
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2016

by Isobel McCretton BA(Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23rd June 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/W/16/3144785

Land East of Derryn, School Road, Marton Moss, Blackpool FY4 5EL

- 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 Mrs Kathryn Rooney against the decision of Blackpool Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 15/0427, dated 30 June 2015, was refused by notice dated 28 August 2015.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a detached dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application was in outline with all matters reserved, though in the representations the appellant indicates that an existing access from School Road would be used.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and whether the scheme would constitute sustainable development.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site lies on the northern side of School Road between two houses, Derryn and Greenacres. There are some mature and semi-mature trees on the site and a ditch on the northern side along the boundary with scrubland which fronts onto St Nicholas Road. There was formerly a building on the site which used to be used for tomato packing, but this was burnt down around 2007.
 5. This is a loose-knit area characterised by sporadic development. It is in the countryside outside the defined settlement boundary and within the Marton Moss Countryside Area (MMCA) as designated in the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 (adopted 2006) (Local Plan). Saved policy NE2 of the Local Plan states that within the MMCA, new development, including the conversion, or change of use of existing buildings, will not be permitted except for (a) agricultural or horticultural purposes or (b) outdoor recreational uses appropriate to a rural
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- area. It also states that new dwellings will not be permitted unless essential in relation to the agricultural or horticultural use of the land. Infill development and the change of use/conversion of buildings for other uses will also not be permitted.
6. As the Council points out, the stated aim of policy NE2 is to protect the open and rural character of the countryside area around Blackpool, especially fringe areas such as Marton Moss. This accords with one of the core principles of the Framework which is to take account of the different roles and character of different areas, including promoting the vitality of the main urban areas and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Also, in terms of paragraph 49 of the Framework, the Council is able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. On the figures before me the Council is able to identify a housing land supply of 5.7 years, taking into account the 2012-2015 shortfall and a 20% buffer to allow for previous under-delivery. This and the Council's housing supply strategy were accepted by the Inspector who examined the Core Strategy and I have no substantiated information which demonstrates that the position has changed materially since. I therefore do not consider that policy NE2 is out of date and I accord the policy full weight.
 7. Policy CS26 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (Proposed Submission) (2016) effectively takes this policy forward until such time as a neighbourhood policy which supports the retention and enhancement of the distinctive character of the area is developed. CS26 is a recently adopted policy and I have no reason not to accord it full weight.
 8. There is no argument that the proposed dwelling is for use in connection with agriculture or horticulture and so the principle of scheme does not accord with saved Local Plan policy NE2 and Core Strategy policy CS26 in this regard. It is also not necessary to maintain the vitality of a rural community in accordance with paragraph 55 of the Framework.
 9. Furthermore, policy NE2 does not allow for infill development which this scheme, being in the gap between 2 existing dwellings, would represent. The prevailing character of the area is predominantly low density with dwellings and smallholdings widely spaced in large plots. The proposed development would have a narrower frontage than the 2 adjoining properties and would consolidate residential development on this side of School Road, giving it a more suburban appearance and reducing the open character.
 10. The appellant refers to other developments in the vicinity which have been granted permission and which, it is argued, are unrelated to agriculture or horticulture. However the Council has set out the main reasons why permission was granted in each case, some of which are not in the Marton Moss policy area, and I do not find that there is an inconsistency in the Council's approach. In any event, each application has to be determined on its own merits in the light of current adopted policy.
 11. Thus I conclude that the development would be detrimental to the distinctive character and appearance of the Marton Moss area, contrary to Local Plan policy NE2 and Core Strategy policy CS26.

Sustainable Development

12. Paragraph 49 of the Framework states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development which lies at the heart of the Framework. The Council sets out that the site is not in a sustainable location; in completing its residential accessibility questionnaire, the site is stated to score 15 out of a possible 48. Even if the appellant's calculation of 21 is used, this is not a score which would mean that the site is considered to be in a sustainable location.
13. The bus service referred to by the appellant runs only hourly until 7pm and not at all on Sundays. The nearest rail station is some 3km away and is closed during the winter. The main day to day facilities such as food shops and GP surgery are in a District Centre concentrated around the junction of Common Edge Road and Highfield Road which is about 1.15km away, and the nearest supermarket is on Squires Gate around 2.2km away. The Council notes that the store referred to by the appellant has recently closed. The appellant suggests that the facilities are accessible by bicycle, or that internet shopping would provide an alternative. However this would not be appropriate for all age groups or access to all facilities. The appellant lists a number of sports facilities, but most of these are at least 600m away and are not play/open space facilities which would be used for informal recreation. In summary, I consider that the site is not in a sustainable location and that future occupiers would be dependent on the private car to access most day to day facilities and services.
14. However accessibility is not the only measure of sustainable development. The Framework states that there are 3 dimensions to sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. In social terms I have found that the site is not in a sustainable location. The appellant argues that the development of the site would increase the security for the adjoining occupiers, but there is no substantiated evidence before me of a particular problem experienced by those occupiers, or, if so, that the development would be an effective solution. With regard to the environment, there would be harm to the character and appearance of the area contrary to Local Plan and Core Strategy policy. In economic terms, there would be a minor benefit through the creation of jobs during construction and the contribution of one household to the local economy, but this does not outweigh the harm identified.
15. Overall, therefore, I find that the proposal would not constitute sustainable development and would not accord with the Framework.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Isobel McCretton

INSPECTOR