The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by K Ford MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/19/3236968
Houghwood Bottom Farm, Stanley Road, Stockton Brook ST9 9LL

- 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 Mr and Mrs Edwards against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref SMD/2019/0365, dated 14 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2019.
- The development proposed is single storey extension with porch and internal alterations.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

   - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and any other relevant development plan policies.
   - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt.
   - The effect on the character and appearance of the area.
   - Would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Inappropriate Development

3. The appeal site comprises a large detached 2 storey former farmhouse that has a number of historic extensions. The house has a variety of finishes which include sandstone, facing brickwork and coloured render. Set back a noticeable distance from Stanley Road, it is nevertheless clearly visible from it given the open exposed nature of the land and the elevated position of the road in relation to the dwelling.

4. The appeal site is located in the Green Belt. Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and

should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate. It sets out some exceptions, one of which is the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling. Policy SS6c of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Core Strategy) is consistent with the provisions of the NPPF in this regard.

5. The Council say that the property has been subject to previous extensions, which add some 96 sqm to the around 78.6 sqm of the original building. This has not been disputed by the appellant. The further additions proposed would add around an additional 24 sqm. The existing extensions to the dwelling plus the proposed development would represent an increase of some 150% in the size of the original dwelling which is a substantial amount.

6. The policies in the NPPF and development plan are explicit that the test is one of proportionality. A further extension of the property would be disproportionate to the size of the original dwelling. The proposal would be inappropriate development which the NPPF advises is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and to which substantial weight must be given.

Openness

7. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF says 'the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are their openness and their permanence'. Given my findings that the extensions are a disproportionate addition above the original dwelling house, there would be a loss of openness from the extensions that would be significant in Green Belt terms. The development would consequently conflict with paragraph 133 of the NPPF in this regard.

Character and Appearance

8. Both the proposed side extension and the porch would be visible from different vantage points on Stanley Road. The side extension would be set down in height and set back from the main elevation but it would still exacerbate the existing unbalanced appearance of the property. The contemporary design would also be at odds with the main part of the building. Existing unsympathetic extensions to other parts of the dwelling do not mitigate the further harm that would be created by the scheme. Nor would the location of the extension away from other elevations that more fully face the road.

9. The proposed porch seeks to replicate use of some materials found on the main original dwelling. However, this is an insufficient means of detracting from the awkward design created by the valley roof link, even if this is a feature found elsewhere on the building and in the wider area. The harm would be further exacerbated by the proposed gable apex glazing which cumulatively would create an obtrusive addition clearly visible in the approach to the property from the access road. The fact that the porch would be viewed in the context of the existing rendered extension on this side of the dwelling does not alter my view.

10. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and as such would conflict with the part of Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy which requires new development to be of a high quality and designed to respect the site and its surroundings through scale and layout. It would also conflict with

the relevant parts of the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide. This includes an expectation that new development should sit comfortably in the landscape, respect the character and context of the area in terms of form, scale, proportions and materials and that extensions to properties should harmonise with the parent building, its scale and character.

Other Considerations

11. The appellant has identified an extension to the property which they claim could be undertaken under Permitted Development rights. This is disputed by the Council. The fallback summer room would be larger than the proposed scheme and so would have a greater impact on openness. It would also be clearly visible from the site access. However, even if the fallback could be implemented there is little before me to indicate that the development represents a realistic possibility given the alternative extension would adjoin a plant room and wc/ shower which would be at odds with what the appellant appears to be trying to create in the proposed open plan scheme. This is even if the fallback position would enable views over the valley to the north. Any porch that may constitute permitted development would be smaller than the one proposed. I consequently give this consideration limited weight.

Conclusion

12. The proposal is inappropriate development which by definition is harmful to the Green Belt. It would also impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The NPPF requires that substantial weight be attached to harm caused by inappropriateness and loss of openness. The development would also harm the character and appearance of the area. For the appeal to succeed the combined weight of other considerations must clearly outweigh the totality of the harm that would be caused and so very special circumstances to justify the development do not exist. For the reasons identified, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Ford

INSPECTOR