The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by Helen Hockenhull BA(Hons) B.Pl MRTPI

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

Decision date: 07 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/P4225/D/16/3157410
Harwood Fields Farm, Castle Hill Road, Heywood BL9 6UL

- 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 S Robinson against the decision of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.
- The application Ref 16/00625/HOUS, dated 23 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 28 July 2016.
- The development proposed is the replacement of single storey front extension with a new front extension.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the replacement of single storey front extension with a new front extension at Harwood Fields Farm, Castle Hill Road, Heywood, BL9 6UL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/00625/HOUS, dated 23 May 2016, subject to the following conditions:

    1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.

    2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Proposed Plan.

    3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural matter

2. I am advised by the Council that since the determination of the original planning application, the Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) has been adopted. In terms of the Green Belt, Policy D/4 Control of Development in the Green Belt had been deleted and replaced by CS Policy G4. Policy G4 should be read alongside Saved Policy G/D/2 of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006. The Councils reason for refusal made reference to Policies BE/2 and H/11 of the Rochdale UDP. I am informed that these policies have now been superseded by CS Policies P3 and DM1 respectively. I have therefore determined this appeal accordingly.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are:

- whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and development plan policy;
- the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

Reasons

4. Harwood Fields Farm is a working dairy farm and equestrian centre. The appeal site forms a farmhouse located to the north east corner of the site. Attached to the appeal building are former barns which have been converted to dwellings by the appellant. Modern and traditional agricultural buildings lie to the west of the appeal site and neighbouring the appeal building are a number of other barns that have been converted to residential accommodation. The site is located within the Green Belt.

Inappropriate development

5. Policy G4 of the Rochdale Core Strategy aims to protect the Green Belt and states that development will be restricted to those limited types of development which are deemed appropriate by national planning policies unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Saved Policy G/D/2 of the Rochdale UDP supports this objective.

6. Paragraph 89 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate. The paragraph goes on to list several exceptions to this which include 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 Council's Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document 2016 advises that in the Green Belt extensions that result in up to 35% increase in floor space or volume over and above the original dwelling would be considered appropriate and not disproportionate. I am advised by the Council that the proposed front extension would increase the floor area of the existing dwelling by around 9.5 %. The appeal proposal would therefore not result in a disproportionate addition to the original farmhouse in accordance with paragraph 89 of the Framework and Policy G4 of the Core Strategy. The development would not form inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

8. The Framework indicates that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt and that one of the purposes of the Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The appeal proposal would replace an existing front extension but as a result of its slightly larger floor area, it would have a greater impact on openness. However having regard to the very limited increase in built form, together with the location of the building within a complex of other converted barns, I consider that the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would not be material.

Character and appearance

9. The appeal property forms an attractive stone farmhouse dating from around the early 19th Century. It adjoins a terrace of recently converted former barns. These dwellings have a blue slate roof and dark grey aluminium window and

door openings. The existing front extension forms a more modern addition to the appeal building and is constructed in stone with an overhanging flat roof.

10. The replacement front extension would form a glazed structure with a pitched roof and would span more than half of the front of the building. As a result the Council argue that the extension would dominate the front elevation and appear discordant in design. The existing flat roof extension however already dominates the front of the farmhouse and because of its flat overhanging roof does not complement the design of the existing pitched roof property. I observed on my site visit that other neighbouring converted barns in this complex have pitched roof porches and small front extensions. The proposed pitched roof would therefore not be out of keeping with the character and appearance of nearby buildings.

11. The extension would be built in materials matching that of the neighbouring converted dwellings. In particular the proposed fenestration materials would complement that of the large glazed barn door entrance feature within the attached terrace. Whilst the farmhouse is attached to the adjoining former barns it is physically separated from them by a stone wall which provides a gateway to a front courtyard area. This wall is of such a height that in visual terms it breaks up the terrace and provides a degree of screening to the proposal. In this context I consider that the development, whilst it would cover a significant area to the front of the house and be higher than the existing front extension, would not form an incongruous addition.

12. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the host property or the surrounding area. It would comply with CS Policies P3 and DM1 and the principles of the Framework that seek to achieve high quality design.

Conclusions

13. I have found that the appeal proposal would not form inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt or the character and appearance of the host property or the surrounding area. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised I therefore allow this appeal and grant planning permission subject to conditions necessary for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning and to safeguard the character and appearance of the appeal property and the surrounding area.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR