



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 August 2023

by H Senior BA (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N2345/W/22/3313070

Land associated with Dam House Inglewhite Road, Preston PR3 2EB

- 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 Tom Townley (J Townley Ltd) against the decision of Preston City Council.
 - The application Ref 06/2022/0289, dated 8 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 28 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is conversion and extension of barn to form 1no. dwelling, including new vehicular access, drive and parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form does not include the full address of the appeal so I have taken the address from the decision notice.
3. During the application process the scheme was amended to reduce the size of the glazed link and remove the car port. These amended plans were used by the Council when determining the application and I have had regard to them in determining the appeal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed development is consistent with development plan policy relating to the reuse of rural buildings, and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

Reuse of rural buildings

5. The barn is a modest disused stone building close to Inglewhite Road. It is in poor condition with a collapsed slate roof and internal timbers.
6. Policy EN1 of the Preston Local Plan 2015 (Local Plan) limits development in the open countryside to a few exceptions including the re-use/re-habitation of existing buildings. The aims of the policy are to protect the open countryside from unacceptable development which would harm its open and rural character. Details regarding the re-use of buildings are contained in the Central Lancashire Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

7. Paragraph 49 of the SPD states, that for a rural building to be appropriate for re-use, it must be permanent and substantial and should not require significant extension. It goes on to indicate that extensions to dwellings that increase the volume of the original building over 50% will not be considered favourably. Whilst the figure of 50% increase in size relates to extensions to dwellings not conversion of buildings, it has been accepted by both parties as an appropriate indication of proportionate additions to buildings. Para 59 goes on to say extensions to buildings are appropriate development provided that they do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
8. The proposed single storey extension to the barn to create a two bedroomed dwelling would increase the volume by approximately 73% and the area by approximately 110%. I accept that the proposal has been revised to reduce the size of the proposed extension and that the extension would be to the rear of the barn and not highly visible from Inglewhite Road. However, the scale of the increase is considerably greater than allowed under the SPD and therefore it would be disproportionate extension to the building.
9. There is no substantive evidence before me to indicate the housing need in the area and that a one-bedroom property would not be viable. I therefore give this matter limited weight.
10. For the above reasons I conclude that the proposal would not accord with development plan policy relating to the reuse of rural buildings. It would conflict with Policy EN1 of Local Plan which, amongst other matters seeks to protect the open countryside from unacceptable development which would harm its open and rural character. It would also conflict with the guidance in the SPD.

Character and appearance

11. The proposed vehicular access would be approximately 107metres long and 4 metres wide with passing places and located at the nearby existing field gate to allow the creation of adequate visibility splays. In addition to serving the proposed dwelling, the track would also serve the existing dwelling, Dam House, which although does have vehicular access, is considered to be substandard.
12. Although the track would have a gravel surface and the appearance of a farm track, its excessive length and large areas of gravel necessary to create the passing places would have an urbanising effect on the area and be inappropriate in the open countryside.
13. I have had examples of long access tracks to dwellings brought to my attention. Whilst I do not have the full details of them before me, they appear to be historic tracks, and in some cases incorporate public rights of way. In any event, I have determined the appeal on the site-specific circumstances of this case.
14. Whilst I note that the local highway authority welcomed the removal of part of an existing hedge, that was in order to improve visibility sightlines. It does not support the proposal in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

15. Whilst the creation of a safer access to Dam House would be a benefit of the scheme, there is no evidence before me of accident or other data in this location. I therefore give this moderate weight in favour of the proposal, however this would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance I have found.
16. I conclude that the vehicular access, drive and parking would harm the character and appearance of the countryside. It would conflict with Policy 21 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy 2012 which amongst other matters, seeks to ensure that development is well integrated into existing settlement patterns.

Planning Balance

17. The proposed development would create a two-bedroom dwelling adding to the Council's housing stock and supporting the Government's objective of boosting the supply of homes.
18. However, the appeal proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and not meet the requirements of Policy EN1 with regard to the reuse of buildings. In this case, the harm that would result would outweigh the benefits arising from the proposed development.

Conclusion

19. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, that outweigh this conflict. I therefore conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

H Senior

INSPECTOR