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Adroddiad

Ymweliad a safle cynhaliwyd ar 30/11/99

Report

site visit held on 30/11/99

gan/by David Sheers BA DipTP MRTPI

**Arolygydd cyfarwyddwyd gan Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol Cymru**

**an Inspector instructed by the National
Assembly for Wales**

Dyddiad/Date 15 December 1999

- ◆ The application is made by Mr and Mrs S W George.
- ◆ The site is located at Enfield, Portfield Gate, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.
- ◆ The application (ref: 98/0613/PA) is in full and dated 23 October 1998.
- ◆ The development proposed is the rehabilitation of the Enfield homestead, including conversion of redundant corn barn, removal of eyesores and on-site improvement to access all for use as a single detached dwelling.

Recommendation: that planning permission be refused.

Procedural matters

1. The application was called in for decision by a direction made on 15 July 1999 under Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the reason that the proposed development raises planning issues of more than local importance. On the information available at the time the following matters appeared likely to be amongst those relevant to the consideration of the application:

- (i) The visual, environmental and access implications of the proposed development on the site and the surrounding areas.
- (ii) Relevant national and development plan policies, especially in relation to the government's policy on housing in the open countryside as set out in Planning Guidance (Wales) Planning Policy: First Revision, April 1999 and Policies GN4 and ENV18 of the North Pembrokeshire Local Plan.

2. This report contains a description of the site and surrounding area, my appraisal (on the basis of my observations and the written representations of the parties) of the proposals, and my recommendation as to the decision which might be made.

The site and surroundings

3. The application site is situated in the open countryside, just south of the small settlement of Portfield Gate about 0.75km west of Haverfordwest. The settlement is strung out for about 0.5km on both sides of the B4341 Broadhaven Road that runs along a well-defined ridge at this point. The land falls away on both sides of the settlement and the application site is at a somewhat lower level, with the buildings on it located some 90m due south of the nearest dwelling in the settlement; a modern two storey dwelling. The settlement consists of a number of traditional houses and a public house interspersed with modern residential development, mainly in the form of detached dwellings in a variety of styles. The southern boundary of the settlement is well defined by various forms of boundary treatment to the rear gardens.

4. At the eastern end of the settlement, to the north east of the application site, is a large, fenced compound enclosing a high, grassed covered reservoir. Just to the east of this, and within the 30mph speed limit through the settlement, is the access to the application site and surrounding agricultural land. This consists of a wide, fenced unmetalled driveway that runs southwards alongside the fence of the reservoir compound, across the apex of a corner and then westwards along the south side of a post and wire fence to an extensive cleared area forming the northern part of the site. Recent planting has taken place bordering the driveway. Visibility from this along the B4341 is good to the east and extends to about 90m to the west. The site can just be glimpsed through a hedgerow bordering a public bridleway running southwards from the road about 220m to the east.

5. The application site itself is surrounded by open countryside with a recently formed small enclosure bounded by planted banks, to the west, open fields to the east and south and a grassed paddock to the north between the drive and the reservoir and rear of houses to the north. The northern part of the site consists of a cleared area while the southern part comprises a collection of buildings in various states of disrepair that originally formed a farmstead and which are grouped around a small yard with cobblestones linking the barn and house. These buildings consist of a modest sized stone barn with corrugated iron roof, 2 slit openings and a door on the northern elevation and a barn door and one slit opening on the southern elevation. On the western side are the remains of a farmhouse of traditional form and scale. It is roofless, was originally 2 storeys in height, and is largely stone built with the central portion extending up to the eaves. The southern end, which is on a slightly raised platform, consists only of the base of the walls. The central portion includes a central chimney, 3 window openings (1 blocked up) on the western elevation and 2 door and 2 window openings (1 blocked up) on the eastern elevation. The northern end consists of the remains of a former byre and, adjoining the western side of the barn, the stone and concrete block remnants of an outhouse. In general the barn appears to be in a reasonably sound condition, but the farmhouse and attached buildings are in a very poor state of repair with only the general outlines of the former house being discernible.

6. The eastern side of the farmyard is bounded by the lower parts of the concrete block and brick walls of a substantial agricultural building divided into animal pens. The concrete wall bases of a former similar sized building adjoin this. On the southern side of the farmyard is a large former agricultural building of which the concrete frame and corrugated iron roof remains. To the west of this, and separated from it by a track to the fields to the south, is a small stone built, mono-pitched vehicle shed. The area is scattered with discarded items of building materials and former agricultural machinery.

Appraisal

7. Although located close to the settlement of Portfield Gate, the application site is clearly situated in the open countryside. It is surrounded by agricultural land, is at a lower level than the built development to the north and as a consequence it is well separated physically and visually from the settlement. Two schemes of work on the site have been proposed, both involving the retention of parts of the stonework of the old farmhouse and the small stone barn, the construction of a sizeable dwelling incorporating these and the removal of most of the remains of the former agricultural development on the site. The proposals as originally submitted in October 1998 are illustrated on the plans at ENFELD5. At the request of the Council a revised scheme was submitted in June 1999 (plans at 99027H/01D). I consider that both schemes involve, in effect, the construction of a new dwelling as comparatively little would remain of the original structures on the site and extensive reconstruction or new building would be required.

8. In this context the relevant development plan policies are contained in the adopted North Pembrokeshire Local Plan. The site lies outside the settlement limits for Portfield Gate and Policy GN4 of that plan states that development will not be permitted outside these subject to specific exceptions, including the conversion or change of use of buildings for business or residential uses as specified in Policies EC15 and EV18. The latter permits the conversion of appropriate sound traditional buildings for residential use in locations outside settlements subject to 5 caveats, number 1 of which states that *the building can be genuinely converted to accommodate the proposed use without extensive alterations, rebuilding and/or extension. In addition a structural survey will be required to establish that the building is structurally sound.*

9. National guidance on the matter is contained in Planning Guidance (Wales) Planning Policy First Revision (April 1999) [PGW]. This states, at paragraph 5.1.1 that *Development in the countryside should benefit the rural economy and maintain or enhance the environment...but new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development in development plans should be strictly controlled.* In respect of the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings, PGW states, at paragraph 10.5.1, that a positive approach to the conversion of rural buildings for business re-use should be adopted subject to several factors, including, if they are in the open countryside, that *they are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.* Paragraph 10.5.2 states that *Residential conversion of buildings which have ceased to be used for industrial or commercial purposes, including agriculture, can have minimal economic impact, and may be detrimental to the fabric and character of historic buildings.*

10. In this case it is clear that neither of the schemes proposed comply with the development plan provisions or with national guidance. Although the small stone barn may be structurally sound, the major part of the proposals involves the former farmhouse and attached outbuildings that are totally derelict and requires major reconstruction, new construction and extensions. These proposals could not be regarded as a conversion or change of use of buildings in compliance with Policy GN4 nor would they constitute a genuine conversion without extensive alterations, re-building and/or extension in compliance with Policy EV18(1). In effect they would, in total, constitute a new dwelling in a location where development should be strictly controlled.

11. However there are other material factors that require consideration. A new access to the site has been constructed. The original access was from the north and has now been built over. The new driveway skirts around the eastern edge of the settlement and, as such, represents an intrusion into the countryside. However it differs little in appearance from a normal agricultural access, the planting that has taken place will screen it and visibility from it along the B4341 meets the required standards. The site is well screened from public view due to the lie of the land and the distance away of the nearest public right of way. Significantly, the buildings and paraphernalia on the site represent an eyesore while planning permission was granted in December 1995 (ref. D2/95/0741) for the conversion and extension of the small stone barn into a small, 2 bedroomed, single storey dwelling and the creation of a new access. This follows much the same line as that currently formed. This planning permission included no provision for the clearing of the remains of the former farm buildings.

12. It is clear that, regardless of the outcome of this application, the residential use of the site can lawfully take place, albeit on a strictly limited scale, and the derelict buildings could also remain as lawfully take place, albeit on a strictly limited scale, and the derelict buildings could also remain an eyesore in the countryside. These matters could be considered to be sufficiently important and exceptional to override the strong planning policy objections to the current proposals for the site. In consequence some form of appropriate residential scheme on the exceptional to override the strong planning policy objections to the current proposals for the site. In consequence some form of appropriate residential scheme on the site, which included the clearance of all dereliction on the land, may be considered acceptable. However I do not consider either of the two schemes that have been proposed to be appropriate especially as neither, in my opinion, would meet the criteria set out in Policy EV18(3) and (4); that *the proposed use can be accommodated without changing the character of the building or its setting and the proposed form, bulk and general design of the converted building, including any extensions, are keeping with its surroundings.*

13. Currently the site accommodates a small barn close to the remains of part of a traditionally proportioned farmhouse with outbuildings of unknown scale. In general these have a low profile and complement their agricultural and rural setting. Any scheme for the site should, in my view, respect the principles set out in Policy EV18. However in this case both schemes would result on a dwelling of 4 bedrooms and 3 or 4 other habitable rooms which would be substantial in scale and mass. Both would involve extensions beyond the footprint of the farmhouse, outbuildings and stone barn. In particular the second proposal would include a garage, porch and second storey to the barn, which would extend well beyond the form of the existing structures on the site. Neither would respect the existing features of the original farmhouse. I would conclude, therefore, that the schemes the subject of the present application would represent a significant departure from the provisions of the development plan and that other material considerations do not indicate that these should be set aside.

14. Should it be considered that planning permission ought to be granted, the proposals the subject of the original application (ENFELD5) more closely respects the design and form of the existing small barn and is the smaller in scale of the two schemes. Any planning permission should be subject to conditions relating to landscaping and the removal of all derelict structures from the site prior to the occupation of the proposed development.

Recommendation

15. I recommend that planning permission be refused.



Inspector

Persons present at the site visit

Mr B R Howell	Agent
Mr S W George	Applicant
Mr A Williams	Pembrokeshire County Council

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