
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 February 2017

by Siobhan Watson BA(Hons) MCD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 24 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M2325/W/16/3164834

Waterview, Pool Foot Lane, Singleton, Poulton-le-Fylde, FY6 8NA

- 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 and Mrs P Farnsworth against the decision of Fylde Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/0616, dated 12 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 18 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a dwellinghouse and detached garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) whether the proposed dwelling would represent sustainable development in terms of its location; and (ii) the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

Policy Background

3. The Council has confirmed that it can only demonstrate a 4.8 year supply of land for housing. Therefore, Policies HL2, SP2, EP11, and EP20 of the Fylde Borough Local Plan, 2005 (LP) are out of date. However, whilst I cannot give these policies the full weight of the development plan, this does not mean that they are irrelevant or should be disregarded.
4. Paragraph 49 of the Framework requires housing applications to be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is set out at paragraph 14 of the Framework and indicates that where relevant housing supply policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole. Paragraph 7 of the Framework establishes the three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental.

Locational Sustainability

5. The site is located about 2.4km (1.5 miles) outside of the nearest defined settlement of Singleton. It is also very close to Little Singleton but this is not a defined settlement. Little Singleton has a few employment sites including a laboratory which employs over 30 staff; Koi Pool Water Gardens, employing

over 10 staff, and a petrol filling station with convenience store. The appeal site is also very close to Windy Harbour Holiday Park which has a shop, café and takeaway that are open to the public.

6. The appellant has drawn my attention to bus stops of between some 0.6km (approx. 0.36 miles) and about 1km (approx. 0.63 miles) from the site. Timetables submitted indicate that these provide school services and a number of hourly and half hourly services to several town centres and other destinations.
7. The appellant has also indicated the proximity of schools to the site. The closest primary school, Singleton C of E, is about 1.5 km (0.93 miles) away which I consider is a reasonable walking distance.
8. I appreciate that a section of Pool Foot Lane has no street-lighting but this is only for a short distance. There is a lack of footpaths along the lane but as it is a dead end and leads to a limited number of properties it is not used by much traffic. In these circumstances a shared surface is not inappropriate.
9. All in all, within walking distance, there is a school, two convenience stores, some limited employment opportunities, regular bus services, a cafe and a takeaway. Therefore, I do not consider that the site is isolated from day to day services.
10. I therefore conclude that the dwelling would represent sustainable development in terms of its location. Therefore, I find no conflict with LP Policy HL2 which seeks to ensure that new housing is in a sustainable location having regard to the local availability of shops, schools, employment sources, public transport and other community facilities. I note the Council's reference to Policy GD1 of the emerging Fylde Local Plan 2032 but as this is not at an advanced stage, I afford it little weight.

Character and Appearance of the Countryside

11. The site is to the rear of a dwelling and is surrounded on 3 sides by open, rural, land. It falls within the Countryside Area as defined on the LP Proposals map. The proposed dwelling would be constructed on the site of some previous agricultural buildings, however, Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework excludes land that is or has been occupied by agricultural buildings from the definition of "previously developed land". Furthermore, there is only rubble and stone left over from these buildings and they no longer exist. Therefore, their historic existence does not make the land currently or previously developed and I give very little weight to the fact that farm buildings previously stood there.
12. It is my assessment, that in spite of the site being next to an existing dwelling, and near to others, it is not within a developed area and is within the open countryside. The dwelling would encroach into and erode the open and rural nature of the surrounding countryside and would have a suburbanising effect upon it. Paragraph 17 of the Framework says that planning should take account of the different roles and character of different areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
13. I do not agree that the site is so low lying as to affect the prominence of the proposed dwelling, and from what I saw on site, a house would be clearly visible in the wider landscape which has an open character. Whilst the existing

site looks a little untidy, a house, being a substantial structure, would be far more intrusive within the landscape.

14. I note that it is proposed to plant trees and hedging to screen the dwelling but these would take time to mature and would have to be exceptionally dense and tall to hide a dwelling. In any event, screening would not overcome the actual loss of the landscape and would not make the development acceptable.
15. I understand that there is planning permission for an 18 hole golf course, club house, hotel, food court and 49 lodges between the site and the Holiday Park. However, I have no assurance that the permission will be fully implemented. Furthermore, the existence of this permission does not remove the site from the open countryside and does not justify further encroachment into it.
16. The appellants' Landscape Design Statement disputes the site's LP designation as "Open Coastline". This is because Lancashire County Council's Landscape Character Appraisal identified the site as falling within the "Coastal Plain Landscape". However, given my findings above, the development would be unacceptable regardless of its Open Coastline designation and the case does not turn on this matter.
17. I therefore conclude that the proposed dwelling would harm the character and appearance of the countryside. Consequently, it would conflict with LP Policies SP2, EP11, and EP20. In combination, these policies seek to protect the countryside and rural landscape including the open coastline. Policy GD4 of the emerging plan has similar objectives.

Other Matters

18. I note the appellants' reference to an approval for a dwelling at Bankfield Lodge but I am not bound by other decisions of the Council. I have taken into account all other matters, including the representations from interested parties but none outweigh the conclusions I have reached.

Planning Balance

19. The proposal would result in a short term economic benefit in terms of its contribution to the construction industry and there would be a small benefit arising from the occupants using local services. There would be a small social benefit in that it would contribute 1 dwelling to the local housing supply. However, the harm to the countryside and landscape would significantly and demonstrably outweigh these benefits. Therefore the proposed development does not constitute sustainable development of which there is a presumption in favour.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons and having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Siobhan Watson

INSPECTOR