

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL



Ribble Valley
Borough Council

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TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Planning Inspectorate Reference:	APP/T2350/W/20/3265972
LPA Application Reference:	3/2020/0281
NGR:	SD 364360 437735

APPEAL BY MR P COATES
AGAINST THE REFUSAL BY
RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
TO GRANT FULL PLANNING PERMISSION
FOR THE DEMOLITION OF AN EXISTING TWO STOREY FARMHOUSE AND SIX OUTBUILDINGS AND
CONSTRUCTION OF ONE SINGLE STOREY REPLACEMENT DWELLING AT
LOWER SEED GREEN FARM, STONEYGATE LANE, RIBCHESTER PR3 2ZS

WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF
THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This written statement is submitted by Ribble Valley Borough Council in respect of the appeal lodged against the Council's decision to refuse full planning permission for the demolition of an existing two storey farmhouse and six outbuildings and the construction of one single storey replacement dwelling at Lower Seed Green Farm, Stoneygate Lane, Ribchester.

1.2 The planning application was refused under delegated powers on 24 June 2020 for the following reason: -

1) The proposed residential development (including associated private gardens and domestic paraphernalia such as sheds, washing lines, children's play equipment and fence lines) would, by virtue of its design, appearance and siting, result in an incongruous form of development that fails to respond positively to or enhance the immediate context, being of detriment to the visual amenity of the open countryside and inherent character of the area contrary to Key Statement EN2 and policies DMG1, DMG2 and DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

2. APPEAL SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

2.1 The appeal site lies in the open countryside approximately 3km east of Longridge and 2.2km north of the village of Ribchester on the west side of Stoneygate Lane. The site comprises 0.37 hectares of land on which is a group of buildings which form part of the former farmstead of Lower Seed Green Farm. The buildings include a detached two-storey farmhouse and seven outbuildings including 5no. timber sheds, a Nissen hut and stone built shed. The farmhouse is denoted on the first edition (1:10,000) OS Map circa 1845 which confirms the building is of some age.

2.2 To the north is a stone barn which is also in the appellant's ownership but does not form part of the appeal proposals. The site is served by an existing vehicular access. There is a network of public footpaths in the locality and the surrounding area is characterised by individual or small clusters of residential properties and scattered farmsteads. The Forest of Bowland AONB boundary is approximately 400m to the north of the site.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 This appeal relates to the demolition of the existing farmhouse and six of the buildings (the existing stone building would be retained) and the erection of a single storey three-bed dwelling. The dwelling would provide an internal double garage, utility, store, cinema/snug, open plan living, dining and kitchen space and three bedrooms.
- 3.2 The building would measure 29 metres by 11.7 metres and would have a maximum height of 4.5 metres. The roof would be constructed of grey metal sheet material and it is proposed to frame windows and doors in grey aluminium and for steel roller shutter garage doors. The proposal seeks to incorporate the entire site, including the agricultural components, to residential use. The new dwelling would be served via the existing access from Stoneygate Lane.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY & GUIDANCE

- 4.1 The planning policy context for the appeal site is set out at a local level by the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (adopted 16th December 2014) and Housing and Economic Development DPD. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material planning consideration.

National Policy Context

- 4.2 The Council's evidence will consider the appeal proposals against the policy guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and in particular the extent to which it does or does not comply with the policy guidance given in the NPPF regarding the requirement to conserve and enhance the natural environment and achieve well-designed places.

Local Policy Context

- 4.3 The development plan for the Borough comprises the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the HED DPD. The Council's evidence will address the extent to which the appeal proposal does or does not comply with the relevant policies. In particular the evidence will explain why it is considered that the proposals do not comply with those policies identified in the reason for refusal which are set out below.

Ribble Valley Core Strategy

Key Statement EN2 (Landscape)

- 4.4 Key Statement EN2 of the Core Strategy states that as a principle the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.

Policy DMG1 (General Considerations)

- 4.5 Policy DMG1 is the general development management policy. Amongst other requirements it states that development should be of a high standard of design and must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials. It places particular emphasis on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character, and states that development must not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area.

Policy DMG2 (Strategic Considerations)

- 4.6 Policy DMG2 assists the interpretation of the Development Strategy (Key Statement DS1) and underpins the settlement hierarchy for the purposes of delivering sustainable development. Policy DMG2 requires that within the open countryside development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area.

Policy DMH3 (Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB)

- 4.7 The protection of the open countryside and designated landscape areas from sporadic or visually harmful development is seen as a high priority by the Council and is necessary to deliver both sustainable patterns of development and the overarching Core Strategy vision. Policy DMH3 seeks to manage residential development in the open countryside and AONB. In relation to replacement dwellings, Policy DMH3 states that they will be supported subject to the following criteria: -
- The residential use of the property should not have been abandoned.
 - there being no adverse impact on the landscape in relation to the new dwelling.
 - the need to extend an existing curtilage.

5. CASE FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

- 5.1 In relation to the appeal case, the sole issue to consider is whether the proposed residential development (including associated private gardens and domestic paraphernalia such as sheds, washing lines, children's play equipment and fence lines) would, by virtue of its design, appearance and siting, result in an incongruous form of development that fails to respond positively to or enhance the immediate context, being of detriment to the visual amenity of the open countryside and inherent character of the area. There are public footpaths in close proximity to the appeal site to the north (FP 14) and west (FP 16). Longer distance views of the site can be gained from the south along Stoneygate Lane which passes the site to the east. Whilst the Forest of Bowland AONB boundary is 400m to the north of the site there would be no direct impact on the AONB as a result of the proposals.
- 5.2 Core Strategy Policy DMH3 states that the rebuilding or replacement of existing dwellings are acceptable in the open countryside or AONB subject to three considerations including that the residential use of the property proposed to be replaced should not have been abandoned, that the new replacement dwelling should have no adverse impact on the landscape and that there is no need to extend an existing (residential) curtilage.
- 5.3 In relation to the first consideration the Council accepts that residential use of the existing property has not been abandoned. However, it is considered that due to its design, appearance and siting, the proposed replacement building would prove harmful to the visual appearance of the surrounding area and would also result in a considerable extension of domestic use onto agricultural land.
- 5.4 The existing farmhouse is a relatively modest building of local vernacular style. It is noted that the building is in a poor condition, although not in a state of disrepair. Whilst it is not considered to contribute positively to the appearance of the surrounding area, the farmhouse is not particularly prominent as it is located close to the larger stone barn to the north so is viewed as part of a group of buildings. The majority of the other buildings at the site are mainly lightweight timber structures (buildings 1-5 on the existing site plan).
- 5.5 Dealing firstly with design matters, Core Strategy Policy DMG1 requires that all development be of a high standard of design. The proposed replacement dwelling, in terms of its form, appears to have been designed to reflect the appearance of an agricultural/industrial storage building.

It has a large rectangular footprint with a shallow pitched roof constructed from grey metal sheeting.

- 5.6 The proposed building design has 30-metre-long unbroken elevations which lack articulation. The proposed fenestration details include openings with both vertical and horizontal emphasis and window/door placement, including six double patio doors on the south elevation and a row of nine windows on the north elevation, contribute towards a poor overall design concept which lacks any interest and fails to respect local vernacular style.
- 5.7 The design of the building is considered to be of a poor design contrary to the requirements of the abovementioned Core Strategy policies and the NPPF which at paragraph 124 states, *“the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what planning and the development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development...”*.
- 5.8 In terms of the replacement building’s size and scale, the appellant has sought to justify the proposed increase in volume of the replacement dwelling when compared with the existing farmhouse by factoring in the reduction in volume from the demolition of the remaining agricultural buildings on site. However, calculation of the volume of a replacement dwelling based on the volume of other non-domestic buildings to be demolished at the site is not considered to be an acceptable approach.
- 5.9 Agricultural buildings are designed so that they are simple and functional – they are a common sight in the countryside and are an inherent part of the landscape in which they are sited. Whilst the removal of the agricultural buildings, the majority of which are lightweight structures, would have a moderately beneficial impact on the visual amenity of the site, this would not offset the harm that would result from a significantly larger replacement dwelling.
- 5.10 The existing farmhouse has a footprint of around 142sqm and a volume of 593m³. The proposed replacement dwelling would have a footprint of 341sqm and a volume of 1,247m³. This is a considerable increase, more than doubling the footprint and volume of the existing farmhouse. Whilst the Council did not refuse the appeal scheme on the basis of footprint or volume increase, clearly this contributes to the visual impact of the proposals.

- 5.11 To further exacerbate the above design concerns, it is proposed to re-site the replacement dwelling further south and incorporate a large area of agricultural land into the residential planning unit. Firstly, re-siting of the proposed dwelling, as proposed, would move it further from existing built form to the north such that there would be a degree of visual separation that would make the replacement dwelling more prominent in the landscape.
- 5.12 In respect of the area of residential garden proposed, this covers a significant area of over 3,000sqm. The creation of residential gardens can have a significant impact upon visual amenity and patterns of land use. Ideally any residential curtilage needs to be kept as minimal as possible and any enclosed private areas need to be carefully sited and contained, particularly in relation to public views and the surrounding landscape.
- 5.13 At present there is no defined garden area associated with the farmhouse. The appellant states at paragraph 6.8 of their appeal statement that the land to the south of the farmhouse is short mown grass having the appearance of residential lawn, which is perhaps surprising given the farmhouse itself is long-term vacant. However, it is apparent when visiting the site that the majority of the land included within the appeal site does not form what would be considered to be 'residential garden'. Whether or not the grass is mown is not validation that the land is, or has been used previously as, domestic garden and there are no features that indicate residential garden use.
- 5.14 The land to the south of the farmhouse, aside from the land directly in front of the building which is used for associated parking, is agricultural land and aerial photos of the site dated 2003, 2015, 2018 and 2020 (Google Earth) provide conclusive evidence that the appeal site includes a substantial area of agricultural land and that the fence line between the appeal site and the field to the south has been moved during recent years, extending the 'parcel' of land further south. The proposal to include the entire site as garden would therefore result in a significant extension of the residential planning unit which is one of the criteria that Policy DMH3 requires to be given consideration. The fact that the appellant has referred to the removal of "agricultural" buildings situated on the land in question to support a replacement dwelling that is significantly larger in footprint and volume, is acknowledgement that the buildings and the land surrounding them are in agricultural use.



