



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 March 2022

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/21/3288607

Land south of Embleton Hall and behind Front Street, Longframlington

- 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 John Thompson against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01136/FUL, dated 11 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'construction of one detached dwelling with integral garage'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development set out above is taken from that stated on the planning application form. During the course of the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) consideration of the application an amended scheme was submitted, and which omitted the integral garage from the proposal. I have considered the appeal on that basis.
3. The Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036 (the NPL) was adopted by the LPA on 31 March 2022. This suite of policies now forms the statutory development plan for the county of Northumberland and replace the Alnwick District Local Development Framework Core Strategy. In addition, the Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036 (the LNP) was formally 'made' on 8 March 2022. Accordingly, both main parties were invited to provide their comments on these matters. I have subsequently determined the appeal having regard to the relevant policies of the NPL, the LNP and in light of the comments made by the parties in these regards.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the local development strategy for the area, and its effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a largely rectangular area of land as part of a larger agricultural field and adjacent to an area of woodland to the east of the A697 public highway and beyond the built up area of Longframlington. The main built up area of the village is to the south and west of the site, with Embleton Hall to the north. Despite a recent development of two new dwellings to the south, the

site is generally surrounded by undeveloped countryside, reinforcing its intrinsic rural character.

6. Policy STP 1 of the NLP outlines the LPA's spatial strategy and generally resists development in the open countryside, beyond defined settlement boundaries. This approach is echoed by LNP Policy LNP1 which states, among other things, that only exceptional development proposals that satisfy national and strategic planning policy will be supported outside the settlement boundary.
7. It is common ground between the parties that the site is located beyond the settlement boundary and is therefore considered as open countryside in policy terms. In such locations, development is limited to those listed in criteria g. i. to vii. of the policy. This includes residential development in accordance with the provisions of policies HOU 7 and HOU 8.
8. Policy HOU 7 permits exception sites for the development of entry-level and affordable housing along with self-build, custom-build and community-led housing projects where there is a demonstrable need. Given that the proposal is for market-let housing, this policy provision does not apply. Policy HOU 8 provides circumstances when isolated homes in the countryside could be supported. However, given the site's close proximity to the built up area of Longframlington, I consider that it is not isolated. Even if the proposal was to represent an isolated home, the proposal would not comply with any of the exception criteria set out in the policy or the equivalent provisions set out at paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
9. Turning to character and appearance, the site falls within an area of lowland rolling farmland, as defined by the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment. The open and undeveloped character of the site and the surrounding farmland provide a strong rural setting to the village. The proposal would introduce built form and associated domestic paraphernalia that would significantly alter the character of the site. Despite the design having been revised to appear as a traditional field barn, by its very nature, the development would diminish the site's open and undeveloped rural character. As such, the proposal would lead to a prominent and permanent intrusion of development into the countryside setting of the village that would result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
10. Accordingly, the proposal would frustrate the LPA's spatial strategy, harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and run contrary to the provisions of the LNP. In doing so, the proposal would, to a moderate degree, undermine public confidence in the plan-led approach to managing development.
11. In reaching these findings, I have had regard to the other permissions and appeal decisions that the appellant has drawn to my attention. However, these other cases reflect different locational circumstances and, in some cases, a different quantum of development. I also note that all of these other decisions were made under a different local policy framework, where some policies were considered to be out of date. Therefore, I have necessarily considered the appeal proposal against the policies of the newly adopted NLP, the LNP, and with regard to the site's unique spatial characteristics.
12. Bringing all of these points together, I conclude that the site is not a suitable location for the proposed development, having regard to the local development

strategy for the area, and its effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies STP 1, QOP 1, ENV 1 and ENV 3 of the NLP, which together, seek to deliver sustainable patterns of development that make a positive contribution to local character, and which conserve and enhance Northumberland's distinctive landscape. Accordingly, the proposal would also conflict with Policy LNP1 of the LNP, which seeks to steer development to locations within the settlement boundary and for proposals to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Other Matters

13. I acknowledge the lack of any objections from the Council's Environmental Protection Team, Highways Department and Environment and Design Team. Nor has there been an objection from the local Parish Council. Nevertheless, these are neutral considerations that do not detract from the harm I have identified and the consequent policy conflicts.
14. The site falls within the setting of Embleton Hall, a Grade II listed building. Therefore, it is incumbent on me to apply the statutory duty set out at s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which compels me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.
15. The listed building is set within a rolling agricultural landscape that accentuates its historic and architectural significance as a grand country residence. The undeveloped character of the appeal site makes a positive contribution to the building's landscape setting. The LPA considers that the proposal would have a neutral impact on the setting of the listed building and, from the evidence before me, I see no reason to depart from this view. Accordingly, the setting of the listed building would be preserved and there would be no conflict with the statutory duty. However, this matter does not alter my findings on the main issue or lead me away from my overall conclusion.

Conclusion

16. The proposed development would be contrary to the policies of the development plan and no considerations of sufficient weight have been put forward to outweigh this conflict.
17. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

J M Tweddle

INSPECTOR