



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2025

by Ryan Cowley MPlan (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/N2345/W/25/3366786

Simpson House Farm, Fernyhalgh Lane, Preston, Lancashire PR2 5ST

- 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 Kleon Koutsokostas against the decision of Preston City Council.
 - The application Ref is 06/2025/0254.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing buildings and erection of up to 6 no. dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle (PiP). 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 two stages: the first stage ('permission in principle') establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle, and the second stage ('technical details consent') 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 the subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for the proposed residential development having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development, with particular regard to whether or not the proposed development would provide a suitable location for housing in the context of the spatial strategy.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a collection of agricultural buildings and a vacant two-storey detached dwelling. It sits to the northeast of Preston, separated by several agricultural fields and the M6 motorway. It is located within the open countryside for the purposes of Policy EN1 of the Preston Local Plan 2012-25 Site Allocations & Development Management Policies Adopted 2 July 2015 (the Local Plan).
6. Policy EN1 of the Local Plan limits development in the open countryside to: (a) that needed for purposes of agriculture or forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area; (b) re-use of existing buildings; or (c) infilling within groups of buildings in

smaller rural settlements. The parties agree that the proposal would not benefit from any of the exceptions in Policy EN1. It would thus conflict with this policy

7. Policy 1 of the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy Local Development Framework July 2012 (the Core Strategy) seeks to focus growth and investment on well-located brownfield sites, the Strategic Location of Central Preston, Key Service Centres and other main urban areas. It states that, in other places, development will typically be small scale and limited to appropriate infilling, conversion of buildings and proposals to meet local need.
8. Policy 1 clarifies that by “other places”, it is referring to smaller villages, substantially built-up frontages and Major Development Sites. There is no evidence that the site sits within a recognisable village. Additionally, the frontage of the site cannot reasonably be described as substantially built-up, nor is it a major development site. Policy 1 would thus appear to provide little support for development in this location.
9. Even if the site could be considered to fall within the “other places” category, while it would be relatively small scale, the site is surrounded by agricultural land, and the development proposes the demolition of the existing buildings on site. It therefore could not reasonably be described as infill development, nor would it comprise conversion of buildings.
10. In terms of meeting local need, the Council acknowledges that, at the time of the decision, it could not demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply (HLS) to address the housing need in this area. The Council has however since confirmed that, as of April 2025, it can demonstrate a 6.7-year HLS, as published within the Council’s Housing Land Position Paper 2025. There is no compelling evidence to indicate that this assessment is flawed. I must determine the appeal on the most up-to-date HLS and, accordingly, the proposal would not address a specific local need.
11. The proposed development would thus not provide a suitable location for housing in the context of the Council’s spatial strategy. It would conflict with Policy EN1 of the Local Plan and Policy 1 of the Core Strategy, for the reasons outlined above.

Other Matters

12. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) seeks to direct development to sustainable locations, though Paragraph 110 recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas.
13. The site sits next to a nursery and church, which future occupiers may benefit from, and is a short drive from a retail park and supermarkets on the other side of the M6. These could be reached on foot or by bicycle in a reasonable timeframe, but there is no dedicated footpath or cycle lanes along the route to most local services and facilities, and limited street lighting. There is also little evidence before me of public transport accessibility.
14. Future occupiers would thus likely be heavily reliant on the private car for most journeys, particularly during periods of inclement weather, later in the evening or when carrying shopping. While the site therefore enjoys a degree of access to local services and facilities, it is not particularly accessible, and considerably less so than the other locations identified in the settlement hierarchy.

15. The appellant maintains that the proposal would help to grow and enhance community vibrancy and the local economy. Paragraph 83 of the Framework indicates that rural housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, to promote sustainable development in rural areas. The site is not particularly well located for access to settlements in the rural area and so is unlikely to provide any significant contribution to the economic or social vitality of the rural community.
16. Paragraph 85 of the Framework places significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity. The development would add to the housing supply and provide a temporary economic boost during construction. Future occupiers are also likely to use services and facilities in Preston to the south-west. However, given the scale and context of the development, these benefits would be relatively modest in this case.
17. The proposal would thus undermine the Council's spatial strategy, and the modest benefits set out above would not outweigh the identified harm and development plan conflict.
18. Though full details are not before me, the parties agree that the site benefits from two extant planning permissions totalling 6no. dwellings (06/2022/1418 & 06/2022/1419). These permissions however complied with exceptions in Policy EN1 of the Local Plan and Policy 1 of the Core Strategy in relation to infilling and the conversion and re-use of existing buildings. Furthermore, additional agricultural land would be used in the appeal scheme compared to the approved developments. Accordingly, it has not been demonstrated that the fallback position would result in development plan conflict and harm comparable to that which would arise in the appeal scheme.
19. My attention has been drawn to various decisions by the Council, which the appellant contends demonstrate support for PiP applications that have similar characteristics to the appeal scheme. However, all appear to have been approved at times of deficient housing land supply. The circumstances in those cases are thus not comparable to the appeal case before me.
20. While it is briefly stated in the Officer Report that residential development of the site would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, this did not explicitly feature in the Council's reasons for refusal. Due to the nature of the application, there are no details of the appearance, layout, scale or landscaping of the development at this stage and so I cannot conclude that redevelopment of the site would be unduly harmful in this regard.
21. The appeal site sits within the setting of St Mary's Roman Catholic (RC) Church and Presbytery, and RC School. The evidence indicates that these buildings are both Grade II listed. Sections 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act) requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The significance of the RC School building is derived from its symmetrical design with projecting single storey wings, dressed sandstone façade and classical detailing. The significance of the RC Church and Presbytery is taken from its traditional redbrick façade with sandstone detailing, large vertical window openings and ecclesiastical features. As above, given the level of detail at this stage and the current setting of the site, there is no compelling

reason to conclude that the development would fail to preserve the setting of the listed buildings and their significance.

22. Other than where set out above, I have not identified conflict with any other relevant parts of the development plan or national policy and guidance. However, the absence of harm or development plan conflict with respect to other relevant matters weighs neither for nor against the proposal.
23. While no objections to the application were received by technical consultees, this does not in itself demonstrate that the proposal is acceptable with regard to the main issue in this case.

Conclusion

24. The proposal conflicts with the development plan, taken as a whole, and I have found no material considerations that indicate it should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, 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, and the appeal should be dismissed.

Ryan Cowley

INSPECTOR