour of the proposal, these factors do not outweigh my conclusions on the sustainability of the location. The development would therefore be contrary to emerging Policies CS7 and CS24 of the Wyre Core Strategy. These policies aim to restrict development in the open countryside whilst also supporting the rural economy. I consider that the development would also conflict with emerging Policy CS13 which seeks to select accessible and sustainable locations for new development, though this policy is not specifically referred to in the Council's reason for refusal. The proposal would also conflict with the principles of sustainable development outlined in paragraphs 55 and 17 of the Framework which seek to avoid isolated new homes in the countryside.

Other matters

15. The appellant has brought my attention to two barn conversion schemes in Pilling and Out Rawcliffe approved by the Council in 2012. The Pilling site was located a similar distance to public transport however the Out Rawcliffe site was not located on a bus route. I have not been provided with the full details of these cases in order to make a direct comparison to the appeal scheme. I have in any event considered the appeal proposal on its individual merits on the basis of the evidence before me.
16. I acknowledge that the appeal proposal would contribute to the supply of housing in the area. However the provision of one dwelling would make a very limited impact on housing supply. I also note that the Council has raised no concerns with regards to the design of the conversion, highway matters or the impact on the amenity of the occupants of neighbouring dwellings. In addition I note the Council's view that the conversion of the barn to a dwelling would not constitute permitted development under Class Q of Schedule 2 Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (England) 2015. There would therefore be no fall-back position in this case.
17. I note the appellant wishes to provide housing for four generations of his family on the site. This would enable older and younger family members to be cared

for within a sustainable family unit. Whilst this is to be supported, I must give consideration to the wider sustainability of the proposal.

18. The appellant has made reference to a lapsed planning permission for the conversion of the barn to a dwelling dating from 1996. Furthermore I am advised that pre application advice was sought from the Council in February 2014 and a positive response to the proposal was given which did not raise the issue of sustainability. I can understand the appellant's frustration that despite this positive advice the application was subsequently refused on these grounds. In determining this appeal, I am required to consider the proposal in light of current national and local planning policies and on the merits of the individual case.

Conclusion

19. I have had regard to the benefits of the scheme including the re use of a redundant agricultural building and the contribution to the supply of housing. However I consider that it has not been demonstrated that all suitable alternative uses have been satisfactorily explored. Furthermore I have found 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. I consider that these factors outweigh the benefits I have identified.
20. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I dismiss this appeal.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR