
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 May 2017

by Andrew Owen BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 2 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/W/17/3169381

Land adjacent Well House, The Common, Preston Bissett MK18 4NA

- 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 Christopher McNally against the decision of Aylesbury Vale District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/04308/APP, dated 1 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 3 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is erection of three dwellings, demolition of all buildings in agricultural use, B8 storage distribution use and B1 industrial use.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and whether the development would represent sustainable growth of the settlement.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The site accommodates a number of dilapidated buildings. At the time of my site visit it appeared that there was some active, albeit limited, agricultural use. There are residential properties to the south, Well House to the east and open land to the west and to the rear of Well House. The undeveloped nature of the land to either side, the open fields opposite and the low density of the nearby houses locally means the site has a rural setting. Nonetheless, I consider the site is perceived as being part of, though on the fringes of, Preston Bissett and my view is supported by the Inspector into the previous appeal for this site¹.
4. The scheme subject of that previous appeal proposed two houses. Though I have no plans of that scheme, I understand from the Inspector's decision that one house was proposed at the front of the site and the other just past the centre. The current proposal would also comprise one dwelling just past the centre of the site, but two at the front. Since that appeal, I understand the Council have granted planning permission for two houses at the front of the site² and, as they consider the two proposed frontage houses are comparable

¹ Ref APP/J0405/W/16/3146918

² Ref 16/02458/APP

in design and location to those granted planning permission, they do not object to these dwellings.

5. The Inspector into the previous appeal considered that though there is potential to redevelop the site in depth, the design, bulk and siting of that development would not fit in with the character of the area. From the details in that Decision, it seems that the rear dwelling would have been taller than that now proposed at plot 3. Nonetheless the current proposal is for a large, imposing dwelling accompanied by a sizeable car port. With the removal of the existing tree screen along the west boundary, the development would be visible from Pound Lane appearing prominent and visually isolated in the context of the adjacent open land. It would also appear detached from the frontage dwellings when seen along its driveway from The Common.
6. Although I accept the existing buildings are spread over a large proportion of the site, they are low and do not appear prominently in the area, primarily due to the mature vegetation along the west and front boundaries. Some of the trees along the west boundary of the site have fallen and more may do so in future which would expose the site to a degree to views from the west. However in that eventuality, the hedging along the east side of Pound Lane would provide some screening of the existing structures. It would not provide comparable screening for the large proposed dwelling at plot 3. Notwithstanding this, at present the site remains well screened from most public viewpoints and therefore I do not give significant weight to any visual enhancement that may be achieved by the removal of the existing buildings.
7. As such I consider the scale of the development would appear incongruous in its rural context and therefore it would harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policy GP.35 of the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan which requires development to respect and complement the site's surroundings. It would also fail to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') which, as one of its principles, advises that development should take account of the character of its area.
8. The Council recognises that though they can point to a 5.8 year supply of housing, this does not account for unmet need from neighbouring authorities. As such they consider their policies relating to housing supply cannot be considered up to date. However as I do not consider Policy GP.35 relates to housing supply, I can give it considerable weight.

Sustainable growth

9. The Council suggest that the small size of Preston Bissett, and the limited facilities available therein, means the village has limited potential for further growth. The Inspector into the previous appeal agreed that the site has poor accessibility to the services and facilities necessary for daily life, notwithstanding his conclusion that it was within the confines of the village.
10. The site is around four miles from Buckingham and to access the facilities and services available there the future occupants of the dwellings would rely heavily on the private car. As the proposal would increase the number of houses on site from that already granted planning permission, the current proposal could result in more car journeys and more people living in a location without good access to facilities and services than which would occur were the extant permission implemented. I understand the existing lawful use of the site could

potentially generate a level of traffic that would be comparable with that generated by the proposal. Nonetheless this would not have the same day to day dependency on goods and services that a residential use would.

11. The planning permission granted by the Council for two houses at this site suggests there is some potential for growth in the village, and from my site visit I saw that there are a few new houses in the village. Indeed the appellant suggests seven houses have been built since 2014. However I must consider the proposal on its own merits.
12. I consider that the occupiers of the development would have poor access to facilities and services and therefore the proposal would not represent the sustainable growth of the settlement. Accordingly the development would not accord with the Framework which, as one of its principles, states that patterns of growth should be managed to make fullest use of public transport, walking or cycling and should focus development to locations which are sustainable.

Other matters

13. The southern tip of the site abuts the Preston Bissett Conservation Area (PBCA). The houses would be some distance from this corner and views of the development from within the PBCA would be limited. As such I consider there would be no adverse impact on the setting of the PBCA.
14. Notwithstanding the Council's housing supply, I acknowledge the proposal would provide a small contribution to housing supply in the district. Nonetheless, this only a moderate benefit particularly in light of the extant permission for two units. It does not outweigh the harm I have found and set out above.
15. The appellant's assertion that he has no intention of implementing the extant permission has no bearing on my decision, as the planning permission runs with the land and is not personal to him.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, and taking account of all other considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR