



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2013

by N M McGurk BSc (Hons) MCD MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 26 March 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/A/12/2186957

Whins Lodge, Whalley Old Road, Langho, Blackburn, BB6 8DU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Peter Street against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2011/1032, dated 5 November 2011, was refused by notice dated 9 August 2012.
 - The development proposed is "log cabin" style holiday lodges.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal before me relates to an outline application, with all matters reserved.

Main Issues

3. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (Section 9: Protecting Green Belt land) and development plan policy;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the area;
 - if the development is inappropriate, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether the proposal is inappropriate development

4. The appeal site comprises a field on the north side of Old Nab Road, adjoined to the north by the garden of Whins Lodge, a large detached dwelling. To either side of the field are other similar fields, whilst to the south of the site, on the other side of Old Nab Road, are a small group of dwellings and buildings
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surrounding a farmhouse. These are raised considerably above the appeal site, behind a bank of trees. The area is surrounded by countryside and the field is open and rural in character, comprising largely grassland, which during the time of my visit appeared to be largely open grazing land.

5. It is proposed to provide log cabin style holiday lodges on the site. No number is specified, although the appellant refers to 'a small number' in the Design and Access statement.
6. The Framework states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate, unless it is for one of a number of specified purposes. The proposal does not meet any of these purposes and would therefore represent inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness and character and appearance

7. The Framework considers openness to be an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The site is currently open and undeveloped. The introduction of log cabin style holiday lodges on the site would, inevitably, erode the openness of the Green Belt.
8. During my site visit, I noted that, whilst there were some trees partly screening distant views to and from the site, particularly to the north and west, there were plentiful distant views to and from the site from various locations. The field itself appeared as a prominent feature in the landscape. Notably, I found that it combined with adjoining fields to provide an attractive, rural and open feature.
9. Whilst there were gentle undulations to the field, there is nothing that leads me to concur with the appellant's suggestion that the prominence of the proposed development could be appropriately reduced by taking advantage of the 'natural the lie of the land.' Similarly, the use of timber materials for the proposed structures, would fail to prevent them from appearing as intrusive and alien features within a largely open landscape. Furthermore, there was no evidence during my site visit and nothing is before me, to demonstrate that log cabin style holiday cabins are typical features of the area.
10. Consequently, I find that the proposed development would contrast significantly with the area's identified character. It would have a detrimental impact on the open, rural appearance of the field, and its incongruous appearance would be highly visible from the surrounding area. Taking all of this into account, I find that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Local Plan¹ policies ENV3 and RT1, which together amongst other things, require development to be in keeping with the character of the area.

Other considerations

11. The appellant considers that the refusal of his application was in conflict with the tourism policies of the Local Plan. However, whilst policy RT1 does seek to extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the Borough, it also requires proposals to be well related to existing buildings, not to undermine local

¹ Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan (Adopted 1998) Saved Policies (2007).

character and not to conflict with other policies of the Local Plan. The proposed development is contrary to each of these three requirements.

12. The appellant would seek to incorporate existing mature trees into the scheme, which is a factor in favour of the proposal. I also note that there is no objection to the proposal on highways grounds.

Balancing exercise and conclusion

13. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, a consideration to which I afford substantial weight, as indicated by paragraph 88 of the Framework. There would also be harm to the character, appearance and openness of the Green Belt, matters to which I afford significant weight. There are no special circumstances which outweigh the harm identified.

14. For the reasons given above, the appeal does not succeed.

N M McGurk

INSPECTOR