

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item No

meeting date: THURSDAY, 26 APRIL 2007

PLANNING APPLICATIONS UNDER THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990:

APPLICATIONS WHICH THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES RECOMMENDS FOR APPROVAL

APPLICATION NO: 3/2007/0005/P

(GRID REF: SD 7939 4549)

PROPOSED REPLACEMENT DWELLING AT DENISFIELD HOUSE, RIMINGTON LANE, RIMINGTON

PARISH COUNCIL:

Has submitted a lengthy letter of objection to this application, which is available for inspection by Members. The Parish Council's grounds of objection are summarised as follows:

1. An application to rebuild the saved front etc of Sandown Hall in Macclesfield Borough was refused by the Council and the subsequent appeal was dismissed in November 2004. The Appeal Inspector commented that the Greek Revival style of the building and its Liverpool origins had no direct affinity to Macclesfield Borough or Nether Alderly in particular. The Parish Council considers the same comments to be applicable to Ribble Valley and Rimington in particular.
2. The building is not appropriate to the character of the area as it involves the replacement of a traditional Lancashire style long farmhouse with an alien Liverpool version of a Greek Revival style mansion. The sandstone is also likely to be red sandstone which differs from the millstone grit sandstone characteristically used in the Ribble Valley.
3. Permission has been granted for a scheme of extensions and alterations to Denisfield House which the applicant now says (in the supporting statement with this application) would leave the dwelling poorly planned, and that achieving an entirely satisfactory outcome by remodelling would be difficult, if not impossible. The Parish Council believes, however, that there exists the possibility of designing a remodelling of the premises within the vernacular style that would deal with these conveniently perceived limitations of the earlier application.

The supporting statement also says that, in its original setting, Sandown Hall was an individual house with gardens surrounded by open countryside, and that this has similarities to Denisfield. The Parish Council says that this is misleading because, at Denisfield, the gardens are only at the rear with agricultural land between the dwelling and the road.

ENVIRONMENT
DIRECTORATE
(COUNTY SURVEYOR):

No highway observations.

ADDITIONAL
REPRESENTATIONS:

A letter of support for the application has been received from the Wavertree Society, a Civic Trust registered amenity society for the area in Liverpool in which Sandown Hall originally stood. They strongly object to the demolition of the former Listed Building, and were strongly represented at two public inquiries in 1996 and 1998. They were disappointed when the Secretary of State allowed the demolition of the building, but were then pleased to hear that the sandstone blocks comprising the front façade had been purchased by a third party with the intention of being re-erected "somewhere in the north west". The Society says that, whilst they have no knowledge of the locality, and cannot therefore judge how well the building would fit into its surroundings, they express support in principle for the proposal. They feel that the new structure will serve a useful function, not only as an attractive home but also as a permanent reminder of what Wavertree has lost.

Proposal

The existing Denisfield House is a detached house of stone construction with a slate roof. It has been previously extended, including a swimming pool within a flat roofed single storey extension. In 1995, planning permission was granted for a scheme of substantial extensions to the property including pitched roofed two storey extensions at the rear and the construction of a pitched roofed first floor extension over the swimming pool (3/2005/0782/P). No works have been carried out in respect of that planning permission.

Permission is now sought for the demolition of the dwelling and its replacement with a new house which is to incorporate the reconstructed façade of the former Listed Building, Sandown Hall. The replacement dwelling would be similar in size and height to the dwelling which would result if the extant permission 3/2005/0782/P were to be implemented. It would, however, be in a slightly amended position further to the north east, but still partly overlapping the position of the existing building. The proposed dwelling would comprise a central, two storey section containing the majority of the living accommodation on the ground floor, with six bedrooms (five with en-suite facilities) and a bathroom at first floor level. To the west side, and projecting to the rear, would be a swimming pool within a single storey pitched roofed section of the building; and on the east side the majority of a proposed large kitchen would be within a single storey pitched roofed projection.

The external materials would be sandstone (partly comprising the reclaimed front elevation of Sandown Hall) and a natural slate roof. I am advised that the sandstone is more red in colour than that typically found in the Ribble Valley, but that it has been painted over and has faded, and will look more pale when the paint is removed.

A detached garage which formed part of the application as originally submitted has been deleted from the scheme pending investigations concerning the precise route of a public footpath which crosses the site. As amended, the proposal has no implications for the public footpath, which will continue to cross part of the residential curtilage of the site, as it does at present.

Site Location

Denisfield House is in an isolated location within the open countryside on the north side of Rimington Lane to the west of the village of Rimington. The dwelling and its curtilage is at the northern end of an approximately 100m long access driveway. The land on both sides of the driveway (ie between the curtilage and the road), is agricultural land which will remain unaffected by the application.

The northern (rear) site boundary is very well screened by existing trees and hedges. There is also existing tree screening to the front of the existing dwelling.

There are no other dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Relevant History

3/2005/0782/P – Extensions and alterations to dwelling. Approved.

Relevant Policies

Policy G1 - Development Control.

Policy ENV3 - Development in Open Countryside.

Policy H14 - Rebuilding/Replacement Dwellings - Outside Settlements.

Environmental, AONB, Human Rights and Other Issues

This application seeks planning permission for the demolition and replacement of an existing dwelling in an isolated location within the open countryside. As such, it falls to be considered against the general development control, visual amenity requirements of Policies G1 and ENV3 of the Local Plan, and the specific requirements of Policy H14. This latter policy says that applications such as this will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

1. The residential use of the property should not have been abandoned.
2. The creation of any extra curtilage will be assessed in relation to Policy H12.
3. The impact on the landscape will be assessed in relation to that of a new dwelling. As such very careful consideration to design and use of materials must be made. In addition, excessive increase in the size of the property will not be permitted.

With regards to the first of these criteria. Although the dwelling is presently not occupied, its residential use has clearly not been abandoned. In relation to the second criteria, the application site as defined on the submitted plans includes the driveway, and what I consider to be the established residential curtilage of the property. A letter from the previous owners of the property has been submitted by the applicant's agent. The writers of the letter state that they owned the property between 1987 and 2005, and that the whole of the land covered by this application was used by them as formal gardens which had been laid out by a previous owner. I am satisfied that the proposal does not involve any extension of the existing established residential curtilage.

The main consideration, however, relates to the third criteria of Policy H14, and the associated visual amenity requirements of Policies G1 and ENV3.

The proposed replacement dwelling is similar in size to the existing dwelling (if the extant planning permission were to be implemented). Its two storey element, however, is more compact than the existing long and narrow property. The projecting single storey elements have been designed with pitched roofs behind parapet walls. When viewed from the front, the

parapet walls have the appearance of the walls of a walled garden, such that the single storey parts of the building have virtually no effect upon the local landscape. The amended position of the building is also such that the new dwelling will be more effectively screened by the trees at the front of the site than the existing building. Overall, when looking purely at its size and precise siting, I consider that the proposed dwelling would, if anything, have slightly less of an impact on the local landscape than the existing building.

This leaves the final, and main, issue of the precise design of the dwelling and the fact that it will incorporate the rebuilt façade of the former Listed Building which originally stood in the Wavertree district of Liverpool. The Parish Council objects to this aspect of the application and refers to an appeal which was dismissed for the reconstruction of Sandown Hall in Macclesfield Borough in Cheshire.

I have studied the Appeal Decision letter, and would comment that the main issues considered by the Inspector were as follows:

- whether there were very special circumstances to justify development in the Green Belt;
- the impact on the openness of the Green Belt;
- the impact of the proposed dwelling on the supply of housing in the Borough.

None of these issues are relevant in this current application, as the proposal relates to a replacement dwelling and does not constitute development on a Greenfield site within the Green Belt.

Furthermore, despite the fact that there was a major issue of principle against the development (ie the need to justify development in the Green Belt), the Inspector nevertheless concluded that “In many respects, I consider the appeal application to be finely balanced. It would bring back to life a building of acknowledged architectural and historic importance, and as such, might well accord with the spirit of the Local Plan Policy BE1. Nevertheless, for the above reasons I conclude that there are no very special circumstances as to the rebuilding of Sandown Hall within the Green Belt. Such a development would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and contrary to the Council’s objective of restricting the supply of housing within Macclesfield Borough”.

In my opinion, it appears from the decision letter, that the appeal would more than likely have been allowed if the issue of development in the Green Belt had not been considered by the Inspector to be of overriding importance.

In a letter of response to the Parish Council’s objections, the applicant’s agent makes the same comments about the Macclesfield appeal decision as those made above, and also makes a number of additional comments, the main ones of which are as follows:

- The reconstruction of Sandown Hall is unlikely to take place unless the proposal is considered to be economic. The creation of a new house utilising the original components will, inevitably, involve higher costs than is normal for a residential development, and require a building not only of high relative costs per square metre but also of a sufficiently substantial scale. It is clear that such a proposal in the area of Liverpool where the building originally stood is not, in current market conditions, likely to result in a completed development of sufficient value to justify the investment.
- We note the comments that Sandown Hall was not constructed of stone indigenous to the Ribble Valley, but our view is that the proposed replacement dwelling is detached, relatively isolated and reasonably well screened, there being no immediate relationship

between the building and any nearby buildings which are constructed in local stone. The precise colour and texture of stone is therefore not of any great significance whereas the acknowledged quality of the design of the original building is of considerably greater significance.

- It is our view that the proposed replacement dwelling based on bringing back to life a building of acknowledged architectural and historic importance would result in an environmental improvement in terms of the impact of the development on its surrounding landscape.
- It is difficult to reconcile the existing dwelling with the Parish Council's description as "a traditional style Lancashire long farmhouse" the existing dwelling has been the subject of substantial alterations with poorly designed flat roofed extensions and other alterations including the insertion of badly proportioned plastic windows and sliding patio doors. The external appearance and internal planning of the dwelling now bear little resemblance to a traditional building in the local vernacular.

I concur with the agent's comments and I consider, for reasons explained in the report, that the proposed dwelling will not have an unduly detrimental effect on the local landscape, and, as such, would comply with Policies G1, ENV3 and H14 of the Local Plan.

A survey of the existing building has been carried out in respect of its possible occupation by bats and barn owls, and a report of its findings submitted with the application. This concludes that opportunities for barn owls to occupy the property do not exist. With regard to bats, opportunities for use do exist, but no actual evidence of occupation was found. It is therefore recommended that, prior to demolition, two nocturnal surveys be carried out during the breeding season (May to August) and, if a roost is found to be present, then a licence to carry out the demolition will be required from Natural England. This matter will be covered by an appropriate condition in the event of planning permission being granted.

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR APPROVAL

The proposed replacement building will not have any seriously detrimental effects on the appearance of the locality.

RECOMMENDATION: That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following condition(s):

1. This permission shall be implemented in accordance with the proposal as amended by letter and plan received on 5 April 2007.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt since the proposal was the subject of agreed amendments.

2. Precise specifications or samples of walling and roofing materials and details of any surface materials to be used including their colour and texture shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before their use in the proposed works.

REASON: In order that the Local Planning Authority may ensure that the materials to be used are appropriate to the locality in accordance with Policies G1, ENV3 and H14 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan.

3. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until details of the landscaping of the site, including wherever possible the retention of existing trees, have

been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall indicate, as appropriate, the types and numbers of trees and shrubs, their distribution on site, those areas to be seeded, turfed, paved or hard landscaped, including details of any changes of level or landform and the types and details of all fencing and screening.

The approved landscaping scheme shall be implemented in the first planting season following occupation or use of the development, whether in whole or part and shall be maintained thereafter for a period of not less than 5 years to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. This maintenance shall include the replacement of any tree or shrub which is removed, or dies, or is seriously damaged, or becomes seriously diseased, by a species of similar size to those originally planted.

REASON: In the interests of the amenity of the area and to comply with Policies G1, ENV3 and H14 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan.

4. Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority the development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the recommendations of the bat survey and report submitted with the application dated 24 January 2007.

REASON: To comply with policies G1 and ENV7 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan ensuring that no species/habitat protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are destroyed.