
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2026

by J D Clark BA (Hons) DpTRP MCD DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 July 2026

Appeal Ref: 6006487

Wood Top Farm, Chipping Road, Chaigley, Bashall Eaves, Lancashire PR3 2TS.

- 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 Moon against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/2025/0569.
 - The development is proposed demolition of redundant barn and erection of farm worker's (self-build) dwelling to include new vehicular track.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There are already two dwellings, a farmhouse and a newer dwelling with a condition restricting its occupation to that of an agricultural worker, but the Council are satisfied that the evidence submitted justifies an additional workers dwelling for Wood Top Farm. I have no reason to dispute this. Therefore, it is accepted that there is a need for a dwelling to be erected on or close to the farm to provide living accommodation for the appellants.
3. The decision notice cites two reasons for refusal, the first relates to the location of the proposed dwelling and the second relates to inadequate information regarding visibility splays at the access to the proposed vehicular track. Additional information has been submitted to address this which is acceptable to the Council. This reason for refusal has therefore been overcome. Given that the reason for refusal was based on inadequate information and adequate information has now been submitted, I am satisfied that this matter can be overcome with suitably worded conditions and therefore shall proceed on the basis of the first reason for refusal only.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area with regard to its location within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a dilapidated stone building, land around it and a strip of land running parallel to the road to meet an existing access point to

Chipping Road. The building, referred to as a redundant barn in the description of development, is close to the road which is fairly straight for a section to the south-west but bends sharply to the east. The buildings comprising Wood Top Farm are located on the opposite side of the road together with the original farmhouse. A separate dwelling, Wood Top House is separated from the farm complex by a field. This was erected as an agricultural workers dwelling associated with Wood Top Farm and is subject to an occupancy condition accordingly. This bears a date stone 2017.

6. The site is within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, where the National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues (along with National Parks and the Broads). It further advises that the scale and extent of development within these areas should be limited¹.
7. The area is characterised by its rolling rural landscape and scatterings of buildings. Top House Farm is on relatively level land but the land and the existing redundant barn is higher. The farm comprises a fairly compact group of substantial buildings and distant views include the existing building as part of that group despite it being on the opposite side of the road. Whilst the redundant barn would have had historical ties with the farm, due to its condition and position opposite the working farm, it appears separate. The physical separation of the road and the difference in levels accentuates this.
8. The redundant barn is clearly in a poor state of repair and the structural survey clarifies that it is not suitable for conversion to a residential property. The proposed dwelling would be a detached stone faced two-storey dwelling providing a modern three bedroom family home. Its form, appearance, size and design would be traditional. Whilst I find that the design of the house acceptable, its position and height would introduce a domestic element that would appear quite distinct from the lower farm buildings opposite. Due to the bend in the road and the higher land level, the proposed dwelling would appear very prominent. It would be substantially larger than the building on site now and together with the creation of a domestic curtilage and the access track, it would be prominent in the landscape.
9. Although residential properties form part of the landscape and it is proposed to plant a native hedge to the perimeter of the house and the curtilage around the proposed house itself would be modest, it would still represent an intrusion of a domestic curtilage into the landscape. The long access track running across what is now an open field to serve the dwelling would further extend the domestic appearance. There is currently a substantial hedge along this boundary and some of it would need to be removed to create the required visibility splays for the access. Although a hedge could be planted outside the visibility splay, this long access emphasises the domesticity of the proposal in contrast to the agricultural character of the farm complex.
10. I accept that distant views of Top House Farm and the appeal site would see the proposed house within the group context. Important views towards

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, 2024, Paragraph 189.

Longridge Fell would remain. However, when viewed from a closer perspective, the proposed dwelling would be of a scale and location as to make it very visible. Although the existing redundant barn is in an obviously poor condition, it is not so harmful in the landscape to justify replacing it with the proposed dwelling.

11. The appellant has demonstrated that an additional dwelling is required to enable the farm to continue to function in the long term. The Framework recognises that housing in the rural area may be acceptable where there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. As I have stated above, the need for a dwelling is not therefore disputed in this case. This means that the principle of a dwelling is acceptable at or near to Top House Farm.
12. With this in mind, I understand the reasoning for selecting the appeal site to locate the proposed dwelling. I appreciate that it would be close to the farm and allow the appellants to be on hand at all times in order to carry out their farming duties and deal with any emergencies. However, the proposal would be visually intrusive and although there is a building on this site, it is a small and dilapidated one whereas a new dwelling would be larger and include all the associated domestic paraphernalia. It would also include a very long access track. The proposed domestic property would appear out of place compared to the rural buildings opposite.
13. Furthermore, there is no evidence that an alternative location has not been explored. I saw for myself that the farm complex is very compact and the buildings, some of which house animals, are closely grouped together. The buildings, together with manoeuvring space and storage areas, leave limited space for a dwelling. I did not see any building that were obviously redundant and suitable for conversion.
14. The appellant states that a new cow shed is likely to be required to the east of the main cluster of agricultural buildings in the near future but it is not clear exactly where that would go. In any event, at this stage I am not aware of any formal application or proposal to locate such a building. There is a large field between the farm buildings and Wood Top House to the west of the farm complex which includes the farmhouse, but the appellant states that it would not be possible for a dwelling to be situated between the two existing dwellings on the farmstead as a pipe carrying slurry from the main pit to the reception wells throughout the farm passes between the two houses. The appellant states that it would not be possible to dig or build at this location because of the slurry pipe.
15. I accept that the appeal site serves little or no function within the operation of the farm and for the appellants this is a logical location for the proposed dwelling. Whilst there appears to have been a building on the appeal site historically, the ordnance survey plans demonstrate how the farm has grown on the northern side of the road. Expanding a related building onto the opposite side would go against the established pattern of development.
16. Given the sensitivity of the area as a National Landscape and the great weight that must be given to its protection, I consider that it is necessary to justify why

a new dwelling could not be located on the existing developed side of the road. Whilst I am unable to say that a particular site would be preferable to the appeal site, in order to form a balanced view, alternative options would need to be adequately explored. This is not evidenced in the information before me.

17. Ribble Valley Core Strategy² Policy DMH3 is referred to on the decision notice but the proposal would not conflict with it. This sets out limits for residential development in the open countryside and AONB. Amongst other things, dwellings for agricultural, forestry or other essential workers that satisfies a functional and financial test, amongst other things, would not conflict with it.
18. However, the proposal would conflict with Ribble Valley Core Strategy Key Statement EN2 which seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB - now referred to as a National Landscape). It would also be inconsistent with the overall objectives set out in policies DMG1, DMG2 and DME2 which collectively seek to ensure that new development is in keeping with the character of the landscape and recognise the special qualities of the area, amongst other things.
19. It would also be inconsistent with the objectives of the Framework, in particular, in seeking to achieve well designed places, paragraph 135 of the Framework requires development to be sympathetic to local character and paragraph 187 seeks to protect and enhance valued landscapes, recognising the intrinsic natural beauty of the countryside. Also, as I have stated above, paragraph 189 places great weight on conserving and enhancing scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.
20. In conclusion, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area with regard to its location within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape in conflict with the Framework and the development plan policies referred to above.

Other Matters

21. The appellant states that the Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing land as required by the Framework. However, the Council states that it can demonstrate a 6.2 year supply. In any event, even if there is an undersupply, paragraph 11d)(i) of the Framework protects areas or assets of particular importance as set out in footnote 7. This includes National Landscapes, therefore whilst there is no dispute that a dwelling is required in association with Wood Top Farm, the proposal would harm an area of particular importance, that is, the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. The policies that protect this in the Framework as well as Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policy EN2, provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.
22. The proposal is describes as being a self-build/custom built dwelling and therefore exempt from the requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). A condition is suggested to address this although I doubt it goes far enough to ensure the requirements for self-build would be fully met. In any event, given my findings on my main issue, there is no need for me to pursue this further.

² Ribble Valley Borough Council Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adopted Version, Adopted 16 December 2014.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Consequently, for the above reasons the appeal should be dismissed.

J D Clark

INSPECTOR