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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 April 2016

**by Cullum J A Parker BA(Hons) MA MRTPI AIEMA**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 14 April 2016**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/D/15/3141333**

**Hill House, Quatford, Bridgenorth, WV15 6QJ**

- 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 Jonathan Russell against the decision of Shropshire Council.
  - The application Ref 15/04328/FUL, dated 2 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 9 December 2015.
  - The development proposed is domestic two storey side extension.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

2. The main parties agree that the appeal site falls within an area of Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues are:
  - Whether the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework and development plan policies and the potential effect on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes it serves, and;
  - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and;
  - the overall balance, and, if the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances needed to justify it.

### Reasons

#### *Whether inappropriate development*

3. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. Paragraph 87 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraphs 89 and 90 of the Framework indicate limited exceptions to inappropriate development, which broadly reflect those found in Policy MD6 of the
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*Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Mangement of Development (SAMDev) Plan 2015 (SAMD), Policy S3 of the Bridgenorth District Local Plan 1996-2011, 2006 (BDLP) and Policy CS5 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy 2011 (CS).* Put simply, both local and national policy regard 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, are exceptions to inappropriate development. Given this position, I consider the development plan policies in this case are broadly consistent with the Framework, in accordance with Paragraph 215 of the Framework, and should be afforded due weight.

4. The Council indicate that the extensions in this case would result in an additional 22m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace on the ground floor and about 77m<sup>2</sup> at first floor level. To the contrary, the appellant considers that the proposal would result in approximately 92m<sup>2</sup> of additional floorspace. Irrespective of the differences between the two figures, it is clear that there would be an increase in floorspace of over 90 m<sup>2</sup>. What is more, the proposal would see the ground floor about 2.5 metres wider, with a full two storey height introduced to the existing part two, part single storey wing of the property.
5. The appellant asserts that such a small increase in width would represent only a small extension to the side of the property. Although it appears as though the dwelling has already been extended in the past, neither party has provided a fully detailed account of how this position has arisen and whether those extensions were a result of earlier 'exceptions to inappropriate development'. In any case, this extension proposed here would not only increase the footprint of the dwelling, but also see a significant increase in its overall height by the addition of an additional storey. The proposal would also, in effect, almost double the existing first floor area. The combination of both factors would result in extensions that would be disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. What is more, due to the increase in height and bulk of the building, the extensions would result in the loss of openness, which is a key characteristic of the Green Belt.
6. The proposed development does not fall within an exception listed under paragraphs 89 or 90 of the Framework. As such it is inappropriate development as defined by the Framework. Moreover, the proposal would result in the loss of openness; an essential characteristic of the Green Belt set out in Paragraph 79, and would fail to safeguard the countryside from encroachment as set out in Paragraph 80 of the Framework. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Policy MD6 of the SAMD, Policy S3 of the BDLP and Policy CS5 of the CS, and those of the Framework aforesaid, which, amongst those aims stated above, seek to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

#### *Character and appearance*

7. As noted above, the appeal scheme seeks the introduction of a two storey side extension. This would use materials to match those of the main dwelling and the extension would have a similar width, height and bulk to the existing building. However, due to the increase in two storey form across the width of the proposal and its matching height, instead of appearing as a subservient extension to the existing building, the proposal

would instead appear as an overly large addition which would fail to respect the existing form of the appeal building. Moreover, the openings proposed, including Juliet style balconies and half dormers on elevations of the building would introduce further contrasting architectural features to the host building. As a result, the proposed extension would fail to respect the prevailing pattern of development within the context of the appeal site.

8. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would result in material harm to the character and appearance of the area and host building. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CS6 and CS17 of the CS and Policy MD2 of the SAMD, which amongst other aims seek to ensure that proposals respect locally characteristic architectural design and details. It would also be contrary to the Policies of the Framework, which include ensuring that planning should always seek to secure high quality design.

#### *Other considerations*

9. In accordance with Paragraph 88 of the Framework, I attach substantial weight to the Green Belt, through the fact that the development is inappropriate development and through the harm to openness. The appellant has indicated to a number of factors which could amount to a case of 'Very Special Circumstances'. I have considered these below.
10. The appellant asserts that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt. However, I have found that there would be in this instance and therefore this is not a factor in favour of the appeal scheme.
11. Matters relating to design, materials and the overall scale in relation to the existing dwelling have been considered above, and not found acceptable. They do not, therefore, weigh in favour of the proposal. I note the appellant's desire to improve access into their property, as this currently requires access through a utility room. However, access is possible into a hall, as shown on the ground floor plan on drawing SA20966 02. This demonstrates that there are other choices for access into the building, which could provide alternatives to the use of the utility room entrance. This factor can be afforded no more than minimal weight in favour of the appeal scheme.

#### **Conclusion**

12. Paragraph 88 of the Framework requires decision-makers to ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Other considerations weighing in favour of the development must clearly outweigh this harm. In this case, no substantive benefits have been cited by the appellant, with those cited either of minimal weight or not weighing in favour of the proposal. Whilst I acknowledge all other considerations put forward by the appellant, Paragraph 88 makes clear that all development in the Green Belt is subject to stringent national planning policy tests, which I have applied.
13. In light of this, I conclude that those considerations put forward which weigh in favour of the proposal fail to clearly outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt that I have identified, and the harm to character and appearance.

The very special circumstances needed to justify the proposal do not therefore arise and the proposal conflicts with Policy MD6 of the SAMD, Policy S3 of the BDLP and Policy CS5 of the CS, and the Framework in respect of the Green Belt, the aims of which I have aforesaid.

14. For the reasons given above, and having taken into account all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Cullum J A Parker*

INSPECTOR