



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 11 February 2020

by Alison Scott BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 June 2020

Appeal A - Ref: APP/G0908/W/19/3240680

Pt Field 5300, Aikton, Wigton, CA7 0JE

- 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 R Crone against the decision of Allerdale Borough Council.
- The application Ref PIP/2019/0006, dated 18 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 May 2019.
- The development proposed is described as New Residential Development.

Appeal B - Ref: APP/G0908/W/19/3240686

Land adjacent to Aikton Arms, Aikton, Wigton CA7 0JE

- 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 R Crone against the decision of Allerdale Borough Council.
- The application Ref PIP/2019/0004, dated 18 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 May 2019.
- The development proposed is described as New Residential Development.

Decision

1. Appeals A and B are dismissed.

Preliminary and Procedural Matters

2. The Permission in Principle (PIP) has 2 stages: the first stage, 'permission in principle', establishes whether a site is suitable in principle for residential development. The second stage 'technical details consent' (TDC) is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. I have considered this proposal as the first stage, as the principle of each scheme.
3. The Allerdale Local Plan has been prepared in two parts. Part 1 (ALP Part 1), was adopted in July 2014. Part 2 of the Local Plan (ALP Part 2) contains site allocations and additional policies to deliver the development requirements and policies in the ALP Part 1. The Planning Inspector in January 2020 has set out his findings and concluded that the Plan is sound subject to their main modifications, and is capable of adoption. As it is close to adoption, I apply substantial weight to this document.
4. Appeal A relates to land adjacent to Bank End farm and forms part of a wider agricultural field known as field 5300, and Appeal B relates to land adjacent to Aikton Arms Public House on the west side of the main road through the village. Both sites extend to approximately 0.19 hectares and are agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows. They are located on the northern side of Aikton. The PIP relates to 1-9 dwellings to each parcel of land.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is:

- Whether the proposed development would be in a suitable location having regard to character and appearance and accessibility.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

6. Aikton is a small village built to a tight grain approximately 3 miles north of Wigton. It is linear in character with dwellings flanking the main road through the village with farmyards behind houses or open fields bordered by hedgerows.
7. The detached two-storey dwelling located adjacent to Bank End farm and on the north of the unmade lane, as well as Aikton Farm on the opposite west side, symbolises the natural end of the run of built development at this point. Beyond this, the agricultural land opens up, creating a physical separation from built development and agricultural land, with the public house also physically detached from the village.
8. The proposed erection of up to nine dwellings under Appeals A and B to each parcel of land, would be at odds with the established grain and layout of the village as it would be physically detached from it. As a result, the proposed dwellings here would appear to intrude into the open countryside.
9. Whilst I note the claim by the appellant that the development would be of high design standard and housing would address the main road, these are matters for the TDC were permission in principle to be granted. However, in this instance, I consider that dwellings in these two proposed locations would not physically connect or integrate with the built fabric of the village. They would instead appear as discordant features that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
10. Accordingly, the proposals under Appeals A and B would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing village and its tight linear grain, contrary to the design principles set out in Policy S4 of the Allerdale Local Plan Part 1 2014, with particular regard to seeking development to respond positively to character, and to integrate well with existing development.

Accessibility

11. Aikton is a small settlement with no public services or amenities save for the public house on its outskirts. There are no footpaths within the village to connect it to other local villages and in any event, there are also very limited public services within the closest villages. Future occupiers of the proposals under Appeals A and B would be required to travel to Wigton some 4 miles away to access community facilities or public services, or indeed to buy very basic essentials.
12. The poor integration with services is also compounded by the fact that the area is not directly served by public transport. As a consequence, there would inevitably be a high reliance on the private car to access everyday shopping needs and thus additional motor vehicle movements generated.

13. Access to local services via a pre-booked County Council led '*Rural Wheels*' bus transport scheme, or other rural transport initiative, may be available. However, this could have its own limitations including pricing point and its accessibility, availability and long-term aspirations. The limited information submitted about this Rural Wheels service does not provide sufficient confidence that this scheme is a viable alternative to the private car. No other forms of sustainable travel have been explored in detail.
14. I acknowledge that the proposals could support the local school. This school is approximately 2.4km from the appeal sites in another village. As identified, there is however no public transport available within the village or safe and convenient routes to walk to school, and at a 60MPH road, pedestrian safety would be compromised. Although the sites may be part of a Parish that supports the local school, whilst both Appeal's A and B combined would be up to 18 new homes, there is no evidence to demonstrate the need to support the local school. I find no reason to justify these proposals solely to support the school, and I attribute limited weight in this regard.
15. The proposals would conflict with Policy S4 of the LP in so far as it would not meet the policy expectations to achieve a sustainable community given it would poorly relate to local services.

Other Matters

16. The appellant states within their Statement of Case that they are of the view that the relevant policies of the development plan most important for determining the appeals, are out of date.
17. Policy S3 of the ALP Part 1 relates to spatial strategy and growth and defines the settlement hierarchy to direct development, and the exceptions to this. The settlement limits from the 1999 Local Plan and the housing numbers for each settlement have been transposed into the 2014 LP. The Council confirms the housing settlement and housing growth thereof, are out of date. However, this is not to say that all the policy is out of date. The policy is considered to be consistent with the Framework in other respects as it allows for homes where there is an essential need for a rural worker. Consequently, I apply moderate weight to this policy.
18. Policy S4 of the ALP Part 1 sets the design principles new development should meet. This is highly consistent with the broad aims of the Framework to achieve well designed places. This policy is both relevant, and up to date in relation to the determination of these appeals. I have applied full weight to this most important of the development plan policies in my decision making.
19. On this basis, taken as a whole, I conclude that these development plan policies remain relevant and up to date for the determination of this appeal and in this regard, paragraph 11d of the Framework is not engaged.
20. In addition, I am aware of the intentions of the Framework to support a prosperous rural economy and this is promoted by the appellant, although the provision of up to 18 new homes would make little meaningful difference, and therefore I apply limited weight to this economic contribution.
21. The social benefit in providing extra housing units and the economic advantages that would also arise from the construction industry, although in a short-term capacity, I recognise. Whilst these factors are material in this

consideration, the contribution these benefits would bring would amount to very moderate weight in the overall consideration of the appeals.

Planning Balance

22. Bringing all matters together, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires me to determine the appeal in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. I conclude that no material considerations lead me to determine otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

23. I conclude that Appeals A and B should be dismissed.

Alison Scott

INSPECTOR