
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 August 2019 by Ifeanyi Chukwujekwu BSc MSc PIEMA RTPI (Assoc)

Decision by A U Ghafoor BSc (Hons) MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/19/3227955

Land East of Townfoot Steading, Bridge End, Lesbury, Alnwick, NE66 3AZ

- 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 H Dawe against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 18/03964/FUL, dated 9 May 2018, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of 1 dwelling (C3 use) as self-build/custom plot.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matters

3. The site is adjacent to the Lesbury Conservation Area (the 'CA'); however, the Council have not expressed any concerns regarding any potential effect of the proposal on the CA. I do not disagree with this approach given the location of the site. The proposal falls within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the 'AONB'). The National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF') places great weight on the conservation of the landscape and scenic beauty of an AONB. Accordingly, assessment of this appeal will consider whether the proposal would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

Main Issues

4. These are as follows: (1) Whether the proposal would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, and (2) whether the appeal site would be suitable and sustainable for the proposed residential development having regard to local and national planning policy.

Reasons for the Recommendation – *the AONB*

5. The appeal site is located on the eastern edge of Lesbury in what is currently described as disused agricultural land. It is bound to the west by Townfoot Steading which is a residential development, to the north by a plantation

woodland, to the south by the Bridge End highway from which it is proposed that access would be gained and to the east by open agricultural fields. The special qualities of the landscape that provide the immediate context for the site comprise the open countryside. The location typifies the feeling of exposure and tranquillity of the flatfields of the countryside with expansive skies. The settlement pattern of adjacent dwellings comprises terraced one-storey dwellings, semi-detached two-storey dwellings and small cottages which contribute to the special qualities of the AONB. Moreover, this section of coast makes a significant contribution to the characteristic 'dark skies'.

6. The proposed dwelling by virtue of its location would be detached and would not appear to be located within the existing built-up area. It would be a standalone new dwelling within the open countryside. The scheme has been revised from a previously withdrawn application¹ the proposed dwelling would, nonetheless, be of a scale and mass that is uncharacteristic of the landscape. Even though the proposal would be set back within the appeal site, it would be clearly visible to road users and could be viewed at some considerable distance from vantages. It would appear visually incongruous within the rural setting of the area. The characteristic dark skies of the AONB could be preserved by reducing the number of rooflights. However, the proposal, including the large glazed orangery, would fail to conserve and enhance the dark sky character at the edge of the village.
7. The appellant has provided examples of other approved development which were apparently outside the original settlement boundary². These examples are not the appeal before me. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider the merits of the appeal development. The proposed bulk, scale and location of the dwelling would be out-of-keeping with rural quality of the surrounding area.
8. Taking all the above together, I find that the proposal would not conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and would be at odds with the objectives of Policies S13 and S16 of Alnwick District Local Development Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document (the 'LDF Core Strategy').

Suitability and Sustainability

9. Lesbury is identified within LDF Core Strategy Policy S1 as a sustainable village centre where development should be well related to the scale and function of the settlement. The appellant argues that the proposal would help to build and sustain existing services and facilities. However, as stated elsewhere, the new dwelling would be a standalone property located within a large plot at the edge of the settlement boundary. The site would be unsuitable for this kind of development because of its location.
10. Whilst it could be argued that the proposal would generally have good access to local services and public transport links, including Alnmouth Railway Station, the location and siting of the dwelling itself would not encourage the use of public transport. The position of the dwelling combined with the extensive plot would encourage the use of private car to access local services and shops, because the proposed dwelling would be set back from the adopted highway, Bridge End, by a significant distance. Future occupiers are likely to find the

¹ Council ref: 18/01655/FUL - four bedroom to three-bedroom dwelling.

² Council refs: 17/03535/OUT (Land north of Meadowlands, Longhoughton Road, Lesbury for 5 no. dwellings and 14/03236/FUL (Land north of Townfoot, Lesbury, planning permission for 20 new housing plots).

walk to the centre tortuous due to the considerable distance covered by the driveway.

11. I find that the appeal site would be unsuitable and unsustainable for the kind of development proposed. Accordingly, there is conflict with the aims and objectives of Policies S1, S2, S3 and S14 of the Alnwick LDF Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion and Recommendation

12. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Ifeanyi Chukwujekwu

Appeals Planning Officer

Inspector's Decision

13. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report, and, on that basis, I too agree that the appeal is dismissed.

A U Ghafoor

INSPECTOR