
20. FULL APPLICATION – DEMOLITION OF BUNGALOW AND CONSTRUCTION OF REPLACEMENT DWELLING AT HIGH PASTURE, CURBAR HILL, CURBAR (NP/DDD/0815/0745, P.6831, 424987 / 374471, 23/10/2015/AM)

APPLICANT: MR RAY GRIFFITHS

Site and Surroundings

High Pasture is located upon the crest of the hillside which rises eastwards away from Baslow Road and Curbar Primary School. The site is outside of but adjacent to the designated Curbar Conservation Area which includes the open fields above and to the east of the site which are designated as important open space within the Conservation Area. There are open fields to the west and south of the site.

The property is a three bedroom bungalow constructed from a mixture of rendered and artificial stone walls under a pitched roof clad with concrete tiles. To the rear of the main building is a flat roofed element which includes a double garage. The building is set within a large garden which slopes away from the bungalow to the west with access from Curbar Hill to the north.

The nearest neighbouring properties in this case are the houses to the north of the site which front onto Curbar Hill.

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing bungalow and the construction of a replacement dwelling.

The application proposes a detached two storey, six bedroom house built from natural gritstone under pitched roofs clad with blue slate. It would have painted timber windows and door frames with stone surrounds. The plans show that the dwelling would be set at the same level as the existing bungalow. A detached double garage is also proposed adjacent to the access and to the north of the proposed house.

The six proposed bedrooms would be provided at first floor and second floor along with a playroom which could also be potentially utilised as a seventh bedroom. The kitchen, dining room and living accommodation would be provided at ground floor. The existing access will be retained with parking and turning space provided to the east of the house.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reason.

- 1. The proposed development would have an adverse visual impact and harm the scenic beauty of the National Park's landscape and the setting of the Curbar Conservation Area contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1 and L3, saved Local Plan policies LC4, LC5 and LH5 and the National Planning Policy Framework.**

Key Issues

- Whether the principle of the replacement dwelling meets the requirements of Policy LH5.
- Whether the proposed development would otherwise conserve or enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park and be acceptable in all other respects.

Relevant Planning History

None relevant.

Consultations

Highway Authority – No objection.

District Council – No response to date.

Parish Council – Object to the application for reasons which are summarised below. The Parish Council has also submitted photomontages of the site which can also be seen on the Authority's website.

- Inaccuracies within submitted application in regard to floor space of proposed house compared to the existing bungalow.
- The application does not comply with Local Plan policy LH5 (a) (iii) or (v).
- Object to the visible mass of the proposed house and its impact on the immediate landscape and broader views.
- References in the application to other developments in Curbar are not relevant. These are two storey houses not positioned on the landscape skyline.
- The proposed dwelling is very high and would greatly exceed that of the existing property.
- This is one site which is so prominent in the landscape that any increase at all in the height, width or volume of the building would only have an increased and more harmful impact.

Representations

The Authority has received a total of six letters of representation at the time this report was written. One letter makes a general comment requesting the agent submit additional information, one letter supports the application and four letters object to the application. The reasons given in support and objection are summarised below. The letters can be read in full on the Authority's website.

Support

- The proposed design is a distinct improvement on the existing building and provides a dwelling of character which blends in well with the surroundings and nearby dwellings.
- The development would also create a family-sized house which is not the case with the existing bungalow.
- The main aspect of the dwelling does not overlook properties in the immediate vicinity.

Object

- The view over the application site looking west towards Hassop is particularly special. The current bungalow barely obstructs this view but the proposed house would be ruined by this unnecessarily large unattractive house.

- The quantity of glass windows in the south west elevation would make the building look even more intrusive and ruin the green and pleasant land that exists at the moment.
- Because of its size the proposed property would dominate the landscape in a grotesque way and would totally destroy the open aspect of this part of the village.
- Lack of information provided within the application in regard to views of the development from Cliff Lane.
- The development would have an unacceptable impact on both the setting and the wider landscape. The proposed building would be prominent from Cliff Lane and many other viewpoints. The site, on the brow of the slope down towards the main road at Calver, is very poorly chosen as the building would stand out in the landscape from viewpoints all around.
- The proposal is also clearly not compliant with policy LH5. The size (mass, volume, footprint and floor area) of the house is simply enormous.

Main Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF with regard to the issues that are raised.

Development Plan policies

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L1, L2, L3 and CC1

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC4, LC5, LC17, LH5, LT11 and LT18

Saved Local Plan policy LH5 is directly relevant for the current application and other key policies relate directly to landscape character, appropriate design and climate change mitigation and adaptation in the National Park.

Local Plan policy LH5 – Replacement Dwellings states that the replacement of unlisted dwellings will be permitted provided that:

- i. The replacement contributes to the character or appearance of the area.
- ii. It is not preferable to repair the existing dwelling.
- iii. The proposed dwelling will be a similar size to the dwelling it will replace.
- iv. It will not have an adverse effect on neighboring properties.
- v. It will not be more intrusive in the landscape, either through increased building mass or the greater activity created.

Adopted design guidance within the 'Design Guide', the adopted Climate Change and Sustainable Building Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan offer further guidance on the application of these policies. These policies are supported by a wider range of policies in the Development Plan.

Assessment

Whether the principle of the replacement dwelling meets the requirements of Local Plan policy LH5 (ii)

The existing bungalow is modern and has no particular architectural or historic merit. The low massing of the building, wide gables, flat roof garage extension and large horizontal window openings do not reflect the form or detailing of traditional vernacular buildings typically found within Curbar and in the National Park more generally.

It is therefore considered that the replacement of the existing building with a more appropriate design which enhances the site and its surroundings and incorporates enhanced energy saving measures would be acceptable in principle and in accordance with LH5 (ii).

Whether the proposed dwelling is of a similar size to the dwelling it will replace (Local Plan policy LH5 criteria (iii))

This part of the policy uses the phrase 'similar size' as a parameter to control the size of replacement dwellings to protect the landscape, instead of a simple like for like floor space or volume calculation. This enables a degree of flexibility necessary to both achieve enhancement of the Park and to allow the scale of a replacement dwelling to respond to what is appropriate in the context of different sites and their setting.

This is an important consideration here given the prominence of the site in the local area. The potential impact of the proposed house and its relative size compared to the existing bungalow is a key issue raised by the Parish Council and in representation letters from the public.

The table below shows the difference in size between the existing bungalow and the proposed house. The agent has provided figures in the application for existing and proposed floor space taking into account development which the agent considers could be carried out as permitted development. However, Members will be aware of officer advice in previous replacement dwelling applications that volume is considered to be a more reliable indicator of 'similar size' in relation to the key issue of landscape impact. Figures have therefore been provided for footprint, volume and the total height of the building (measured to the ridge of the main roof).

	Existing Bungalow	Proposed House (percentage change compared to existing)
Footprint (m ²)	271	181 (33% decrease)
Volume (m ³)	1005	1282 (28% increase)
Ridge height (m)	5.5	8.7

The proposed house would actually have a smaller footprint than the existing bungalow but as a consequence of providing accommodation over three floors, the volume and height of the house would increase. The increase in volume and height is considered to be significant and therefore it is considered that the proposed house would not be a similar size to the existing bungalow it would replace in conflict with LH5 (iii). Officers have taken into account extensions which could potentially be carried out under permitted development but these would be of a modest scale and critically only be single storey and to the rear of the bungalow. Therefore the potential impacts of

development carried out under permitted development would not be comparable to the proposed house.

The relative sizes of the existing bungalow and proposed dwelling is only one criterion of the policy and should not be looked at in isolation from the context of the site or its setting within the landscape. In these respects criteria (i), (iv) and (v) of LH5 are particularly relevant especially taking into account the concerns raised by the Parish Council and in representations.

Whether the proposed dwelling meets the requirements of Local Plan policy LH5 (i), (iv) and (v)

Officers have visited the site along with local viewpoints looking into the site from Curbar, Calver and in wider views from Curbar Edge and from Hassop Road. The proposed house would be sited broadly speaking in the same position on the site as the existing bungalow albeit turned to face south westwards.

This site is very prominent from local view points and in the wider landscape because it is positioned on the top of the crest of the hillside which rises up away from Baslow road and because there are clear views into the site from the open fields to the west, south and east of the site.

The existing bungalow is clearly visible on the crest of the hill and seen against the backdrop of Curbar Edge from lower ground within Calver and along Baslow Road and in wider views from the south west across the valley. The bungalow is less prominent from within Curbar Conservation Area, Cliff Lane and from Curbar Edge because the site is set down lower than the level of the adjacent field and only part of the concrete tile pitch roof is visible. The proposed house would be larger in volume and, critically, higher than the existing bungalow. As a result the proposed house would have a significantly greater visual impact where seen from local viewpoints and in the wider landscape.

In views from the south west the proposed house would stand significantly higher above the crest of the hillside and would skyline becoming a dominant feature at the top of the hillside. In views from the east from within the Curbar Conservation Area and from Cliff Lane the upper part of the walls and roof of the house would be visible and would interrupt a locally important viewpoint of the valley from Curbar Hill over the open fields.

The wide gables to facilitate the provision of accommodation within the roof space along the significant amounts of glazing on the south west elevation of the proposed house would further draw attention to the development in the wider landscape where it would appear as a substantial building at the crest of the hillside. It is therefore considered that the proposed house would be more intrusive in the landscape and that the house would not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

In coming to this conclusion officers have taken into account the agents argument that the proposed house would have a smaller footprint and floor space compared to the existing bungalow. However it is the increased volume and height of the building which has been found to result in a harmful landscape and visual impact.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development would have a harmful impact upon the scenic beauty of the National Park landscape and the setting of the Curbar Conservation Area by virtue of its increased building mass and design contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3 L1 and L3, Saved Local Plan policies LC4, LC5 and LH5 and adopted design guidance.

Officers have given pre-application advice about alternative designs of a smaller scale and height which may be more likely to be acceptable and have advised the agent that a re-submitted application which follows this advice would potentially be a way forward. However the agent has requested that the Authority determines the current application.

Other Issues

The proposed house would be served by the existing access which would not be altered. There is space within the site to park and turn three more vehicles clear of the highway and there are no objections to the design or siting of the proposed garage. Therefore subject to appropriate conditions to require details of a construction compound and provision and maintenance of parking and bin storage space it is considered that the development would be served by satisfactory parking and access arrangements in accordance with policies LT11 and LT18.

The application form states that the existing and proposed foul sewage drainage is not known. If permission is granted a condition would be imposed requiring full details to be submitted for approval with the expectation that the development would be provided with a connection to the main sewer if viable and if not a package treatment plant.

The proposal falls outside of the Authority's requirement for a protected species survey because of the age of the building. The Authority's officers are not aware of any protected species or habitat that could be affected by the proposal. Although it is considered that the proposed development would be unlikely to have an adverse impact upon any nature conservation interests, an advisory footnote is recommended to remind the developer as a precautionary approach.

The application states that the dwelling would be constructed from a timber frame with high levels of insulation clad in natural stone. The design would also allow for passive heating through the large amount of glazing on the south west elevation. The application also states that there is the potential for the installation of a ground source heat pump on the site to provide energy for heating and hot water. This approach is acceptable and in accordance with CC1 but does not provide any over-riding justification to approve a development which would have a harmful impact upon the National Park.

Conclusion

There are no concerns that the development would be un-neighbourly and the proposed house would be served by safe access and adequate parking. The development would not harm any protected species or their habitat.

However, these factors do not outweigh or override the fundamental objection to the application on the grounds that the proposed house would have an adverse visual impact and harm the scenic beauty of the National Park's landscape and the setting of the Curbar Conservation Area.

There are no exceptional circumstances to justify the proposed development and therefore it is considered that the proposal would represent unsustainable development contrary to contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1 and L3, saved Local Plan policies LC4, LC5 and LH5 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil