



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 March 2025

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/F2360/W/25/3358588

1 Higher Nabs Head Farm, Nabs Head Lane, Samlesbury, Preston PR5 0UQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr/Mrs Frank and Elizabeth Barnes/Smith against the decision of South Ribble Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 07/2024/00482/PIP.
 - The development proposed is application for permission in principle for 4 family dwellings on land adjacent Further Lane, Samlesbury.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal relates to permission in principle, which the Planning Practice Guidance advises is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first (or permission in principle) stage establishes whether a site is suitable in principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. The appeal relates to the first stage.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development. All other matters are considered as part of the subsequent Technical Details application, if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issues are:
 - i) Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - ii) The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - iii) Whether the site is suitable in principle for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and amount of development; and
 - iv) Whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether or not inappropriate development

5. The appeal relates to part of an agricultural field on the outskirts of a small rural settlement, Nabs Head Lane. The appeal site extends along Further Lane from the edge of the residential built environment and it finishes at the field boundary in the east. It is bounded to the front by the rural road and to the rear by farmed land. It is in the Green Belt.
6. The Framework sets out that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Policy G1 of the South Ribble Borough Council Local Plan (2012-2026) Adopted July 2015 (the LP) sets out exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, including limited infilling in villages. This is consistent with the exception in Framework paragraph 154e) limited infilling in villages.
7. The appeal site abuts the residential terrace at the edge of the settlement. However, the next closest building to the other side is a considerable distance away. The site is bordered by undeveloped land to three sides and it is a continuous part of the farmed land and countryside that surrounds Nabs Head Lane. It is not within the built envelope of the settlement nor is it a gap between buildings in a built up frontage or in a building group. The proposal would be the encroachment of built development in the countryside.
8. Therefore, the proposal would not be limited infilling in villages for the purposes of paragraph 154e) of the Framework. It would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in conflict with LP Policy G1 and the policies in the Framework that protect the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt

9. The Framework advises that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Thus, the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness, which has both spatial and visual aspects, and their permanence.
10. The appeal site occupies the road frontage of a large field enclosed by boundary hedges with scattered trees. From the roadside, long views are afforded across the site towards the wider rural landscape with its rolling fields, hedgerows, trees, woodlands and scattered rural development.
11. The appeal relates to the permission in principle stage such that there are no detailed plans of the development. However, the plots would be considerably larger than the terraced and semi-detached housing plots that characterise the nearby settlement. Each plot would be developed with a family dwelling, hardstanding for the parking and manoeuvring of several vehicles, residential gardens with associated domestic paraphernalia and new boundary treatments.
12. By virtue of the bulk and footprint of 4 new dwellings and hardstanding, there would be a significant spatial loss of openness. Taking into account the prominent roadside location, the proposal would be readily visible from the surrounding area. It would dominate the approach to the village and interrupt the far-reaching views across the landscape. Irrespective of the design of the dwellings, the ribbon of residential development would have a conspicuous urbanising effect in this

location. Consequently, there would be a significant visual loss of openness as a result of the quantum of development and associated residential activity.

13. Therefore, the proposal would result in a permanent spatial and visual impact on openness. Taking into account the scale and nature of the proposal, this would equate to a moderate and harmful loss of openness of the Green Belt.
14. I note the appellants' comments in relation to the Green Belt purposes, and in particular that the appeal site does not function to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. However, the Green Belt serves five purposes, one of which is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Whether the location is suitable for residential development

15. The dwellings would be on the outskirts of Nabs Head Lane, largely beyond the 30mph limit entering the village. There is no footway along the majority of the appeal site frontage and the street lights in the settlement do not extend along Further Lane beyond the nearby terrace. Nevertheless, it would be a relatively short walk for future occupiers to reach the settlement.
16. Historically there was a school, churches, village shop, public house and bus stop in the village. The churches have apparently been converted into dwellings and I understand that there is no longer a school or shop. While there are still bus stops, these are not in use. Future occupiers would therefore need to travel further afield to larger settlements in order to meet their reasonable daily needs.
17. I note the suggestion that the location is perfect for green forms of transport. However, given the distances to larger and more sustainable settlements, the nature of the intervening rural roads and the absence of a bus service, sustainable forms of transport would not be realistic options. Future occupiers would be reliant on private car journeys. The location would not offer a genuine choice of transport mode nor would it minimise the need to travel.
18. The proposal would not be affordable rural housing to meet local needs nor do the dwellings require a rural location. Four dwellings would help sustain the viability and vitality of the public house but, in the absence of other community facilities, there would be limited social benefits. Moreover, there is little evidence that the proposal would help support local services in a village nearby. Consequently, the location would not be suitable for new residential development, taking into account the accessibility of shops, services and sustainable transport modes.

Other considerations

19. The appellants intend to construct SIPS housing, which is apparently a resource and energy efficient form of construction. In this regard, the Framework supports prudent use of natural resources, waste and pollution minimisation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, the description of the proposal refers only to family dwellings. The detailed design would be a matter for a subsequent Technical Details Consent application. The future design of the dwellings does not weigh in favour of the appeal. While the dwellings might be wheelchair-accessible, this is not reflected in the description and it also carries neutral weight.
20. I note reference to a major Cyber Corridor. While this would create employment and could increase the demand for housing locally, it does not supersede the development plan. Moreover, no planning applications relating to the cyber corridor

have either been made or determined. Neither the future cyber corridor nor the existing BAE Samlesbury site weigh in favour of the scheme.

21. My attention has been drawn to planning applications and permissions for development elsewhere in the Green Belt. I understand the Cuerdale Garden Village application has not been determined and in any case a planned settlement is not directly comparable to 4 dwellings on the outskirts of a village. Where schemes are permitted in the Green Belt, it follows that they have either been found to be not inappropriate development or there were very special circumstances to justify them. Each scheme must be considered on its own merits, and different schemes in different contexts do not weigh in favour of the proposal.
22. The Framework supports the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, with the overall aim of meeting an area's identified housing need. In this regard, the appellant states that the poor rate of new builds has resulted in a serious housing shortfall between 2010/11 and the present day. However, the Government's latest published Housing Delivery Test data shows that the Council's 2023 measurement is 326%. Even if there was a shortfall in the Council's 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, paragraph 11d) of the Framework is clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance, including land designated as Green Belt, provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

Green Belt Balance

23. I have concluded that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in conflict with the local and national policies that protect the Green Belt. It would also result in a harmful loss of openness of the Green Belt. These matters attract substantial weight.
24. There are no other considerations that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and loss of openness. Therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist.

Conclusion

25. For the above reasons, I conclude that the site is not suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.
26. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR