



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 June 2025

by **E Heron MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/W/25/3362417

248 The Pippins Preston Road, Longridge, Lancashire PR3 3BD

- 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 David Bolton against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/2024/0348.
 - The development proposed is detached self-build dwelling to the rear of the existing dwelling, including formation of a new access road and alterations to existing access and parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council has amended the description of development from that on the application form. The revised wording has subsequently been used by the appellant. I have adopted the revised description of development from the decision notice and appeal statement in the heading above, as it more accurately describes the development.
3. The proposed dwelling is described as a self-build and would be a start-up project for the appellant. Under Section 2A of the Self-Build and Custom Housing Act 2015 (as amended), there is a duty to grant a sufficient number of suitable permissions to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding within an authority area. I am told that the borough's self-build demand outstrips supply by some margin, whilst limited evidence to substantiate this has been provided, this point is not disputed by the Council. The provision of a self-build dwelling would contribute towards meeting the significant shortage of this type of housing within the borough and therefore would be a benefit attracting significant weight. In this case the Unilateral Undertaking (UU) submitted with the appeal is unsigned. As such I can attribute no weight to the self-build element of the proposal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed dwelling on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - whether the location for the proposed dwelling would be appropriate; and
 - whether the proposed development meets the mandatory requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is within an area between the settlements of Longridge and Grimsargh. The area is rural in character, comprising the row of properties that includes the appeal site, a cluster of traditional buildings set around a road junction, an informally arranged small housing development, farms, and a water treatment facility. Whilst some building groups are large-scale, such as the farm opposite the site, significant areas of open fields and spaces surround each of these building groups, providing separation between them. This area has a rural character and provides a visual breathing space between the two settlements.
6. A large housing development is nearing completion to the north, on the edge of the settlement of Longridge. An associated wildlife area, with balancing ponds and footpaths that connect through to a public right of way, provides a large, open and green space between the housing development and the row of buildings that include the appeal site. This wildlife area is of significant visual quality, as it provides separation between the edge of the settlement and the building groups that sit within the area of rural character.
7. The context of the appeal site is a short row of four properties comprising three dwellings and a commercial restaurant, all set back from Preston Road in a linear arrangement. The land to the rear primarily comprises open large gardens, including the appeal site's, stretching some way to the field boundary. There is a linear border between these portions of land and the open field beyond, which is marked by trees and hedge planting. The appeal site contributes to the rural character of the area for these reasons.
8. The proposed dwelling would be sited within the open large garden of the appeal site and set far back behind the row of four properties. Its position would disrupt the group's linear arrangement, and it would appear isolated at the rear of the site. As such it would be a harmfully discordant and incongruous addition to the existing linear pattern of development within which the appeal site sits. I acknowledge that it has been designed sympathetically, that there is ample space within the garden to accommodate the dwelling and associated amenity space, and that there would be enhancements to the site frontage and landscaping. Also, that it would not be readily discernible from Preston Road. Nevertheless, it would be visible from vantage points to the rear, where its harmfully discordant appearance would be apparent.
9. I acknowledge that the local context has altered since the Inspector reached a similar conclusion in 2016 (appeal reference, APP/T2350/W/16/3155091), insofar as the gap between the appeal site and Longridge has been reduced, as a result of the construction of housing, and recent housing developments have been constructed on the edge of Grimsargh. However, I do not find that the rural character of this gap between settlements is so altered as to find the proposal to be in keeping with the area. In particular, regardless that it is no longer in agricultural use, I consider the wildlife area to play a significant role in providing visual separation between areas, rather than simply an extension to the settlement as an urban park, with no visual break in development.
10. Consequently, I conclude that the proposed dwelling would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. In this regard, it would conflict with the

relevant provisions of Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Core Strategy 2008-2028, A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adopted Version (the Core Strategy). Amongst other things, these policies place particular emphasis on the visual appearance of development and its relationship to its surroundings and requires development to be in character with the landscape.

