



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 July 2024

by H Jones BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/24/3340789

Land north of 1 and 2 Front Street, Lyneburn Grange, Ellington

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Dan Taylor against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01317/FUL.
 - The development proposed is 1 no. 4 bedroom bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Dan Taylor against Northumberland County Council. This is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. In December 2023, and since the Council made its decision on the application, a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published. I have had regard to the revised Framework insofar as it is relevant to this appeal.
4. A signed unilateral undertaking (UU) has been submitted. The principal purpose of the UU is to secure a financial contribution towards mitigation measures in relation to the potential for the development to result in recreational activity that would adversely affect Habitats Sites on the Northumberland coast. I consider this matter later in my decision.

Main Issues

5. The effects of the development upon the character and appearance of the area including its effects upon heritage assets.

Reasons

6. The appeal site predominantly comprises of garden land located to the rear of 1 and 2 Front Street in Ellington. Much of the appeal site is laid out as lawn and it includes trees, hedgerows and other plantings within it and to its edges. This includes plantings between the site and the Lyneburn Grange road. Consequently, and even though it is mostly private space, the site and the roadside next to it exhibit a verdant character which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area.

7. Nos 1 and 2 High Farm Cottage and outbuilding to east (the High Farm Cottages), located on the opposite side of the road to the appeal site, are Grade II listed. The statutory duty contained within section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings and any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.
8. Once a farmhouse, the High Farm Cottages are of historic value – providing evidence of the area’s agricultural heritage. The listed buildings include traditional design features and materials such as sash windows, coursed squared local sandstone with stone lintels and sills, and these exude architectural and artistic interest. These facets of interest also contribute strongly to its significance as a designated heritage asset.
9. The High Farm Cottages are prominently located beside Front Street and Lyneburn Grange, and so they are readily visible in approaches to them. This setting, which allows for their architectural and artistic interest to be appreciated, contributes meaningfully to their significance.
10. Ellington contains a historic core. This comprises of linear development along Front St and Ashington Road, as shown on the first edition ordnance survey map, concentrated around the junction of the two roads. This area includes the aforementioned listed buildings, the cottages beside the appeal site (the Front Street Cottages) including 1 and 2 Front Street and the Plough Inn opposite them. This historic core illustrates the village’s agrarian origins and aspects of living and working in the village in the past. This part of the village therefore exhibits historic interest.
11. The buildings within this historic core also display a traditional design, some features of which are common to the various buildings, and this provides a strong sense of cohesion. Well-defined boundaries also notably feature. From this, architectural and artistic interest is derived. Greener spaces such as grass verges and gardens are also present in this part of the village which also contribute positively to the area. Being so close to the likes of the High Farm Cottages, and the Front Street Cottages to the south, the appeal site forms part of the surroundings to which the historic core is experienced.
12. Whilst the Council’s identification of Ellington’s historic core has emerged quite recently and, it seems, in not an especially coordinated manner, it is nevertheless the case that the decision-making process on a planning application is a route by which non-designated heritage assets can be identified. I have summarised above the elements of heritage interest of Ellington’s historic core, and it has a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration. Consequently, it is a non-designated heritage asset.
13. In views from Front Street the appeal site is visible to the rear of both the High Farm Cottages and the Front Street Cottages. The site’s largely undeveloped character, its trees and other plantings are appreciable. Similarly, from Lyneburn Grange and the back lane access to the Front Street Cottages, the verdant nature of the site is experienced, but this time in the foreground.
14. To make way for the proposed dwelling and its access, trees and plantings on the site and verge adjacent would be lost, and the land would become considerably more built-up. The site’s verdant character in the surroundings to

which both the designated and non-designated heritage assets are experienced would be eroded. In some views from Lyneburn Grange elements of the Front Street Cottages and the Plough Inn would also be obscured by the development proposed which would detract from the legibility of Ellington's historic core.

15. For these reasons the development would harm the significance of each asset. The development would fail to preserve the listed building's setting. The harm would result even if the Council's particular assertions about the strength of historical linkages between the appeal site, the High Farm Cottages and the Front Street Cottages are inaccurate.
16. I note the deliberate efforts made to ensure that the design of the proposed dwelling would be sympathetic to the historic buildings within Ellington. However, this would not serve to address, nor adequately mitigate, the harm I have explained would arise to the existing character of the site and how this presently contributes positively to the area and the heritage assets.
17. In some views, the proposed development would conceal existing bungalows on Lyneburn Grange. Whilst I accept that those existing bungalows do not have a design very reflective of Ellington's historic core, the harmful effects of transforming the appeal site with the development proposed would outweigh any positive effects derived from some of the existing Lyneburn Grange development being obscured. Therefore, in the round, beneficial effects upon the heritage assets I have identified would not result, rather, harm to each would be the outcome overall.
18. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of other developments in the area. Firstly, the full details of all of these cases are not before me and, as a result, it is not possible to draw accurate comparisons between all of those schemes and that proposed in this appeal.
19. Regardless, I note that some of the developments referred to were extensions and additions to existing dwellings, and so they are likely of a quite different scale and character to the provision of a new dwelling. One of these planning permissions has lapsed and so it cannot be implemented. More details have been provided to me in respect of the Plough Inn development. I viewed this development during my visit, and I noted that the recently erected dwellings were sited quite a considerable distance away from the pub and other historic core buildings, and certainly further than the Front Street Cottages are from the proposed siting of the dwelling before me. Therefore, there are marked differences between the schemes. For this collection of reasons, none of the cited developments weigh in favour of the proposal to any meaningful extent.
20. Furthermore, whether permitted development rights remain intact for the appeal site does not have a bearing upon the site's contribution to the area and the heritage assets. Neither has it been shown to me that the exercising of permitted development rights could result in development with effects very comparable to the appeal scheme. This matter is also, therefore, of limited weight in determination.
21. The harm I have identified to the designated heritage asset would be less than substantial. Even so, such harm is a matter of considerable importance and weight in my determination.

22. Policy ENV7 of the Northumberland Local Plan (LP) and the Framework each set out that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The LP and the Framework also set out that where a proposal would affect the significance of a non-designated heritage asset a balanced judgement is required taking into account the scale of any harm and the significance of the asset.
23. The proposal would provide a boost to housing supply. In providing a new home it would provide a choice for home-seekers and a home potentially suitable for a range of occupants. However, in providing only a single dwelling, the contribution made in these respects would be very modest.
24. Even though the local school is not at capacity, the evidence before me that the school is under any tangible threat because of this is not compelling. Furthermore, the contribution that a single dwelling could potentially make to the school's financial viability would, I expect, be modest. The development would provide some support for other local and rural services too. Some benefit would derive from this but, again, given the scale of development proposed, it would be limited.
25. The evidence before me that the development would achieve a biodiversity net gain is not compelling. Consequently, the weight I can attribute to the development achieving this is, again, limited.
26. Given all that is before me, I find that the public benefits that would be derived from the development would be insufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset.
27. In addition, the proposal would cause harm to the significance of Ellington's historic core as a non-designated heritage asset. Although it is not a heritage asset of as much importance as the listed High Farm Cottages, the harm which would be caused to it is sufficient that I afford it a moderate amount of weight in my decision.
28. Therefore, the development would result in harmful effects upon the character and appearance of the area and upon the significance of heritage assets. The proposal conflicts with Policy ENV7 of the LP. Amongst other matters, this policy seeks to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the significance of heritage assets including their settings, with any less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets required to be balanced against the public benefits of the proposal and a balanced approach taken where harm to a non-designated heritage asset is identified. The proposal would also conflict with those policies within the Framework which set out like requirements.

Other Matters

29. The principle of a new dwelling within the built-up area of Ellington may be acceptable and the development may not cause harm in relation to a range of other material considerations. However, the absence of harm is a neutral factor in my determination and does not outweigh the harm I have identified in my main issues.
30. The proposal has the potential to contribute to an increase in recreational activity on Northumberland's coast which could adversely affect the integrity of

Habitats Sites in that area. If I were minded to allow the appeal, I would need to be satisfied that the proposal would have no adverse effects on the integrity of these sites. Given I am dismissing the appeal, there is no requirement for me to undertake this assessment. Even if I were to conclude that no such adverse effects would be caused by the development it would be a neutral factor in this appeal.

Conclusion

31. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations in this case, including the Framework, do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Jones

INSPECTOR