



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2024

by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 January 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/D/23/3323570

Oak Fields, Quatford, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WN15 6QL

- 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 23/01721/FUL, dated 19 April 2023, was refused by notice dated 1 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a domestic extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Government published on 19 December 2023 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Whilst this made certain revisions to aspects of national planning policy, the provisions in respect of the main issues in this case are largely unchanged. I am therefore satisfied that there is no requirement to seek further submissions on the revised Framework from the parties, and that no party would be disadvantaged by such a course of action.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwelling and wider area, including the significance of the Quatford Conservation Area; and
 - If the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. The appeal property is a detached, single storey dwelling located within a generous plot within the Green Belt. Through this appeal, permission is sought for the erection of a single storey side extension.

5. Policy CS5 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy (March 2011) (the CS) states that new development will be strictly controlled in accordance with national planning policies protecting the countryside and Green Belt. The Framework states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt subject to a number of exceptions.
6. One such exception, at paragraph 154 c) of the Framework, 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.
7. The term 'original building' is defined in the glossary to the Framework as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.
8. Neither the Framework nor the CS define what a disproportionate addition means. I consider that an assessment of various factors such as massing, footprint and volume may be relevant when assessing the overall size of the proposal in relation to the host dwelling.
9. The Council has not provided any figures or made a thorough assessment which supports their claim that the proposal would represent a disproportionate addition. However, by the appellant's own admission, the original property has been extended in various ways, including side and porch extensions. Together, they have resulted in an almost doubling of its original footprint. It is clear, therefore, that the footprint of the existing dwelling is considerably larger than the original, and its mass and volume has subsequently increased significantly as a result of previous additions.
10. Accordingly, the proposal, taken in combination with previous additions to the original building, would be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and it would therefore fail to meet the exception set out in paragraph 154 c) of the Framework.

Effect on openness

11. Paragraph 142 of the Framework states that a fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. When applying the concept of openness to the particular facts of a case, a number of factors are capable of being relevant. For the purposes of this appeal, I have considered both the visual and spatial aspects of openness.
12. Spatially, the proposed extension would be sited in part of the appeal site which currently has a range of domestic features, predominantly a large outdoor kitchen which has a permanent appearance and is covered with a tiled, pitch roof. This part of the site is enclosed by the dwelling and a steep bank leading to a raised area of garden.
13. Visually, the proposal would not result in a discernible difference, albeit the elevations would be fully enclosed and it would clearly read as part of the dwelling rather than an outbuilding.
14. Consequently, the proposal would not result in harm to the openness of this part of the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

15. The appeal site falls within the Quatford Conservation Area (the QCA) whose significance appears to be derived from its rural characteristics and scattered, traditional built form nestled amongst the rolling landscape. The appeal site makes a positive contribution to the QCA given its spacious characteristics and traditional style of built form.
16. The proposed extension has been sympathetically designed so as to reflect and integrate well with the existing property through the use of matching materials, a subservient footprint and a set-back position with corresponding lower roof form. It would not be a bulky or incongruous addition to the host dwelling, whose modest appearance and key characteristics, namely the front gables and dominant chimney, would remain. For these reasons, the proposal would not result in harm to the significance of the QCA.
17. Therefore, the proposed development would not harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and would preserve the character and appearance of the QCA. It therefore accords with Policies CS6 and CS17 of the CS and Policies MD2 and MD13 of the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (December 2015). Together, these aim for developments which are of high-quality design which responds positively to and conserves the natural, built and historic environment.

Other considerations

18. I acknowledge that dwellings within the Green Belt benefit from permitted development (PD) rights. However, the appellant has not indicated to me what PD rights could be implemented and thus I cannot accurately ascertain whether or not the existence of PD rights are directly comparable to the appeal development and whether they represent a realistic fallback. I therefore afford this matter very limited weight.
19. It has been suggested that the original dwelling was substandard in that it failed to provide sufficient internal space. Be that as it may, it is clear that the original dwelling has since been extended in various ways and there is nothing before me to suggest that it does not currently provide satisfactory living conditions for occupiers. This matter does not therefore attract any positive weight in favour of the proposed development.

Whether very special circumstances exist

20. The Framework makes it clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
21. I have concluded that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, I afford this Green Belt harm substantial weight. A finding of no harm to the openness of the Green Belt and the character of the dwelling and wider area carries neutral weight.

22. The other considerations advanced in support of the appeal do not therefore clearly outweigh the harm I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist thus it would fail to accord with Policy CS5 of the CS and the Framework, as referred to above.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations which indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should not succeed.

H Ellison
INSPECTOR