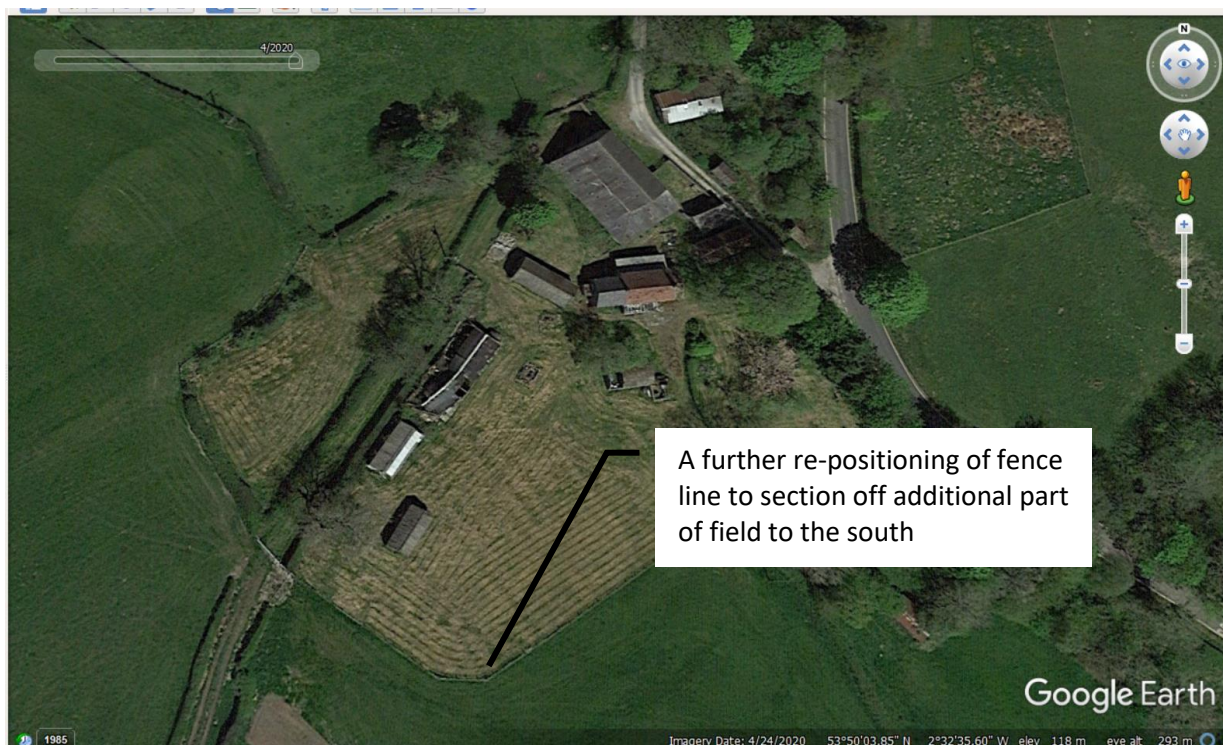
Google Earth image (2003)



Google Earth image (2015)



Google Earth image (2018)



Google Earth image (2020)

5.15 A change to residential garden would result in a fundamental alteration of the character of the land due to the proliferation of domestic outbuildings, raised platforms or further domestic extensions to the proposed dwelling. It is noted that the appellant has suggested at paragraph

6.10 of their appeal statement that this could be controlled by a planning condition to remove householder permitted development rights. However, whilst this would restrict the erection of new outbuildings, for example, the local planning authority would be unable to control other domestic paraphernalia such as washing lines, garden furniture or children's play equipment which would be highly visible from public views around the site.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In summary, it is considered that the design quality of the proposed replacement dwelling is poor and would conflict with the character of the landscape area and local vernacular such that it would be injurious to the appearance of the area.
- 6.2 Close-up views of the proposed dwelling would be gained from public footpaths in the vicinity and from Stoneygate Lane during autumn and winter months when roadside trees would provide less screening. Coupled with this is the proposed residential garden which is substantial and would also be seen from public view.
- 6.3 The domestic curtilage proposed is both extensive and prominent, being located adjacent to the highway and in view of public footpaths. The domestic gardens and associated paraphernalia including washing lines, play equipment and garden furniture would be at odds with, and detract from, the immediate setting.
- 6.4 Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development would be contrary to Key Statement EN2 and policies DMG1, DMG2 and DMH3 of the Core Strategy given it would result in a poor-quality design and an extensive residential curtilage area both of which would be injurious to the character and appearance of the countryside. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.