



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 July 2019

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/19/3225342

Pinchgut Hall, Bedford Road, Ickleford SG5 3RS

- 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 P Wilbor against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00104/FPH, dated 19 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as erection of extension to the side.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for erection of extension to the side at Pinchgut Hall, Bedford Road, Ickleford SG5 3RS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/00104/FPH, dated 19 January 2019, 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: Block Plan; and, Proposed Plan and Elevations.

Procedural Matters

2. The application form included 'Annexe' in the site address. This is however omitted from the address on the appeal form. The Council considers that the annexe forms part of Pinchgut Hall. Indeed, though self-contained, it is attached to the main dwelling, and stands within the same garden space. For these reasons, and given that I have been provided with no evidence that the annexe is anything other than ancillary to the rest of Pinchgut Hall, I have also considered the proposal on the basis that it relates to the extension of Pinchgut Hall as a whole. As such I have omitted 'Annexe' from the address in the banner heading above.
3. During my visit I observed that a conservatory has recently been attached to the annexe. This is not shown on the plans submitted with the planning application. As I have no indication of the lawfulness of this addition, I have not taken it into account my reasons below, and I have based my decision on the plans as submitted.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:

- whether the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt; and
- the effect of the development on the character and appearance of Pinchgut Hall.

Reasons

Whether the development would be inappropriate development

5. Pinchgut Hall lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. It has a long frontage on Bedford Road formed by the 2-storey core of the dwelling, the existing single storey annexe and a further range of single storey buildings which project from the opposite side of the core, and extend deep into the plot to the rear.
6. Paragraph 145(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that the extension or alteration of a building, will be not inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. How the original building is calculated depends upon the age of the building in question.
7. Pinchgut Hall is made up of various elements of different shapes and sizes, spread out across a reasonably large area. It is apparent that this reflects a process by which the dwelling has been extended and added to over time. However, whilst this is at least partly reflected in the planning history, which records a number of additions including the annexe, neither party has clearly identified or quantified the ages and sizes of all the various component parts of the dwelling. It is therefore unclear what constitutes the original building for the purposes of applying the exception in paragraph 145(c) of the Framework. The Council has nonetheless sought to assess the scheme on the basis of visual factors.
8. From within the garden, the extension would be principally viewed in relation to the annexe, to which it would appear a subservient addition. Though the annexe is itself a reasonably past large addition to Pinchgut Hall, the cumulative visual effect of the extension on the building as a whole would appear very modest.
9. From the road, the extension would be viewed both directly in relation to the existing annexe, and to other parts of Pinchgut Hall fronting the road. The extension would increase the proportion and length of the frontage taken up by the annexe, particularly relative to the 2-storey core of the dwelling. Nonetheless the extension would not result in the annexe appearing as a visually dominant or disproportionate element of the frontage, particularly when considered in the context of the informal and mixed composition of the building overall.
10. As such the proposed development would not be a visually disproportionate addition to Pinchgut Hall, considered both individually and cumulatively. The proposal therefore meets the exception set of in paragraph 145(c) of the Framework.

11. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the development would be not inappropriate in the Green Belt. It would therefore comply with Saved Policy 2 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations Originally Adopted April 1996 (the DLP), which, though not referenced in the Council's decision, is consistent with the Framework to the extent that it similarly seeks to prevent inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

12. Saved Policy 28 of the DLP generally requires house extensions to be sympathetic to the existing house, subject to a number of criteria. I note that the text of Policy D2 of the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (the NHLP), which is undergoing examination, repeats much of Policy 28.
13. The extension would integrate with the existing building in terms of its height and form, and, as noted above, appear generally subservient in character. Elongation of the annexe would cause some minor imbalance to its symmetrical design. However, this would only be appreciable from within the garden of the dwelling. Existing imbalance across the road frontage of Pinchgut Hall would be somewhat increased by the development, as the main 2-storey core of the building would appear less centralised than it is at present. However, viewed within the context of the informal composition of the dwelling overall, and the spreading form of existing single storey elements, neither the scale nor the proportions of the extension would cause any obvious visual harm to the character or appearance of the building.
14. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the proposed development would not harm the character or appearance of Pinchgut Hall. It would thus comply with saved Policy 28 of the DLP and Policy D2 of NHLP which each similarly seek to ensure that house extensions are sympathetic; and the Framework, with regards to achieving well-designed places

Conditions

15. I have imposed conditions setting out the time limit for commencement of the development and identifying the approved plans for sake of certainty.
16. Whilst I note that the Council has requested a condition requiring materials used in the external surfaces of the development to match those in the existing building, the plans show that this is not wholly intended. Given that no objection was previously raised to the specification of materials annotated on the plans, I have not therefore imposed the requested condition.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR