



Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 28/08/18

gan Paul Selby BEng (Hons) MSc
MRTPI

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 12.09.2018

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28/08/18

by Paul Selby BEng (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 12.09.2018

Appeal Ref: APP/V6945/A/18/3204625

Site address: Hillcrest Bungalow, Cefn Crib Road, Hafodyrynys, Crumlin NP11 5BN

The Welsh Ministers have transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.

- 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 Kelvin Goff against the decision of Torfaen County Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 17/P/0818/FUL, dated 25 October 2017, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2017.
 - The development proposed is Demolition of existing bungalow and replacement with new residential property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The site incorporates an area of grassland largely separated from the dwelling and its garden by a post and wire fence. Having regard to the description of development for a new residential property, I have assessed the proposal on the basis that all land within the site boundary would fall within the curtilage of the proposed dwelling.
3. Although the ground and first floor levels would incorporate two largely independent living spaces, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the development described on the application form; i.e. as a single dwelling.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would accord with local policy relating to development in the open countryside, having particular regard to visual impacts and justified need.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is occupied by a bungalow which has been subject to modest extensions. Located on Cefn Crib Road north of Hafodyrynys, the site falls outside the settlement boundaries designated in the Torfaen Local Development Plan (LDP). The
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nearby hedgerows, trees, wooded slopes and fragmented field pattern afford the immediate area an intrinsically rural character.

6. The existing bungalow and much of the site lies on land somewhat elevated relative to the roadway. Whilst the site is well screened by boundary hedgerows and foliage in the front garden, the current dwelling is visible via the driveway and a field access on Cefn Crib Road. As much of the boundary vegetation is deciduous, screening in winter months would be further reduced.
7. Whilst not a traditional rural building, the modest scale and understated design of the existing bungalow allows it to assimilate within the wider landscape. The proposed replacement dwelling would be substantially larger. The ridge height of the proposal's central gable section would be over twice that of the existing bungalow. The dwelling would also be far wider, extending well beyond the existing southern elevation. This substantial bulk would be readily apparent in views from Cefn Crib Road. Further, the dwelling's extensive roof slopes and glazed areas would afford it a prominence that would draw the eye of people using the lane.
8. Some site levelling would be required to accommodate the dwelling, but this in itself would not be extensive or intrusively sited. Nonetheless, the scale and design of the dwelling would essentially urbanise the site, causing material harm to the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area. This harm would be amplified by the potential use of the adjoining field as a tended garden for the extended dwelling. The use of materials to reflect those used in traditional local rural buildings would do little to mitigate this harmful visual impact. Further, whilst the appellant indicates that the building's location could be altered, I must determine the proposal on the basis of the plans that were before the Council at the time of its decision.
9. I note that the proposed dwelling is intended to provide accommodation for the appellant's relative, for whom the appellant would be able to care for as the need arose. Nonetheless, little information has been submitted to justify the proposal on this basis. For example, it has not been shown that annex accommodation could not be accommodated on the appeal site in a less visually intrusive manner. Nor has it been demonstrated that there is any overriding functional need to replace the existing building rather than adapt it.
10. My attention has been drawn to other new or modified buildings in the locality, some of which I saw on my site visit. However, these are not directly comparable to the appeal scheme. In particular, the visual isolation of the appeal site relative to other buildings, its proximity to the road and the scale of the proposed replacement building are factors which do not appear to be shared with the other cited examples. I have therefore determined the proposal on the specific circumstances of the case.
11. I do not dispute that the proposed dwelling could be acceptably serviced and may have energy efficiency benefits. I also recognise the potential benefits of providing additional living accommodation to care for a relative. Nonetheless, these matters, or the absence of objections from neighbours, do not outweigh the identified harm. For the given reasons I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the spatial and sustainability objectives of LDP policies S1 and S2 and the design and landscape objectives of LDP policies S4, S7 and C5.

Other Matters

12. Little evidence has been submitted in terms of ecological impacts or site drainage. Nonetheless, there is similarly no evidence that the existing building provides a roost for bats or that soil conditions would render a soakaway ineffective. As the site would

remain in the same use, with much of the site unbuilt, I am not persuaded that such matters could not be acceptably addressed via planning conditions. In coming to my decision I have afforded these matters only limited weight.

13. I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I consider that this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards the well-being objective of supporting safe, cohesive and resilient communities.

Conclusion

14. On the basis of the submitted evidence I am not persuaded that the proposal would have adverse impacts on ecology or site drainage. Nonetheless, this does not outweigh the identified harm. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Selby

INSPECTOR