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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2025

by **C Mayes CMLI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 September 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/N2345/W/25/3365711**

**Land at Bay Horse Lane, Catforth, Preston PR4 0HN**

- 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 Stuart Maclean against the decision of Preston City Council.
  - The application Ref is 06/2024/1289.
  - The development proposed is erection of one house and associated development.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (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. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. At the time of their decision the Council could not demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. As such, some policies within the development plan were recognised by both parties as being out-of-date. Since then, the Council have updated their assessment of housing provision within the development plan area and can now demonstrate a 6.7-year supply of housing land. The appellant does not dispute this. Therefore, the relevant policies within the development are now considered up-to-date and I have considered the appeal on that basis.

### Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

### Reasons

6. The strategy for residential development in the Council area is set out in Policy 1 of the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy Local Development Framework, July 2012, (the CS). This policy seeks to direct new housing towards urban areas,

defined settlements and other key locations outside of main urban areas. Catforth is not a defined settlement within the CS and, as such, is a smaller village. In addition, Policy EN1 of the Preston Local Plan 2012-26, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, July 2015, (the LP) directs development toward appropriate locations and limits development in open countryside to, among other things, infilling within groups of buildings in smaller rural settlements.

7. The appeal site is situated on Bay Horse Lane at the edge of the small rural settlement of Catforth. The settlement is within a broadly flat landscape of small to medium sized fields, bounded by hedgerows and punctuated by hedgerow trees, small woods and shelterbelts. Housing within the settlement is largely centred along the main street, Catforth Road. Some development extends short distances along lanes leading from Catforth Road, including along Bay Horse Lane and Square Lane. However, the predominant character is of one of a linear settlement within open countryside.
8. The appeal site is a roughly rectangular area of ground with views to and from open countryside. The site is open to the front to Bay Horse Lane with a small, open field to the rear. Opposite the site, on the other side of Bay Horse Lane, is an agricultural field bounded by hedgerows. Consequently, open countryside can be viewed across the appeal site from both Bay Horse Lane and Square Lane.
9. To one side of the site is mature woodland and to the other side is the unbounded private amenity space of the neighbouring dwelling. The neighbouring property is the last of 3 pairs of semi-detached dwellings that occupy the site of the former Bay Horse Inn and mark the extent of development to this side of the settlement.
10. The appeal site, while seen in conjunction with the row of semi-detached dwellings and development along Square Lane, is not part of this group of houses and not physically enclosed or integrated within an existing cluster of housing. The proposal would be seen as an extension to the row of dwellings along Bay Horse Lane and the wider settlement. In addition, the proposed development would not infill space within or part of the existing dwellings in this part of the settlement but would be seen as an adjunct to them.
11. Hence, the proposed development would erode the predominantly linear pattern of the wider settlement. Furthermore, the proposal would undermine the currently complementary relationship between the built form of the settlement, and its focus on Catforth Road, and the open countryside.
12. While the appeal site may have been formerly part of the garden to the Bay Horse Inn it retains neither the semblance nor character of a garden and any association with the former public house no longer remains. As such, the former use of the site has no bearing on my consideration of this appeal.
13. When considered in this context, the proposal does not constitute infilling within a group of buildings within the settlement. Furthermore, rather than appearing as vacant, underutilised land of no purpose, the development site provides a distinct visual terminus to the settlement with open views to, from and across open countryside. As such, the appeal site has greater affinity with the surrounding open countryside than the adjacent group of dwellings and wider settlement. Accordingly, the appeal site is within open countryside.

14. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the site is not suitable for the development proposed having regard to its location and land use. The proposed development would conflict with Policy 1 of the CS and Policy EN1 of the LP. Alongside setting the locational strategy for development in the Council area, these policies require, among other things, proposals to demonstrate that the siting of development is informed by and respects the character and pattern of development of both the site and its context.

### **Other Matters**

15. I acknowledge that the appeal site is within walking distance of a regular bus service, the local primary school and village hall. However, the location of the appeal site with regards to sustainable transport and local amenities does not outweigh the harm I have found.
16. The appellant argues that the proposal would meet the requirement to boost housing supply and would be located where it can enhance the rural community and support local services. However, the need for housing supply within the settlement is not substantiated nor supported by the most recent housing land supply figures. Furthermore, the addition of a single dwelling would make little difference to the overall supply of housing and would deliver only limited economic benefit. In combination these factors do not overcome the harm I have identified.
17. The appellant has drawn my attention to the granting of planning permission for two houses in the nearby village of Broughton. I have taken this into account so far as I am able to, based on the information before me. However, while the development in Broughton may be similar in terms of its location within a small rural settlement, its context with regards to, among other things, the form of the settlement is sufficiently different that I cannot conclude that it is directly comparable to the appeal before me. In any event, each scheme must be considered and determined on its own merits.

### **Conclusion**

18. For the reasons given above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan, when considered as a whole, and there are no material considerations that indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*C Mayes*

INSPECTOR