Location

11. The appeal site is within an area designated as countryside in the Core Strategy, and the proposal is in direct conflict with the defined criteria in policies DMG2 and DMH3. This conflict with policy is not in dispute. Regardless that the site would not be particularly remote from day to day services, as found by the Inspector in the 2016 appeal decision, the development would not accord with the borough's spatial strategy which seeks to direct development to specific settlements within a hierarchy. Moreover, the proposal would not be for local need, or any of the rural exceptions identified within the relevant policies.
12. This conflict with policy carries significant weight. Aside from the passage of time, it has not been explained to me why I should consider the relevant policies to be out of date. The Core Strategy remains an adopted development plan document, and the relevant policies align with the spatial principles contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). It is not my role within the remit of a Section 78 appeal, to determine the development strategy area for Longridge. Moreover, I do not consider that the presence of the large housing development to the north, alters the countryside character of the appeal site to a great extent, for the reasons I have previously identified.
13. Accordingly, I conclude that the location of the proposed dwelling would not be appropriate and as such the development would conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies DMG2 and DMH3 of the Core Strategy. Amongst other things, these policies restrict new dwellings in the countryside unless they are for a proven local need or meet the relevant exceptions, such as agricultural worker housing or replacement dwellings.

Biodiversity Net Gain

14. The mandatory requirements of BNG, requires developments to deliver a BNG of 10%, unless exempt. The parties agree that the proposal would be exempt due to the submission of a UU, aimed at securing the dwelling as a self-build, as defined in the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.
15. Regardless of this agreement between parties, I must be satisfied that self-build can be adequately secured in order for the appeal proposal to be exempt. In this respect the UU is unsigned and therefore incomplete. I therefore attribute no weight to the UU, and I conclude that self-build would not be adequately secured in order for the development to be exempt from BNG.
16. In the absence of a signed UU, BNG is required. On the matter of securing BNG, I note that there are no proposals for tree removal, and there would be the addition of proposed landscaping. However, no baseline data in the form of a statutory metric tool has been supplied in order to understand any relevant habitat parcels, their size or quality. Therefore, the true biodiversity value of the existing site, and any net gain cannot be fully assessed. I acknowledge that the appellant would be

happy to accept a condition securing BNG if required, and had I been allowing the appeal, I would have pursued this matter further with the parties.

17. As such, and taking the above considerations as a whole, I conclude that it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development meets the mandatory requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain. As such it would fail to comply with the statutory requirements set out within Schedule 7a of the Environment Act 2021 and the Biodiversity Net Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2023, as amended.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

18. The proposal would be suitable for elderly or disabled occupants, due to its single storey design, and its provision could also free up larger family dwellings to meet the needs of younger families. It is also understood this scenario may apply to the appellant in the future. However, it has not been shown that occupation would be restricted in any way, which limits the weight I attribute to this factor.
19. Economic benefits would arise from employment during construction and spend in the area from an additional household. Environmental benefits include renewable energy inclusions, and provision of biodiversity enhancements such as landscaping. The proposal would also contribute more generally to housing supply. These benefits would be limited as the proposal amounts to a single dwelling, and I am told that the Council has a five year deliverable housing land supply.
20. The absence of a signed UU means the proposal cannot be self-build housing. Even if the UU had been signed, the appeal proposal would have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, and its location would be inappropriate as it would be outside a settlement boundary, and with no specified local need, or specific exception prescribed in Policy DMH 3 of the Core Strategy. Taken together, I attach great weight to this conflict with the development plan, and I consider that the benefits that would arise from the development would not outweigh the harm.
21. I have not pursued the validity of the UU further with the parties, as it is not determinative to the outcome of the appeal, given my findings in relation to the first two main issues.
22. In this case, I consider there would be conflict with the development plan overall and other considerations do not outweigh that conflict. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

E Heron

INSPECTOR