
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2019

by Jamie Reed DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/19/3225579

North Side Farm, Oatens Bank, Horsley NE15 0LZ

- 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 and Mrs Lockey against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 18/04028/FUL, dated 9 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 January 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as an extension to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and so the main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies.
 - The effect on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - The effect on the character and appearance of the appeal property.
 - 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 traditional 2 storey, 3 bedroom farmhouse of simple form, situated on the eastern edge of a complex of other buildings that would have been originally constructed as part of North Side Farm. The farm lies in the open countryside in the Tyne and Wear Green Belt and is within the buffer zone for new development affecting Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. The intention is to replace an existing single storey offshoot extension to the eastern side of the farmhouse, along with a single storey projecting element to the rear with a 2 storey 'wrap around' extension.

Whether inappropriate development?

4. The Framework advises that new buildings within the Green Belt are inappropriate unless, amongst other things, it involves the extension of a building. This is provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Policies NE7 and H20 of the Tynedale Local Plan (LP) (2007) deal with the Tyne and Wear Green Belt and echo the Framework, advising that proposals for building extensions in the Green Belt should only involve limited extensions or alterations and do not substantially increase a buildings size.
5. The proposed 2 storey extension will wrap around the eastern side and the rear of the existing farmhouse. This would increase the number of bedrooms from 3 to 5, all with en-suite access and would also provide the following accommodation; a play room, laundry room, cloakroom and snug. In total, the proposal would increase the overall floor area of the building by around 84%. When comparing the original building to the one that would result if the proposal were to go ahead the outcome would clearly be disproportionate. It would therefore, be inappropriate development which is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness

6. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. As the proposal would increase the bulk of the building, the proposal would reduce openness. However, when taking into consideration the isolated location of the farm and the farmhouses positioning amongst the complex of other farm buildings, the loss of openness would be minor.

Character and appearance

7. The existing single storey offshoot that has to be demolished measures about 2 m in width. When viewed from the front of the property, this is set back from the front elevation by about 5 m. In contrast, the proposed 2 storey extension would be built with only a small set back from the front elevation of about 1m. Also, at around 5 m in width, it would project out from the side of the front elevation by about 3 m more than the existing single storey offshoot. Consequently, the proposal would significantly increase the size and bulk of the building when viewed from the east by adding a 2 storey side extension of a similar scale to the original building. As a result of this scale it would become difficult to clearly identify the extent of the original farmhouse, thereby detracting from its original character and appearance. For these reasons, the proposal would be contrary to Policy BE1 of the Tynedale Core Strategy (CS) (2007) and Policies GD2, H20 and H33 of the LP and the aims of the Framework. Taken together, these Policies and guidance seek to ensure development is of a high quality design that is sympathetic to the character of existing buildings in terms of scale and massing, with Policy H20 also requiring developments in the Green Belt to not substantially increase a buildings size.

Other considerations

8. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any proposal, substantial weight is 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 resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
9. The appellant has presented full details of a potential fallback option in the form of development that could be implemented without seeking planning permission under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) to construct a different form of development at the appeal site. It has been put to me that such permitted development would have a greater impact on the Green Belt than the appeal development. From the information before me, it is clear that whilst such a scheme could be undertaken as Permitted Development, its impact would not be as great as the proposal which is the subject of this appeal, as the alternative scheme does not include a 2 storey extension to the side. Consequently, I attach little weight to the fallback option.
 10. I have also taken into account the appellants' wider evidence, including; the success of their business in recent years; their desire to not have to commute to and from the site on a daily basis and the letters of support received in relation to the planning application. Whilst I can appreciate the benefits that would come from the appellants being permanently located on site, I can only give such a benefit limited weight, as from the evidence before me, their business appears to operate satisfactorily without a permanent on site presence.
 11. The appeal property is located close to The Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site in an area of archaeological interest. Given that the proposal would be of a domestic scale on the edge of an existing complex of buildings, there would be no impact upon the universal value of the World Heritage Site.

Conclusion

12. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the terms set out in the Framework and would result in a minor loss of openness to the Green Belt. Whilst there would be no impact upon the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, the other considerations in this case do not clearly outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development. I have also found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the original farmhouse. Consequently, for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Jamie Reed

INSPECTOR