PLANNING STATEMENT

PROPOSAL : Erection of kitchen extension
ADDRESS : Upper Dales Manor, Dunwood Lane, Dunwood, Longsdon
APPLICANT : Mr and Mrs M Pointon
DATE : March 2016 JOB No. : 2007.1441B

Introduction

This application follows the refusal of planning permission for a proposed larger extension considered under planning application SMD/2015/0816. This application has been reduced further in size and represents an even more modest side extension on to this existing large dwellinghouse.

The dwellinghouse is situated in a rural location on Dunwood Lane, a country lane that links Rudyard to the north to the A53 (about 660m to the south of the site). The general character of the area is made up of large detached houses in generous grounds. Although the wider landscape is agricultural, the application site is within an enclave of residential properties which have either lost their link with agriculture or have been built independent of agriculture. The area, which is referred to as Dunwood, is considered to be within a recognised group of dwellings in the Green Belt.

Planning History

The dwelling has been granted planning permission to carry out four proposals for alterations and extensions over a period of 27 years. These permissions relate to: -

82/11252/OLDDC: renovations and extensions: approved
84/13104/OLDDC: extension to form attached garage: approved
02/00929/FUL: two front dormer windows: approved
07/00762/FUL: construction of dormer windows: approved

These permissions illustrate the acceptance by the Council of a pattern of gradual improvements and additions to the property. In addition, a recent sunroom addition has been made to the property under the allowances of permitted development. The recent refusal is critical of the scale of the overall additions to the original dwelling and considered that this relatively modest proposal resulted in harm to the Green Belt.

Planning Policy

The application building is located in the North Staffordshire Green Belt. A green belt was first proposed around the North Staffordshire Conurbation by the North Staffordshire Green Belt Local Plan prepared by Staffordshire County Council in 1983.The prime purpose of the Plan was to prevent the further expansion of the City of Stoke On Trent into the surrounding countryside.

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in September 1998. It replaced the policies of the North Staffordshire Green Belt Local Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands. The Local Plan policies have themselves been superceded by the new Core Strategy adopted by the Staffordshire Moorlands Council in March 2014. The Core Strategy Policy for Rural Areas is contained in policy R1:-

> "All development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. ……..
> **….Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.** "

Policy R1 sets out the criteria for development that the Council will support in rural locations and the need for such development not to have a detrimental impact on rural character or environmental quality.

Government green belt planning policy is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. This states that: -

> "The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
> As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
> A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:-
> **……**
> **● the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;**
> **……**

Assessment of Proposal
The proposal represents the provision of a single storey kitchen extension. The existing kitchen is shown on the "Existing Conditions" drawing 2007-1441B-44. This shows that the kitchen is poorly lit as it receives little natural light. It has two small windows at the front of the house and borrowed light from the sunroom. Because of this, the room does not work well as a kitchen and the applicants have been forced to rethink the layout of their home. The application proposes the erection of a single storey extension at the rear of the sun room to accommodate a new kitchen.

The application property has the appearance of a large two storey dwelling. As its planning history shows, it has benefitted from alterations and extensions through the granting of four planning permissions between 1982 and 2007 and a further permitted development extension. Only the first of these was granted before the site became the subject of Green Belt policies; the others were granted following consideration of their impact on the Green Belt. It is clear from this, that whilst these proposals have amounted to extensions that exceed the 30% guideline, the Council has considered them to be acceptable.

The application building is situated in large grounds and behind a high stone wall and gates. Its character is very much akin to its neighbours, representing a large dwelling in substantial gardens. Only the higher parts of the application are visible from outside the site- it is mostly hidden from the road by the front boundary wall at the rear by well landscaped gardens. Neighbouring dwellings are masked from public view in a similar way.

The proposed extension is still considered to be inkeeping with the character of the application building, even more so now that it has been reduced further in size. The bulk of the application building is two storeys with later modest single storey additions. Materials are stone and tile and are inkeeping with the building and its additions. The proposed extension has been positioned on the site and in relation to other additions in a way that has limited impact on the application building.

The application site is located within a recognised group of dwellings forming the small settlement of Dunwood. It is considered that the application building, its neighbours and the area generally have a character of large houses, some of which have received substantial additions, standing in large grounds. The proposed extension is considered to be in character with this and is therefore considered to promote the character of the rural area and meets a community need. In doing so the proposal complies with the first part of Policy R1.

The second part of Policy R1 requires that development that satisfies the first part of the policy will only be acceptable in the Green Belt if it is able to show “very special circumstances”. In this case, these are considered to be: -

1. The application building has been shown by previous Council decisions to be capable of accommodating a series of modest extensions that are cumulatively above the general 30% limitation (which is an unofficial guide). This additional extension is therefore modest and is not considered to be out of proportion with the building.
2. The application site is within a group of similar sized and extended dwellings. This modest proposal will not harm any of the five purposes of the Green Belt.
3. The design of the proposed extension is inkeeping with the character of the application building.
4. The application building is mostly hidden from public view.
5. The proposed extension is positioned against the application building in a way that limits its impact.
6. Most importantly for the applicants, the existing kitchen is gloomy and difficult to work in. The proposal delivers a light, modern kitchen environment for the building.

Conclusion

The proposal is not considered to breach the Council’s policy for the control of domestic extensions in the Green Belt, especially since it has been reduced even further since the last submission. The proposal is in itself, modest. The application building is a large house within large grounds in a group of similarly large houses in large grounds. It is therefore considered that the proposed extension complies with policy and will not harm the openness of the Green Belt. If the Council consider that this proposal still represents inappropriate development, then it is considered that the proposal is supported by very special circumstances that justify a granting of planning permission in this case.