



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2018

by A A Phillips BA (Hons) DipTP MTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 15 February 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/D/17/3185124

Oakfields, Quatford, Bridgnorth 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 Mark Meadows against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 17/02019, dated 5 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2017.
 - The development proposed is a single storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and therefore the main issues are:
 - i. Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development for the purposes of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework);
 - ii. The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - iii. Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area; and
 - iv. If the proposal would be 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

3. The appeal property is a single storey detached residential property which is situated within the Green Belt which washes over Quatford. It is also within the Quatford Conservation Area. Properties in the locality are loosely distributed around the surrounding landscape. I observed at my site visit that properties in the area are varied with a range of designs and materials.

Inappropriate development

4. Policy CS5 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy March 2011 (the CS) relates to the countryside and Green Belt and states that within the Green Belt there will be additional control over new development in line with government guidance set out in PPG2. Although PPG2

has been superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) it is clear to me that the Green Belt affords specific protection against inappropriate development. Under Policy MD6 of the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Development (SAMDev) Plan Adopted Plan 17 December 2015 development proposed in the Green Belt must be able to demonstrate that it does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

5. Within the Green Belt there is a presumption against inappropriate development except in very special circumstances. One of the main aims of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land open. The Framework establishes that new buildings within the Green Belt are inappropriate unless, among other things, it involves the extension or alteration of a building. This is provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
6. The Framework advises that the term 'original building' means a building as it was on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after that date, as it was originally built. Consequently, this forms the starting point for an assessment. It is my understanding from the evidence before me and my own observations on site that the property has been previously extended, including a gable section to the west side of the front entrance and a front porch gable. Consequently, the property has almost doubled in its footprint from the original property. The addition of a further extension of approximately 36 square metres would result in an overall increase in footprint from the original property of approximately 168 per cent.
7. Whilst the extension currently proposed may be seen as relatively modest when considered in isolation, I am in no doubt that the cumulative increase in the size, over and above that of the original building, would be so great that it falls to be considered as disproportionate. As a consequence, I find that the proposed extension would comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and contrary to Policy CS5 of the CS, Policy MD6 of the SAMDev and the Framework.

Openness

8. The appellant argues that the construction of a single storey side extension would be a modest operation, that the openness of the area would not be undermined and because the development would be with a residential curtilage it would not encroach into the countryside or lead to urban sprawl.
9. I do not dispute that the extension would be situated in the existing domestic curtilage which is indeed well defined. However, openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. By increasing the footprint and massing of the building, the proposal would reduce its openness to some extent. I am mindful that visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of openness and note, in this regard, that notwithstanding the fact that it would be seen against the gable end of the host property and that the site has been domesticated over time, the proposed extension would, as a consequence of its position, clearly be noticeable from parts of the surrounding countryside, particularly from open land to the south and south east and thus would be experienced visually.
10. As such I conclude that the proposal would detract from the openness of the Green Belt, albeit the effect would be limited by the character of the site and its domestic appearance and character.

Character and appearance

11. The site is within the Quatford Conservation Area and in considering this issue it is therefore necessary in accordance with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
12. Policy CS6 of the CS requires development to be designed to a high quality and Policy CS17 seeks to ensure that development will protect the character and quality of Shropshire's natural environment and historic resources, among other objectives. Furthermore, Policy MD2 of the SAMDev which relates to sustainable design states that for a development proposal to be considered acceptable it is required to respect existing amenity value by responding to the form and layout of existing layout, among other objectives. Policy MD13 relates to the historic environment and heritage assets will be protected and conserved by ensuring proposals avoid harming them.
13. As identified above I do not consider the extension would be a proportionate increase in the size of the host property, but rather it would increase the size of the existing building by approximately 36 per cent. Although the materials would match the existing property and it would incorporate a matching roof design it would materially alter the overall shape of the property which was a simple form and design to a far more elongated and linear structure. As well as changing the form of the building the extension would cover the existing gable end chimney which is an attractive feature of the property.
14. Therefore, the proposal would be harmful to the overall character and appearance of the original property. However, given the scale of the proposal within the context of the Conservation Area as a whole, I consider that it would cause less than substantial harm to its character and appearance. In accordance with paragraph 134 of the Framework I must weigh the harm against the public benefits of the proposal.
15. The appellant has not clearly demonstrated specific benefits that may arise from the development. It is argued that the proposal would improve the efficiency of the use of the land and I recognise that there may be some small economic and social benefits associated with construction activity and the provision of a larger dwelling to improve the quality of accommodation for the existing residents. However, these do not in my judgment outweigh the harm that I have found.
16. As such I conclude on this issue that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and would therefore conflict with Policies CS6 and CS17 of the CS, Policies MD2 and MD13 of SAMDev and the Framework.

Conclusions

17. The proposal comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. To be added to that harm is the harm to openness that I have identified and the harm to the character and appearance of the area. Paragraph 88 of the Framework indicates that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that very special circumstances will not exist, unless the harm by reason of

inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. I have considered the other considerations put forward but they do not carry positive weight. I am not persuaded therefore, that the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal exist in this case. Accordingly, for the reasons set out above, I conclude on balance that the appeal should not succeed.

Alastair Phillips

INSPECTOR