

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 June 2017

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/17/3174467

34 Dunstable Road, Tilsworth, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9PU

- 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 Ashpole against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/17/00510/FULL, dated 2 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a single- and two-storey side extension and the demolition of a conservatory.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies,
 - The effect on the openness of the Green Belt,
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area of Tilsworth along Dunstable Road, and
 - Would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

3. No 34 is an end-terraced house, situated on the eastern side of Dunstable Road, towards the edge of Tilsworth, which is a village washed over by the Metropolitan Green Belt. It is a two-storey dwelling with a large rear roof dormer extension; a single-storey full width rear extension with a conservatory off; and a front porch. There is a gravel drive to the side of the house and a small open front garden. The proposed development would involve the construction of a two-storey side extension, set back from the main front elevation, with a single-storey extension to the rear of this, continuing the form of the existing rear extension. The existing conservatory would be demolished.
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Whether the proposal is inappropriate development

4. The proposed extension would be around 4 metres wide and almost 9 metres deep. It would be set back some 1.5 metres from the main front elevation and would, as a result, have a ridge height a little below that of the main ridge. The existing house would appear to have a footprint somewhere in the region of 50 sq metres, although part of that is taken up by the single-storey rear extension. I have not taken into consideration the existing footprint of the more modern conservatory since this would be removed. There is some evidence that a small rear projection existed in connection with the original house, though it would appear that the current extension is larger than this. In any case, the original house also has some more recent additions, including a front porch. On the basis of the above, it would appear that the proposed extension, along with elements of the other recent extensions, would add over 60% to the footprint of the original house.
5. The appellant indicates that the original building has a floorspace of around 90 sq metres, excluding the floorspace of the large dormer room in the roof space. The existing and proposed extensions, the latter of which includes a first floor bedroom and attic storage space, would apparently total 72 sq metres – again excluding the dormer room. On the basis of these figures, this represents an increase of some 80% over the floorspace of the original house. Including the floorspace of the dormer room would presumably increase this figure.
6. With regard to the overall bulk of the house, the proposed two-storey side extension and single-storey rear element would appear almost as wide as the main body of the house. With the inclusion of the dormer extension to the roof, these developments would result in a significant additional visual impact over and above that of the original modest dwelling.
7. In conclusion on this issue, when taking into account the increases in footprint, floorspace and apparent bulk resulting from the proposed and certain earlier extensions, I find that the proposal would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. It would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy H13 of the Council's Local Plan Review (LP), which accords with the thrust of policy in the NPPF.

The openness of the Green Belt

8. No 34 is situated on the edge of the village. The properties in the vicinity have generally large or long gardens, and there is open countryside around. The proposal would add a significant amount to both the footprint and bulk of the existing dwelling. In addition, it appears that the creation of a fourth bedroom would require the property to provide enough parking space for three cars. Whilst the submitted plans show three cars on the site, there would appear to be little room for manoeuvre as well as restricted access to the front door. As a result, in addition to much of the side of the dwelling being taken up with the proposed extension, virtually the whole of the front of the dwelling, including the garden area, could be occupied by cars.
9. On the basis of the above, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the generally open character of the area and the openness of the Green Belt, albeit to a small extent. Nevertheless, harm would exist.

Character and appearance

10. The Council contends that the proposed development, because of its size, width of side extension, and design, including use of materials, detailing and fenestration, would result in a loss of symmetry and be out of character with the existing dwelling and terrace of dwellings, thereby harmful to the visual amenities of the streetscene and the Green Belt. The side extension would be wide in the context of the existing house, but it would be set back from the front elevation and set down from the existing ridge. On this basis it would appear subordinate to the existing house.
11. In addition, whilst there is a degree of symmetry within the terrace, there is also existing asymmetry with regard to the porches at the front of two of the houses, but not the third. In any case, there is a wide range of house types, styles and designs in the vicinity, with a range of materials used, and I do not consider that any symmetry within the terrace is of itself a key factor in establishing the character and appearance of the area. However, I have concerns with regard to both the design and size of the proposed windows in the front elevation of the extension, which do not relate well to the existing house, and also, as noted above, with the space left for off-street parking, which would result in a somewhat cramped appearance.
12. On this issue, therefore, I find that the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area, and that it would conflict with Policy BE8 of the LP, which relates to issues of design, appearance and the setting of development in the context of its surroundings, and also with Policy H8 of the LP, which relates to extensions to dwellings.

Other considerations

13. The appellant notes that there has been a number of planning permissions granted in recent years for extensions to properties in the vicinity. However, from the limited information available to me, it would appear that these have either involved relatively smaller extensions, or are replacement buildings on the same or similar footprints. The proposal at the appeal property is larger in scale and represents disproportionate additions over the original building.
14. The appellant also contends that the proposal could be considered as an infill development in the village of Tilsworth. However, paragraph 89 of the NPPF, which lists potential exceptions to the principle of the inappropriateness of development in the Green Belt, categorises infill development as separate from that of extensions and, on this basis, the current proposal cannot be considered as infill development. Similarly, the fall-back position as suggested by the appellant, that the existing dwelling could be demolished and rebuilt on the basis of infill, would only apply, in this case, in the context of a replacement dwelling that would need to satisfy the criteria for such development in paragraph 89, which is that it is not materially larger than the one it replaces.

Conclusion

15. The scale of the proposed extension, when taken with earlier extensions to the dwelling, including a large dormer, a porch, and at least part of the existing rear extension, would represent disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling. On this basis, I find that the proposal would be

inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The appeal property is on the edge of a village in a relatively open area, and the proposal would add considerable bulk to the existing property, such that it would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. I also consider that the design of the proposed extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area around this part of Dunstable Road. The appellant has put forward certain considerations relating to the proposal, but these considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and other harm that would be caused by the proposal, and there are, therefore, no very special circumstances to justify this inappropriate development.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR