The Planning Inspectorate

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 March 2018

**by G J Fort BA PGDip LLM MCD MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 11 April 2018**

**Appeal Ref: APP/G1250/D/18/3194291**
**The Old School, Holdenhurst Village, Bournemouth BH8 0EF**

- 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 M Howard against the decision of Bournemouth Borough Council.
- The application Ref 7-2017-13331-L, dated 3 September 2017, was refused by notice dated 6 November 2017.
- The development proposed is double timber garage extension to existing timber double garage.

## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Main Issues

2. The appeal site is within the Green Belt. Consequently, I consider the main issues to be firstly, whether the appeal scheme would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of national and local policy; secondly, the effects of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt; thirdly, the effects of the proposed development on the setting of the Old School, a Grade II Listed Building, and whether it would preserve the character or appearance of Holdenhurst Village West Conservation Area; and finally, if the appeal scheme is inappropriate development whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

## Reasons

*Site, surroundings and proposed development*

3. The appeal site comprises the Old School, now in residential use, and its grounds, which include substantial outbuildings annotated on the submitted plans as a garage and summer house. The Old School is situated at the end of an intermittent line of buildings including Vicarage Cottages and the School House which are sited close to one side of the road, to the rear of which are open fields fringed by a dense thicket of mature trees. These environs taken together with the trees in and adjacent to the appeal site, and in the grounds of the Old Vicarage across the road impart an intensely rural and verdant character to the area. The gentle slope of the appeal site down from the road allows views across it towards the open fields beyond.

4. The Old School is a Grade II Listed Building. The annotation 'GV' on the listing description indicates that its contribution to the group value of buildings in its immediate surroundings is of particular note. Of limited height, and featuring the brick-facing common to the buildings in its immediate environs, the significance of the Old School resides to some extent in its historic role and functional relationship to its grounds and wider surroundings, and the contribution it makes to the legibility of the village. For these reasons too the appeal site contributes considerably to the character, appearance and significance of the Holdenhurst Village West Conservation Area- a relatively small area of dispersed residential and other buildings and their grounds addressing the junction of Holdenhurst Village Road and Throop Road.

5. The appeal scheme would extend the existing double garage on the appeal site which is set back further from the road than, and separated considerably from, the Old School. The extension would result in a building with an L-shaped footprint, with a pitched roof over the new element which would include a double garage and an open-sided, though covered, storage area in its rear corner. Storage would be provided in the loft space, and accessed via a circular staircase in the open-sided area. A clock tower would be included at the apex of the new roof.

*Whether Inappropriate Development*

6. I am mindful that the appellant considers the site, due to its residential use to be outside of the Green Belt. However, for the purposes of the development plan, the appeal site is within the South East Dorset Green Belt, which as it applies to Bournemouth is a narrow strip between the edge of the urban area and the Borough boundary, roughly following the course of the River Stour.

7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts; that their fundamental aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. This national approach is reflected in Policy CS37 of Bournemouth's Core Strategy (adopted October 2012) (the Core Strategy), which seeks to restrict inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

8. The Framework sets out that, with some exceptions, the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt. In this instance, the appellant has not indicated whether they consider any of these exceptions[1] to the Framework's restrictive approach to new buildings in the Green Belt to apply. Nevertheless, I have considered the appeal scheme against paragraph 89, bullet 3 of the Framework as it relates to the extension or alteration of existing buildings.

9. The appeal scheme would more than double the footprint of the existing garage at the site. Whilst some of this would be open-sided it would nevertheless considerably extend the roof- at the same ridge level as that of the existing building- to cover over the entirety of this extended footprint. Consequently, due to the overall size and site coverage of the proposed development it would constitute a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building.

[1] Set out in paragraphs 89 and 90 of the Framework

10. Accordingly, for these reasons the proposed development would not meet the exception given in paragraph 89, bullet 3 of the Framework, and as a result constitutes inappropriate development for its purposes. The Framework establishes that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

*Openness*

11. In terms of Green Belts the term 'openness' includes both visual and spatial elements, and in short means that land within the Green Belt should remain, on the whole, free from development.

12. The appeal scheme would introduce further development, including the substantially extended roof, which would considerably erode the openness of the appeal site itself. Moreover, the siting of the appeal scheme, towards the rear of the plot, taken together with its scale and site coverage would significantly increase the visual implications of development on the site which would have an adverse impact on the openness of its immediate surroundings.

