
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 September 2019

by Katie McDonald MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/U2370/W/19/3230698

Land at Gezzert's Farm, Gezzert's Rise, Poulton-le-Fylde FY6 7XE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr T Rowe against the decision of Wyre Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/01016/OUT, dated 18 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 17 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is outline erection of detached dwelling with access applied for off Gezzert's Rise (all other matters reserved).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal is for outline planning permission with all matters reserved except access. Indicative plans relating to the layout, scale and appearance of the dwelling have been submitted. I have had regard to them so far as relevant to the proposal before me.
3. The Council has recently adopted the Wyre Borough Local Plan (2011- 2031) (February 2019) (LP). Consequently, Policy SP4 of the superseded Wyre Borough Local Plan has been replaced by Policy SP3 of the new LP. Policy SP3 was cited in the reason for refusal, and the appellant has had the opportunity to address this in the evidence.

Main Issues

4. The site is within the Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues are:
 - i) Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - ii) The effect of the proposal upon the openness and purposes of the Green Belt; and
 - iii) If the proposal is inappropriate development; would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal?

Reasons

5. The site is located on the corner of a recently developed small housing estate. It is a vacant undeveloped site, detailed as being former agricultural land. The site, and land to the north west of Blackpool Old Road, is identified as Green Belt in the LP. It forms a narrow parcel of Green Belt separating Poulton-le-Fylde from Blackpool and is linked with a larger parcel of Green Belt to the south east on the other side of Blackpool Old Road. The proposal is for a detached dwelling, accessed from the recently constructed development, Gezzert's Rise, that sits outside the Green Belt.

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development

6. Policy SP3 of the LP sets out that within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development as defined in national policy except in very special circumstances. The Framework sets out that the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are listed in paragraphs 145 and 146 of the Framework. Of these, the appellant claims that the proposal would be limited infilling in villages.
7. Although limited infilling is not defined in the Framework, in my opinion, infill development is the development of a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage. The site is open to the western side, being land identified as Green Belt, and the proposal would not fill in a limited gap on the Blackpool Old Road frontage.
8. Furthermore, despite the housing development surrounding the north eastern corner of the site; the site is open to the south west and thus the space is not a gap, or a break in continuity of other built up development. Additionally, notwithstanding the appellant's assertion, Blackpool Old Road is open to the rest of the Green Belt land to the south and it does not form a built-up area of development such that it would amount to an enclosure of the site. In short, this site is an edge of settlement development, and not an infill site. Therefore, it is my judgement that the proposal would not constitute 'limited infilling'.
9. The site is located on the edge of Poulton-le-Fylde, a large town in the borough of Wyre. The appellant claims this location is in the village of Little Carleton, presenting details as to the location of a nearby shopping parade and its reference on Google Maps, along with other information such as a Domesday Book reference. However, whilst Little Carleton may have historically been a village, it has over time merged into a large urban conurbation. Indeed, the appellant recognises this in his evidence.
10. Therefore, based upon what I saw on my visit, along with the evidence before me, the site is on the edge of a large town, which includes sub areas, such as Little Carleton. Therefore, it is my judgement that the site is not within a village.
11. Consequently, the proposal would not be limited infilling in villages. There are no other exceptions that would apply and as a result, the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This would be contrary to Policy SP3 of the LP and the Framework.
12. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Openness and purposes of the Green Belt

13. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Openness has both a visual and spatial element.
14. Whilst the proposal is outline with several matters reserved, based upon the size of the site and as a result of the proposed development that would take place, there would inevitably be a visual and spatial reduction in openness.
15. Moreover, one of the purposes of the Green Belt is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. In this location, the Green Belt allocation is particularly narrow, being around 60m wide along Blackpool Old Road. Despite this narrowness, the absence of development successfully separates the neighbouring towns of Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde, such that it achieves the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy.
16. The site takes up around a third of this space between the towns along the Blackpool Old Road frontage, and although it is close to other built structures, of an amorphous shape and shallower depth than the fields to the west; it is essentially undeveloped and open. As a result, the site makes a valuable contribution to openness, the fundamental aim and the purposes of the Green Belt.
17. Owing to the likely scale, size and location of the proposal, along with domestication of the site; the space between the large built-up areas would be noticeably reduced. Regardless of any assertions that this would 'round off' the urban boundary or provide a 'cleaner line', the site is in the Green Belt and the proposal would be unrestricted urban sprawl that would lead to an inadequate break between the neighbouring towns.
18. Consequently, the proposal would have a very harmful effect upon openness, the fundamental aim, and the purposes of, the Green Belt. This would conflict with Policy SP3 of the LP, which sets out that any development permitted in the Green Belt should seek to minimise the impact on the openness of the Green Belt and any conflict with the purposes of including land within it. It would also conflict with the Framework.

Other considerations

19. The appellant claims that the Council has previously allowed 2 other developments¹, with similar circumstances to this appeal. The Hardhorn Road site is located between other dwellings that present a road side frontage. The Bridge House site, whilst involving demolition of the existing dwelling, would create a new dwelling in between the replacement dwelling and other dwellings to the south that also present a road side frontage. The extent of development at the Bridge House site is also contained within the existing residential curtilage and the replacement dwelling is in a similar location to the existing. Consequently, I understand why both other developments were considered to be limited infilling. This is different to the appeal before me.
20. Moreover, the specific circumstances of this appeal, being located in a narrow allocation of Green Belt functioning to separate two large settlements and

¹ 13/00536/OUT (Hardhorn Road) and 16/00292 (Bridge House)

prevent urban sprawl, is very different to the location of both other sites, which are located on road side frontages contained by existing development. The appeal site contributes towards the fundamental aim of the Green Belt and is a very important parcel of open undeveloped land. Therefore, despite the Council's conclusions on the location of the other developments, the circumstances of the other sites are not sufficiently similar to the appeal proposal. Thus, I give them little weight.

21. The proposal would make a very modest contribution to housing supply by the provision of one dwelling and I attach little weight to this matter.
22. Both the Council and appellant detail that the site is in an accessible location, well served by public transport. However, as many Green Belt sites, by their fundamental nature, are located adjacent to developed towns, the location does not add any weight in favour of the proposal.
23. The acceptable effect of the scheme upon the character and appearance the area and the lack of concerns relating to ecology, highway safety, flood risk and neighbouring living conditions are essentially of neutral weight.

Conclusion and Green Belt balancing exercise

24. The other considerations advanced by the appellant would not clearly outweigh the totality of harm arising from inappropriateness, openness, the fundamental aim and the purposes of the Green Belt; all of which attract substantial weight against the development.
25. Consequently, very special circumstances do not exist and the proposal is contrary to Policy SP3 of the LP and the Framework.
26. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Katie McDonald

INSPECTOR