



## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 March 2019

by **Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019

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**Appeal Ref: APP/U2370/W/18/3219263**

**White House Farm, White House Lane, Great Eccleston PR3 0XB**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Rowe against the decision of Wyre Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 18/00767/FUL, dated 31 July 2018, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2018.
  - The development proposed is the erection of a single dwelling.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural matters

2. On 28 February 2019, the Council adopted the Wyre Local Plan (2011-2031) (LP), which has replaced the saved policies of the Wyre Borough Plan 1999, to which the Council's reasons for refusal and the evidence refer. The main parties have had the opportunity to submit comments in relation to the LP, although the appellant decided not to do so and none were received from the Council.
3. On 19 February 2019, the Government published its Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results alongside an updated revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The HDT outcome for the Council indicates that the delivery has been above the requirement over the last 3 years. The matter of the Council's 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites appears not to be an issue between the main parties at the appeal stage. There is no change to the housing position as a result.
4. The revisions to the Framework do not otherwise materially alter the national policy approach in respect of the issues raised in this appeal and therefore the main parties have not been prejudiced by the updates to this document.

### Main issues

5. The main issues are:
  - whether the site would be a suitable location for housing, having particular regard to its location and accessibility to services and facilities; and
  - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

## Reasons

### *Suitability for housing*

6. The proposal is to erect a detached dwelling on land adjacent to White House Farm, which is a detached 2-storey house that stands among a cluster of buildings within the countryside, as defined in the LP. Paragraph 170 of the Framework states that planning decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. LP Policy SP4 echoes this approach. It also lists the types of development that would be acceptable in countryside areas, none of which would apply in this case. The appeal scheme is, therefore, contrary to LP Policy SP4.
7. To promote sustainable communities, LP Policy SP2 states that development should be located where it, amongst other things, minimises the need to travel by car. In this instance, a reasonable range of shops and local services can be found in Great Eccleston, which is some distance from the site. From what I saw, other villages in the local area such as Elswick and St Michael's include few, if any, destinations that would prompt the lengthy walk or cycle from the site. While there are bus stops on the A586, from which the appellant states there are services to Garstang, Preston and Blackpool, few details have been provided. In any event, the initial part of the route to the bus stops would involve an unlit road with no footways, which would deter many walkers and cyclists.
8. Taking into account all of these points, it cannot be reasonably assumed that future occupiers would regularly walk the considerable distance to most of these destinations, or would wish to carry shopping or other items over this distance, or would walk it in inclement weather or after dark. Although there are some opportunities to use local bus services, it is very likely that car borne trips to and from the new dwelling would predominate. This would be at odds with LP Policy SP2.

### *Character and appearance*

9. With its largely open grassed area, the site positively contributes to the spacious semi-rural character and appearance of the local area. By introducing a substantial and permanent new built form, the proposal would erode that sense of openness. The site's character would be transformed from a pleasant area of largely undeveloped green space to one occupied by a sizeable building where people would live and visit. Despite the partial screening provided by the frontage hedgerow and new boundary fences and planting, the new addition would be prominent in views from White House Lane. From this highway, the proposal would reduce the spacious undeveloped qualities of the site and unacceptably harm the intrinsic character and appearance of the countryside notwithstanding the presence of existing buildings on each side.
10. I accept that the landscape to which the site belongs is not designated as being of special value. However, as LP Policy SP4 and the Framework make clear, the countryside should be recognised for its intrinsic character and beauty. The removal of the existing caravan on the site would enhance the site's appearance. However, there is nothing before me to indicate that this improvement could only be achieved by introducing a new dwelling, as proposed.

*Conclusion on the main issues*

11. On the main issues, I conclude that the site would not be a suitable location for housing and that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. Accordingly, it conflicts with LP Policies SP1, SP2, SP4 and CDMP3. These policies broadly aim to ensure that development protects the countryside, and respects the character of the area and minimises the need to travel by car.

*Planning balance*

12. Once complete, the new dwelling would provide a property for the appellants to move into from the farmhouse that would suit their future needs and enable them to stay in the local area. In those circumstances, the main house would become available to others. While I am sympathetic to this desire, personal circumstances rarely outweigh more general planning considerations such as the protection of the countryside.

13. Reference is made to other planning decisions at both the application and appeal stages although few details have been provided and so I cannot be certain that their circumstances are the same as or very to similar to those of the proposal. In any event, I have assessed the proposal on its own merits.

14. The scale and design of the new dwelling and its external materials would be in keeping with some nearby properties. Others raise no objection. The site is available for development and the proposal would add to the amount and choice of new housing. It would contribute to the local economy during the construction phase through the sale of materials and future occupiers would support the vitality of the local community. These considerations are either neutral or weigh in support of the appellant's case. That the Council can demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing sites does not in itself preclude other land from coming forward for housing including within the rural area.

15. However, the new dwelling would not be in an accessible location and future occupiers would be heavily reliant on the use of the private car for most journeys. As such, the proposal would be at odds with the aims of the LP and the Framework to minimise the need to travel and to support the transition to a low carbon future. This, and the harm to the character and appearance of the local area mean that the environmental objective of sustainable development would not be achieved. To my mind, the public benefits of the scheme would be limited and would not outweigh the harm that I have identified. As such, the overall planning balance is tipped firmly against the appeal scheme.

**Conclusion**

16. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Gary Deane*

INSPECTOR