13. Consequently, the proposed development would fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt, and would run contrary to the Framework in this respect.

*Listed Building and Conservation Area*

14. The double garage currently present at the site due to its modest area and adequate separation from the Old School appears as a subservient and ancillary structure, which allows some breathing space between the Listed Building and the subsequent domestic structures in its wider grounds. The proposed development would erode this gap considerably, and due to the area of the garage's extended footprint, and the scale and extent of its resultant roof would appear as a disproportionate building, unduly dominant in the context of the modest scale of the Old School. Moreover, in drawing ancillary buildings closer to the Old School, it would impart a more intensely domestic character to its grounds, eroding an appreciation of the historic function of the listed building and its setting. In doing so the appeal scheme would fail to preserve the setting of the listed building, and would be harmful to the significance and special interest which the Old School possesses.

15. For these reasons too, and through its introduction of a relatively large structure set back and apart from the dispersed line of development which addresses Holdenhurst Village Road more intimately, it would diminish the legibility of the village and erode its plan form. Accordingly, these considerations lead me to the view that the proposed development would not preserve the character or appearance of the Holdenhurst Village West Conservation Area, and would thus be harmful to its significance. Whilst I readily accept that the proposed development would reflect the style and detailing of the existing garage, employ matching materials in its facing, and incorporate the clock tower, these aspects would not serve to soften the harmful listed building and conservation area effects that I have described.

16. Therefore and mindful of the duties arising from Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I conclude on this main issue that the proposed development would fail to preserve the setting and special interest of the Old School, and would not preserve the character or appearance of the Holdenhurst Village West Conservation Area.

*Other Considerations*

17. I note the appellant's assertion that the Old School includes little internal storage space. The proposed development would supply a considerable increase in storage space available at the site and additional space for car parking, and storage of a tractor and garden equipment. Whilst this weighs in the appeal scheme's favour it does so only to a modest degree. Moreover, it would be essentially a private rather than a public benefit.

18. I am mindful of the appellant's comment that the Old School was in a dilapidated condition before they implemented restoration work. This may be the case; however, this matter does not weigh in favour of the current proposal to any material degree.

19. References were made to the siting of the proposed development outside of the floodplain, and that the appellant intends to build the proposed development himself. However, these matters only have a neutral effect on the overall planning balance.

**Planning Balance and Conclusion**

20. The Framework establishes that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. 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. This is a high hurdle for a development proposal to overcome, and in the current case the other considerations advanced in favour of the proposed development do not, either individually or cumulatively, clearly outweigh the Green Belt harms- matters to which I attach substantial weight.

22. Moreover, the Framework anticipates that when harm to heritage assets is found that the degree of that harm should be assessed. Whilst in the current case due to the extent of the proposed development's effects in terms of both the Conservation Area and the Listed Building its harm would be less than substantial, this does not equate to less than substantial weight in the overall planning balance. Indeed, the Framework[2] states that in considering the impact of such a development great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets; and that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal, including securing a heritage asset's optimal viable use[3].

23. In the current case, whilst I note the increased storage that the proposed development would supply at the site, I have been provided with no substantive evidence to suggest that this would facilitate the appeal building's optimum viable use. Moreover, the benefits advanced in favour of the scheme are essentially private in nature and thus do not outweigh the harm that the proposed development would cause to the significance of the Old School and the Conservation Area- matters to which I attach great weight and importance in the overall planning balance.

24. Accordingly, the proposed development would conflict with the Framework insofar as it seeks, amongst other things, to protect the openness and

[2] At paragraph 132
[3] At paragraph 134

permanence of Green Belt land, and ensure that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

25. For these reasons too, I conclude that the proposed development would conflict with Policies 3.5 and 4.4 of the Bournemouth District Wide Local Plan (adopted February 2002) (the Local Plan); and Policies CS37 and CS39 of the Core Strategy. Taken together these policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that developments maintain the openness of the Green Belt and protect the identity of Holdenhurst; and ensure that designated heritage assets such as listed buildings and conservation areas are protected from proposals that would adversely affect their significance.

26. Accordingly, as no material considerations of a sufficient weight have been advanced to justify a decision other than in accordance with the development plan in this instance I conclude, for the reasons set out above, and taking into account all other matters raised, that the appeal should be dismissed.

*G J Fort*

INSPECTOR