



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 March 2022

by Paul Martinson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B2355/W/21/3285842

Close Nook Farm, Rochdale Road, Turn Village, Ramsbottom BL0 ORR

- 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 C Brown against the decision of Rossendale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2021/0066, dated 14 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as 'replacement agricultural building'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There is another appeal¹ currently under consideration at this site relating to the demolition of the farmhouse and erection of a replacement building. However, I have considered this appeal on the basis of the circumstances before me, and I cannot be certain that the other appeal would be allowed.
3. Rossendale Borough Council adopted a new local plan on 15 December 2021, the Rossendale Local Plan 2019-2036 (the RLP), which was after the submission of the appeal. I have determined the appeal in accordance with the most up-to-date policies.

Main Issue

4. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. It is common ground between the parties that the proposal is not inappropriate development having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). As such, the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Close Nook Farm comprises a traditional farmhouse with attached stone barn and a further detached blockwork building located opposite and accessed from the adjacent field. The buildings are surrounded by fields in an open upland and attractive landscape with an overwhelmingly rural character. The distinct lack of buildings within this landscape adds to the open character of the area. Being sited at a high point in the landscape, the appeal buildings are visible for considerable distances, including from Rochdale Road (A680) to the north,

¹ APP/B2355/W/21/3286680

Black Lane to the south and from a number of local public rights of way, including the Rossendale Way to the north.

6. The existing detached barn consists of a central blockwork section with open, lightweight lean-to shelters to either side. These are in a state of disrepair. The main section of the building has a reasonably narrow gable that is similar in width to that of the adjacent farmhouse, although seen alongside one another, the eaves and ridge of the roof of the farmhouse are noticeably higher.
7. It is proposed to demolish the existing blockwork building and attached structures and construct a new agricultural building in its place, albeit over a substantially larger footprint². It is also proposed to demolish a barn attached to the existing farmhouse (although this is not included within the red line of the site location plan, nor are any other plans provided showing how this would alter the appearance of the dwelling). The proposed building would extend into the adjacent field and, whilst existing elevation drawings have not been provided, based on my assessment on site, and the information provided in the appellant's statement, it would extend to a noticeably greater height than the building it would replace. Indeed, I am of the view that it would extend to a height that would be comparable to or exceed that of the existing dwelling.
8. The proposed building's substantial scale, particularly when compared to that of the existing building (and, to an extent, the adjacent dwelling) would cause it to appear highly dominant within its overtly open upland setting. The solid appearance and lack of the open sections present in the existing building would add to the overall bulk of the structure. Alongside its scale and bulk, the four roller shutter doors would give the building an industrial appearance which would appear alien in this setting and harmful to the open upland character. This would be highly evident in views from the public rights of way to the north, including the Rossendale Way as well as the public right of way running along the boundary of the adjacent field to the east. The proposal would also be highly prominent in views from Black Lane and Rochdale Road where it would be seen against the skyline.
9. Whilst the appellant argues that the scale of the increase in size of the building (based on floor area) is only 20.5%, this measurement includes the floor area of the barn attached to the dwelling that is also proposed to be demolished. This is a traditional building with a narrow gable and low roof height that sits comfortably in this setting, attached to the existing dwelling, in contrast with the building proposed. Given that the proposal would also be in a different location to this existing building, the visual effects of the two buildings are not comparable.
10. I accept that the proposed building would be sited close to the existing dwelling which could help to mitigate some of its visual harm through interrupting views of the structure, particularly from the east. However, given the substantial scale and bulk of the proposal and its industrial appearance, it would appear out of scale with the much smaller dwelling and this would to my mind only serve to emphasise the dominance of the building within its setting. Whilst agricultural buildings can be common within rural areas, in my experience buildings of the scale and bulk proposed are rarely sited in such prominent and exposed positions in the landscape.

² Based on the proposed site plan

11. Whilst buildings of 1000 square metres are permitted under the GPDO, that is not what is before me. Moreover, to meet the requirements of the GPDO such proposals are required to conform to a number of criteria as well as needing prior approval for the siting, design and external appearance of the building.
12. Very limited evidence has been provided with regard to the existing business. Therefore it is not possible to conclude that any economic benefits would outweigh the harm I have identified above.
13. For the above reasons, the proposal would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy ENV1 of the RLP which requires development proposals to take account of the character and appearance of the area. There would also be significant conflict with Policy ENV3 of the RLP which seeks to protect and enhance the distinctive landscape character of Rossendale through supporting proposals which are in scale and keeping with the landscape character, and which are appropriate to their surroundings in terms of siting, design, density, materials, and external appearance and landscaping. There would also be conflict with Framework paragraph 174 which seeks to ensure planning decisions recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
14. Conflict would also occur with Policies 1, 18, 21, 23 and 24 of the Rossendale Core Strategy DPD (2011) insofar as they seek to safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside and ensure new development is compatible with its surroundings.

Other Matters

15. Reference has been made to a large area of hardstanding and access track however, neither form part of the appeal proposal before me.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Martinson

INSPECTOR