The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2019

by R Cooper BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/19/3234554
1 The Villas, Uttoxeter Road, Draycott In The Moors ST11 9AQ

- 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 Miss Rebecca Hartley against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref SMD/2019/0180, dated 20 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 May 2019.
- The development proposed is a ground and first floor extension to existing dwelling to form enlarged kitchen/diner and two additional bedrooms and bathroom.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and so the main issues are:

    - Whether the appeal development is inappropriate development for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework;
    - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the area; and
    - If the appeal development is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development?

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to state that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. In addition, the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt subject to a number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 145 of the Framework. One of the exceptions cited is the extension of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the 'original building'. Policy R2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework: A Local Plan for the future of Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy Development Plan Document

2014 (the Core Strategy) conforms to the thrust of national Green Belt policy in these respects.

4. The existing dwelling is a modest two bedroomed period semi-detached property. The front elevation is relatively narrow, providing enough width to accommodate the lounge on the ground floor and the main bedroom at the first floor. The proposed two store extension would be noticeably wider than the host dwelling, creating double frontage as such. The resultant extension would appear disproportionate to the original dwelling.

5. Policy R2 of the Core Strategy does not provide a definition or quantify what is considered to be a disproportionate addition to a dwelling in the Green Belt. However, the Council officer's report considers 30% of the original dwelling house to be used as a guide, although it is not clear whether this relates to floor space or volume. The Council have estimated the proposal to be an increase of 94% over and above the of the original floorspace, whilst the appellant considers it to be approximately a 70% increase in floor space. These figures are quite different, however, even if I were to accept the appellant's figure of 70%, this still represents a significant increase in floor area, with the resultant extension appearing substantially disproportionate to the original dwelling, and would be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt.

6. For these reasons, therefore, the appeal development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, in this regard, and it would conflict with Policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework which collectively seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development and preserve its openness.

Openness and character and appearance

7. The existing modest two bedroomed semi-detached dwelling occupies a triangular plot to the southern side of Uttoxeter Road. The property forms part of a linear pattern of development and is bound to the east and west by neighbouring residential properties. Open agricultural land to the south, and to the north east. The existing dwelling has an openness around it created by the size of its plot and the distance between the neighbouring building to the south east.

8. The Framework makes clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It also states that one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness. The increased bulk of the building that would arise from the extension would significantly reduce this openness.

9. As described above, the dwelling has a narrow frontage, and the proposal would result in a disproportionate and over-dominant form of development that fails to respect the scale and massing of the host dwelling. The appeal property has an existing side extension. However, this is single storey and subordinate to the host dwelling and maintains the overall symmetrical appearance in the pair of semis. In contrast, the width and height of the proposed extension, would cause a significant imbalance between the properties. Consequently, the extension would appear incongruous and visually intrusive detrimental to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider street scene context.

10. Even though the extension would have a lower ridge line, and the front elevation would be set back so as to expose the brickwork detail on gable of the host dwelling, this would not mitigate the harm identified above. Whilst the appellant considers the extension to be in keeping, and more aesthetically pleasing than the existing additions by the previous owner, the scale and mass of the extension would not respect the host building.

11. For the reasons outlined above, the proposed extension would be disproportionate relative to the original building and would reduce the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, it would not accord with Policies R2 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, paragraph 127 and 145 of the Framework which collectively seek that new development respects local character and preserves the openness of the Green Belt.

Other considerations

12. I have considered that there are no windows proposed at first floor level on the first floor side elevation of the extension, and the appellant considers no significant injury would be caused to nearby properties, and that they consider there to be sufficient onsite parking. I also understand there have been no objections from neighbours or parish council, however these matters do not alter my findings on the main issues above.

13. Whilst others may have obtained permission for extensions closer to their neighbours, I am not aware of the circumstances of those other schemes and in any event all proposals for development must be determined on their individual merits.

14. The Council Officer's report refers to policies in the emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan which has reached a reasonably advanced stage, having been examined by an Inspector in Autumn 2018. From the information provided, it is difficult to ascertain whether any modifications and further consultations are proposed. As such, it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion on the weight that should be afforded to those policies. In any event, given my findings, the proposal does not accord with the adopted Core Strategy policies identified above.

15. Consequently, these other considerations either individually or collectively, do not clearly outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Conclusion

16. The appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the terms set out in the Framework and would lead to a loss of openness to the Green Belt. These issues are not outweighed by the considerations advanced by the appellant and in the wider evidence so as to amount to very special circumstances. Furthermore, the scale and appearance of the extension would not respect the character and appearance of the host building.

17. Therefore, for all of the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Cooper

INSPECTOR