The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 June 2021

by Thomas Hatfield BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/21/3271842
Rock Cottage, Bagnall Road, Bagnall, ST9 8JY

- 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 & Mrs A Lyttleton against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref SMD/2020/0638, dated 12 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 12 January 2021.
- The development proposed is described as *"single storey rear extension to form 'sun room' / study"*.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

   (a) Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') and development plan policy;

   (b) The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;

   (c) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property; and

   (d) If the proposal 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 the development.

Reasons

Inappropriate development in Green Belt

3. Paragraph 145 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions. One such exception 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 building'.

4. Annex 2 of the Framework defines the 'original building' as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after that date, as it was built originally. In this case, it

is agreed that the proposal would cumulatively extend the footprint of the 'original building' by around 68%, and its built volume by around 85%.

5. Policy SS 10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) provides further local guidance in this regard. It states that in the Green Belt and countryside, extensions to existing dwellings will be allowed where they are appropriate in scale and design. However, it does not set out any percentage threshold against which to assess whether an extension is 'disproportionate'.

6. In isolation, the proposed extension would be modest and would have limited visibility from Bagnall Road, albeit it would be visible across open land to the rear. However, in combination with other previous extensions to the property, it would result in a very significant increase in both footprint and built volume. In this regard, paragraph 145 c) of the Framework refers to *"disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building"* (my emphasis). Accordingly, I consider the overall increase in built volume to be the most relevant measure in this case. In my view, a cumulative increase of around 85% would clearly be disproportionate for the purposes of paragraph 145 c).

7. My attention has been drawn to a permission at the site for a single storey rear extension that was granted in 2013 (Ref SMD/2013/0215). However, that proposal related to a significantly smaller extension than is proposed here. It also does not appear to have been implemented.

8. I conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which Paragraph 143 of the Framework states is harmful by definition and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The proposal would also be contrary to Policy SS 10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) in this regard.

Openness

9. The proposal would introduce additional floorspace and built volume that would be visible in the surrounding area. The development would therefore fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt. In this regard, the Framework advises at Paragraph 133 that openness is an essential characteristic of Green Belts.

Character and appearance

10. The appeal property is an attractive semi-detached cottage that has a traditional rural appearance. The proposal would introduce a single storey rear extension with a south eastern elevation that would largely consist of glass and timber framing. It would also have a gable roof profile which would create a valley between the extension and the rear wall just below a first floor window. In my view, this would have an awkward relationship with the host property and the extension would visually compete with it at the rear. It would not be subservient in this regard. Whilst the proposal would have limited visibility from Bagnall Road, it would still be visible at the rear of the property and in the surrounding area. Whilst the previously approved extension also included a valley along the rear wall of the house, that proposal had a lower ridge height and was smaller in size.

11. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would significantly harm the character and appearance of the host property. It would therefore be contrary to Policies SS 1, SS 10, and DC 1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local

Plan (2020). These policies seek to ensure, amongst other things, that new development is well designed and respects local character.

Other considerations

12. It is asserted that the existing dwelling could be significantly extended through the use of permitted development rights. However, the construction of a rear extension of more than 3 metres in depth would require prior approval, and there is no certainty that this would be granted. In this regard, it cannot be assumed that neighbours would not object to any revised proposal submitted under that route. Accordingly, I attach only limited weight to this purported fallback position at this stage.

13. The proposal would provide additional living space to the existing property, and the appellant states that it would facilitate home working. It would also generate some economic benefits during the construction phase, and through the purchasing of furnishings and fittings. However, these are modest benefits that are common to many developments of this type and size.

Conclusion

14. The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would reduce openness in this location. It would also significantly harm the character and appearance of the host property. The Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Even when taken together, the other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm in this case. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies SS 1, SS 10, and DC 1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020), and guidance contained in the Framework relating to Green Belts.

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Hatfield

INSPECTOR