
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 October 2019

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/W/19/3234213

**Land between Longfield and No 21 Robins Lane, Carleton, Blackpool
FY6 7QN**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr John Boardman against the decision of Blackpool Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/0306, dated 07 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of 1no. dwellinghouse.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. As explained in the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG), the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017 (the Order) is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for the proposed development from the technical detail. The scope of the first stage, that is to establish whether a site is suitable in principle for development, is limited to location, land use and amount of development.

Main Issues

3. 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 on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - iii) If the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development

4. The appeal site is to the east of Robins Lane, between No 21 and Longfield. It is in the Green Belt on the outskirts of Carleton and beyond the administrative boundary of Wyre.
5. Paragraph 143 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
6. Policy CS6 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 Adopted January 2016 (the CS) sets out that the Green Belt will be protected in accordance with national policy, to protect openness and character, and retain local distinctiveness. In this respect, Paragraph 145 of the Framework states that new buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt unless they meet one of a limited number of specific exceptions, including 145 e) limited infilling in villages.
7. The Framework does not define a village or what would constitute limited infilling. In this case, Carleton does not have the character of a village in the Green Belt, being neither surrounded, nor washed over, by the Green Belt. Moreover, notwithstanding that it has local services and facilities, Carleton is functionally and physically linked to Poulton-Le-Fylde and both parties agree that it is part of the urban settlement of Poulton-Le-Fylde.
8. Although the appeal site is beyond the urban edge of Poulton-Le-Fylde and Carleton, the defined settlement boundary is not necessarily determinative for the purpose of identifying a village. However, in this case there is a distinct change in character where the defined urban edge meets the countryside. At this point, Robins Lane is an unadopted rural road with no footway and it is narrow and enclosed by tall hedges with overhanging trees. The consistency of the urban built form, including in terms of plot sizes, spacing and boundary treatments, quickly gives way to sparse and sporadic development characteristic of rural areas.
9. The part of Robins Lane that includes the appeal site is characterised by a small number of widely and irregularly spaced properties, set in generous grounds and with intervening areas of farmed land. They are not a linear continuation of the built form of Carleton and they do not form a coherent group of properties beyond the settlement. Moreover, the appeal site is in any case part of a large open field which is visually, functionally and physically related to the undeveloped countryside behind Robins Lane at this point. Consequently, the site is not part of Carleton and it is not within a village for the purposes of my assessment.
10. While appeal decisions elsewhere have addressed the issue of infilling within villages, the assessment in each case will depend upon the particular circumstances of the site and its surroundings. In the case referred to on the outskirts of Blackburn, the Inspector concluded that the site was within a village for the purposes of the Framework. However, notwithstanding the similarity in respect of the relationship to the administrative boundary, there are nevertheless differences between the sites. In that case, the appeal site was part of a long ribbon of development with a large number of houses to

either side of Barker Lane. Moreover, while there is a change in character along Barker Lane, it is nevertheless a continuation of the built form of Blackburn. It is not therefore directly comparable to the appeal site before me, which is in the countryside and which is not a linear continuation of the built form of Carleton.

11. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it would not meet the exceptions for the construction of new buildings set out in the Framework. It would conflict with paragraph 145 of the Framework. It therefore follows that it would also conflict with Policy CS6 of the CS.

Effects on openness of the Green Belt

12. Paragraph 133 of the Framework states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The assessment of openness requires a consideration of both spatial and visual impacts.
13. There are no details provided in respect of the layout, scale or appearance of the proposed dwelling, in accordance with the limited requirements of the first stage of an application for permission in principle. However, the appellant envisages that the dwelling would reflect the scale, character and appearance of neighbouring residential properties.
14. The appeal site is an undeveloped field with open countryside behind. The proposal would therefore introduce a significant footprint of permanent development in this location as a result of the construction of a detached residential dwelling with associated vehicular access and car parking. Consequently, the proposal would result in a significant spatial loss of openness.
15. Notwithstanding the vegetated boundary to the Lane, a dwelling in this location would be visible from locations along the Lane and from nearby properties and the surrounding countryside. Irrespective of its scale and appearance, there would be a significant visual impact resulting from the bulk of a new dwelling and associated domestic paraphernalia. The proposal would represent encroachment into the countryside and there would be a harmful loss of openness of the Green Belt. While the loss might be somewhat modest in the context of the Green Belt as a whole, there would be a moderate loss of openness in this locality.

Other Considerations

16. The appeal site is in an accessible location with respect to local services and facilities and the availability of public transport. However, any site proposed for new housing would be required to have reasonable access to services and facilities. Therefore, while the accessibility of the site would be a small benefit, there are nevertheless likely to be other equally accessible sites in more suitable locations. This is therefore a matter which carries little weight in my assessment.
17. The proposal would not result in harm to the highway network or to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring residential properties. However, these are neutral factors and do not weigh in favour of the scheme.

18. It is suggested that the site is Previously Developed Land (PDL) by virtue of forming part of an existing equestrian facility. In this respect, paragraph 145 g) of the Framework relates to the limited infilling or the partial redevelopment of PDL which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. Even if I were to accept that the site is PDL for the purposes of the Framework, the proposal would have a significantly greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, the proposal does not meet the exception set out in paragraph 145 g). This is not therefore a matter that weighs in favour of the scheme.
19. With reference to the contribution to local housing needs, there is little before me in respect of the Council's 5 year housing supply. However, Paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development. The specific policies referred to are listed in footnote 6 and include those relating to land designated as Green Belt. As such, the provision of a new dwelling in an unsuitable location is not a benefit of the scheme and it is therefore a neutral factor in my assessment.

The Green Belt Balance

20. I have concluded that the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would result in a moderate loss of openness of the Green Belt. These matters attract substantial weight.
21. There are no other considerations that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and loss of openness. Therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons set out above, the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR