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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 April 2025

by **Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/N2345/W/25/3359494**

**Dam House, Inglewhite Road, Goosnargh, Preston PR3 2EB**

- 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 and Mrs A Coop against the decision of Preston City Council.
  - The application Ref is 06/2024/0743.
  - The development proposed is described as resubmission of application 06/2023/0234 New vehicular access to Dam House including closure of existing vehicular access.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. Planning permission<sup>1</sup> was refused in 2022, and subsequently dismissed on appeal<sup>2</sup>, for conversion and extension of barn to form 1no. dwelling, including new vehicular access at Dam House. Planning permission<sup>3</sup> was again refused in 2023 for a new vehicular access, including closure of existing vehicular access and relocation of approved garage under application 06/2021/1163. The appeal scheme has been amended from the earlier proposals, including in terms of the position of the access road and additional screen planting.
3. Although not included in the description of the development, the submitted plans illustrate relocation of the approved garage. The Council has no concerns in relation to the garage and I see no reason to disagree.

### Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the countryside.

### Reasons

5. Dam House is a somewhat isolated former farmhouse sited close to and accessed from Inglewhite Road, which is a typical rural road bounded by grass verges and mature rural hedgerows. The appeal site is part of a gently undulating undeveloped field that borders the road. It is in an area of sparsely developed rolling countryside with grassland fields, hedgerows, scattered trees and patches of woodland.
6. The proposed access road would span the width of the field between the existing field gateway in the north-east corner and the garden boundary of Dam House to

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<sup>1</sup> Ref 06/2022/0289

<sup>2</sup> Ref APP/N2345/W/22/3313070

<sup>3</sup> Ref 06/2023/0234

the north-west. It would then cross the garden of the appeal property to finish at the gravelled parking area to the rear of the dwelling. In total, the new access would be over 100m long and somewhere around 3m wide. Where it passed through the field, it would be enclosed by new hedgerows to either side and accessed via a five barred timber gate, with pedestrian gate and cattlegrid at the end of the enclosure. This driveway entrance would open onto a large gravelled area close to the highway, which would be separated from the field to the rear by a stock proof fence with field gateway and it would be accessed from the road by a further timber gate.

7. The proposed gravel surface with central grass strip would not be dissimilar to the surfacing of rural agricultural access tracks. However, the general arrangement and roadside siting of the proposal would be unusual and not typical of a track serving either farmed land or agricultural buildings. Indeed, the enclosed driveway, with gated entrance and roadside domestic waste and recycling storage, would be an overtly residential feature. That being said, by virtue of its length and distance from Dam House, and the intervening screening, the proposal would not be visually well related to the appeal property.
8. In addition to the driveway and large gravelled enclosure, the access from the highway would be hard surfaced for several metres from the carriageway. This would result in a more formal arrangement and a marked visual change from the existing typically rural field entrance with its irregular and rough compacted stone surface. The residential access, with hedgerows and timber gates, would be conspicuous, including in juxtaposition with the various field gateways and agricultural metal gates that serve the surrounding farmed land in this location.
9. I understand that the landscape planting has been bolstered from the earlier scheme. However, even if vegetation could be relied upon to screen unacceptable development from view, it would be many years before the new hedgerow and tree planting reached maturity. Even then, while mixed native species planting would be appropriate for the countryside location, it would provide variable screening benefits throughout the year depending upon whether or not vegetation was in leaf.
10. While small woodland copses may be a feature of the local landscape, the proposal would very clearly be two roughly parallel hedgerows to either side of a residential driveway. It would not be a woodland copse. The long linear driveway enclosure would be a discordant feature that would be poorly related to the rural landscape.
11. The extensive hardstanding near the highway and the gated entrance to the driveway would be readily visible at all times of year. Taking into account local topography, it seems likely that the driveway would also be visible rising away from the highway access. Particularly during low light and overnight, the use of the driveway would be conspicuous due to car headlights heading up and down the slope from the highway entrance, roughly parallel with highway traffic.
12. Notwithstanding the additional planting, I agree with the previous Inspector insofar as the excessive length of the track and the wide gravel passing places would have an urbanising effect on the area that would be out of character in the open countryside. The proposal would be an incongruous and visually obtrusive feature that would not contribute to local distinctiveness or sense of place.
13. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would significantly harm the rural character and appearance of the countryside. The proposal would conflict with Policy EN1 of Preston Local Plan 2012-2026 Adopted July 2015 and Policy 21 of Central

Lancashire Core Strategy Adopted July 2012. These seek to limit development in the open countryside, with exceptions including where it would be necessary for the purposes of agriculture or forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area, and subject to it contributing positively to the landscape character.

### **Other Matters**

14. The appeal is supported by an appraisal of the existing and proposed accesses. This reports that the Dam House access does not meet the relevant Manual for Streets stopping sight distances. It notes that substandard sightlines could increase the risk of collision for vehicles leaving the site and those waiting to turn right into it, and it could also be hazardous during roadside refuse collections.
15. I do not disagree that substandard sightlines can pose a risk to highway safety, but it is not the case that all historic accesses that do not meet modern standards fail to operate safely. In this regard, while I acknowledge the appellants' concerns in relation to the safety of the existing access to Dam House, there is little substantive evidence of safety issues including incidents or accidents in this location. I also note the suggestion that the cleansing team are concerned about the collection of bins from the existing location but, in the absence of substantive evidence in this regard, this carries little weight in favour of the scheme.
16. The Highway Authority does not object to the proposal and it welcomes the proposed re-siting of the hedgerow on the basis this would improve visibility along the westbound carriageway of Inglewhite Road. However, this appears to be commentary in relation to the safety of the proposed new access and I am not aware that this section of road is unsafe. Moreover, it seems possible that the closure of the existing access, the relocation of the hedgerow and the associated alteration of sightlines could result in a change in driver behaviour, including in terms of vehicle speeds. Therefore, I cannot be certain that the proposal would result in a measurable improvement in road safety along Inglewhite Road.
17. In the earlier dismissed appeal, the Inspector found that the creation of a safer access to Dam House would be a benefit that weighed moderately in favour of that scheme. Even so, it did not outweigh the harm to character and appearance and the appeal was dismissed, despite additional benefits in terms of contributing to the supply of homes such as would not be realised by this appeal. However, notwithstanding it would provide improved sightlines, for reasons set out above I am not persuaded that the proposal would provide a demonstrably safer access than the existing. In this regard, I am also mindful that there would be no increase in vehicle movements such as would have been generated by an additional dwelling. Therefore, I attach only modest weight to the purported safety improvements in this case which does not outweigh the harm that I have found.
18. I note planning permission (ref 06/2023/1073) for extension to existing track to provide vehicular access from Bullsnape Lane at Fir Trees Farm. It was proposed primarily to serve a new dwelling formed from the change of use of an agricultural building under Class Q permitted development rights, but it could also be used for an agricultural purpose which is an appropriate rural use. Irrespective of its precise length, the location plan illustrates it as a minor extension to an existing track. In contrast, the proposal would be a wholly new and disproportionately long residential drive to serve an existing dwelling and it would not have a visual or functional association with a rural enterprise. The Council found no harm to

character and appearance in that case, despite apparently similar materials. However, the proposal in this case would not be similar to an existing neighbouring access, nor would it be visually unobtrusive or commensurate with nearby agricultural tracks. Irrespective that it relates to a gravelled track serving a dwelling, that permission does not provide a justification for the appeal which I have considered on its own merits.

19. The submitted Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric indicates that the mandatory minimum 10% net gain would not be achieved. I note that the Council considers that the requirement could be achieved through additional planting which would be in the form of off-site habitat creation, either on other land within the ownership of the appellants or through purchasing Biodiversity Credits. However, while BNG would generally be considered a benefit, in the absence of substantive information in this regard this is a matter that carries little weight in favour of the appeal.

### **Conclusion**

20. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict.
21. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Sarah Manchester*

INSPECTOR