



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 December 2019

by J M Tweddle BSc(Hons) MSc(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q9495/W/19/3237004

Land adjacent to Greenthwaite, Ennerdale Bridge, Cleator, Cumbria CA23 3AR

- 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 & Mrs Dean against the decision of the Lake District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 7/2018/4107, dated 19 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 4 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of new two storey 4 bedroom dwelling with detached garage and sheltered external storage areas.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr & Mrs Robert Dean against the Lake District National Park Authority. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. I have taken the site address from the appeal form as this appears to be a more accurate reflection of the site's location.
4. The Government published its National Design Guide and updated the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on 1 October 2019 with regard to matters of design and the achievement of well-designed places. I have had regard to this in my decision and I am satisfied that this has not prejudice either party as they have had the opportunity to comment during the appeal proceedings.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, having regard to the site's location within the Lake District National Park and the English Lake District World Heritage Site.

Reasons

6. The appeal site consists of an area of rough grassland on the southwest edge of the village of Ennerdale Bridge and adjacent to a residential property known as Greenthwaite. It is understood that the site was formally garden land associated with that property but has since been subdivided from it. This part

of the village is characterised by modest residential properties set back from the highway with good spacing and set comfortably within generous plots. This provides a spacious feel to the area, with the appeal site forming a point of transition between the built up edge of the settlement and the rural landscape beyond.

7. The proposal would introduce a large two storey dwelling orientated at an angle from the highway and incorporating a large double garage linked to the building by a flat roofed storage area. Its sprawling footprint would fill almost the full width of the plot giving it an uncomfortably cramped appearance and thereby diminishing the spacious character of this part of the village.
8. Despite excavations to set it down into the plot, its high ridge line and overall massing would result in a tall and substantial building that would be seen as a bulky and overly assertive addition to the street scene. The extensive use of timber cladding to the upper part of the elevations and the lack of architectural detailing at eaves level would add to the building's prominence, giving it a top-heavy appearance. Moreover, its arrangement in the plot, turning away from the village, would fail to successfully integrate with the established pattern of development here and would accentuate its visually discordant and obtrusive appearance.
9. The design approach of attempting to appear like a contemporary converted agricultural building would be contrived and the extent of glazing, including rooflights, would be at odds with this design ethos. Moreover, agricultural buildings do not feature in the site's immediate surroundings and therefore this design approach is not suitable at this location. I accept that there are some elements of its design and proposed suite of materials that have evolved from those found at the neighbouring property, Greenthwaite, which has recently been redeveloped to a high standard. However, the scale, design and execution of materials is markedly different and at odds with the surrounding area.
10. A band of trees would, to an extent, limit the building's visual presence in views from the south, yet it would be visible in views on the approach into the village from the west and would also be highly visible in public views from the nearby coast to coast footpath across the road from the site. The development is likely to be imperceptible in long-range views, but this does not overcome its incongruous appearance in its immediate surroundings.
11. For all these reasons, the proposal would result in a bulky and cramped form of development, lacking architectural integrity and therefore failing to integrate well with its surroundings. As such, it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and, while reasonably localised in its extent, would fail to conserve or enhance the local landscape of this part of the Lake District National Park.
12. It follows, therefore, that this localised landscape harm would amount to less than substantial harm to the significance and outstanding universal value of the English Lake District World Heritage Site (WHS), a designated heritage asset. As such, I give considerable importance and weight to such harm. In weighing this harm against the public benefits, the proposal would provide a new home that would add to local housing supply, providing economic benefits during its construction and subsequent occupation. However, these benefits are tempered by the fact that the proposal would only provide a single new home. Consequently, the benefits would not outweigh the harmful effects on the WHS.

13. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, having due regard to the site's location within the Lake District National Park and the English Lake District World Heritage Site. As a consequence, it would be contrary to Policies CS02, CS03, CS10 and CS11 of the Lake District National Park Core Strategy 2010 which together recognise the national significance and special qualities of the Lake District and seek to achieve design excellence that reinforces distinctiveness of place.
14. I also find conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which seeks to achieve well-designed places and states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks. Areas which have the highest status of protection in these regards. It would also conflict with the heritage policies of the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Furthermore, the scheme would not meet the expectations of good design as set out in the PPG and the accompanying National Design Guide.

Other Matters

15. I acknowledge that the proposed dwelling would include a number of renewable energy technologies and sustainable drainage solutions, but this does not outweigh the harm I have identified.
16. In support of the proposal the appellant has drawn my attention to the village hub building, 'The Gather', which is located further along the street on the opposite side of the road. It is suggested that this building contains locally distinctive elements similar to those presented by the appeal proposal. However, I have limited details of this other development before me and do not know the circumstances that led to it being approved. Furthermore, its surrounding context appears to differ from that of the appeal site and therefore it is not directly comparable. Neither do I consider the proposal to be comparable to that of the neighbouring re-development of Greenthwaite, as its footprint, height, orientation and design is materially different. In any case, I have considered the appeal proposal on its own merits.
17. The appellant refers to positive pre-application discussions with Officers at the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and points out that Officers recommended the application for approval. However, I am mindful that pre-application discussions are informal and not binding on any future decision the LPA may make once a proposal has been subject to the formal planning process. I also note that members of the LPA's Development Control Committee are not duty bound to follow the advice of their Officers. Therefore, these matters do not lead me away from my conclusion on the main issue in this case.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons I have set out, the appeal is dismissed.

J M Tweddle

INSPECTOR