
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 July 2019

by R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/D/19/3227779

Turf Lea Farm, Turf Lea Road, Marple, Stockport SK6 7EZ

- 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 Copeland against the decision of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref DC/072249, dated 21 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'proposed replacement extension'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. 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;
 - if inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances to justify the proposal in the Green Belt.

Reasons

Whether the development would be inappropriate development

3. The appeal site is formed of Turf Lea Farm, a large traditional stone built dwelling and barn conversion set within generous grounds. It lies within the Greater Manchester Green Belt. The appeal proposal relates to the replacement of an existing open car port and outdoor swimming pool enclosure with a new single storey side and rear extension, accommodating an indoor swimming pool, fitness suite and storage rooms, kennels.
4. Policy GBA1.2 of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review, 2006 (UDP) seeks to protect the Green Belt by only allowing limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings, in accordance with UDP Policy GBA1.5. Policy GBA1.5 allows alterations and extensions to existing residential uses in

the Green Belt where the scale, character and appearance of the property are not significantly changed. The supporting text to the policy explains that the interpretation of 'significant change' will vary according to the character of the property, but extensions which increase the volume of the original dwelling by more than about one third are unlikely to be acceptable.

5. These policies are not entirely consistent with the Green Belt policies of the more recently published Framework. Consequently, I place greater weight on the Framework in my consideration of the appeal.
6. Paragraph 145 of the Framework establishes that new buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt, except in the circumstances listed at a) to g). This includes the extension or alteration of the building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
7. The Framework does not explain what a disproportionate addition means. An assessment of whether the proposal would be disproportionate to the original building is therefore a matter of planning judgement. There is no dispute between the parties that the original building has been significantly extended over time, which includes the car port and swimming pool enclosure. There is however disagreement between the parties as to the exact percentage increase in volume over the original building, but both agree the existing dwelling is already well over the one third increase referred to in the supporting text to UDP Policy GBA1.5.
8. I acknowledge that the appeal proposal would result in the footprint of the existing dwelling being reduced through the removal of the swimming pool enclosure which is a substantial structure. The Framework, however, requires an assessment against the original building, rather than the existing dwelling. Even on the appellant's own calculations of footprint and volume, which includes the original dwelling and barn, the appeal proposal would constitute a significant extension, representing an increased footprint of around 241m² (or 95%) and an increased volume of around 788m³ (or 69%). I find this addition disproportionate to the size of the original building.
9. As such, the proposal would not fall within one of the exceptions set out in paragraph 145 of the Framework and is therefore inappropriate development. Paragraph 143 of the Framework is clear that *'inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances'*.

The effect on the openness of the Green Belt

10. The appeal proposal comprises two elements. To the rear, is a largely glazed single storey extension to accommodate a swimming pool. Although this element would have a multi pitched roof, its design means its profile would be low and it would have similar proportions to the existing swimming pool enclosure and car port behind. Although the plant room would extend further to the side, the projection to the rear and overall footprint would be less than the existing by removing the swimming pool enclosure. I am, therefore, satisfied that this element of the proposal would not cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt in visual or spatial terms.

11. To the side of the existing dwelling, the car port would be replaced by a single storey extension with a pitched roof. The existing car port is open fronted, with a low flat roof. I acknowledge the extension has been designed in a traditional way to reflect the character of the dwelling. However, its height and width, which would be around one third of the front elevation, would give the appearance of a substantial building and extension to the dwelling which would result in moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Other considerations

12. My attention is drawn by the appellant to the reduction in the footprint and volume of the proposed extension, compared to the existing dwelling including the swimming pool enclosure. I saw on site that the swimming pool enclosure is a very substantial structure by reason of its height and concrete construction. The replacement of this with the proposed rear extension which is more compact, contemporary and visually lightweight, would be a benefit of the proposal. I find this carries moderate weight in favour of the scheme.
13. The appellant also refers to the significant improvements the proposal would make to the energy efficiency of Turf Lea Farm. Whilst I recognise the benefits of the use of glazing to minimise the need for artificial lighting, I have no substantive evidence in respect of the improvements that would be achieved. Notwithstanding this, I find that any improvements to energy efficiency would be a neutral matter, rather than one which carries weight in favour of the appeal proposal.
14. I also note that the proposals would not cause harm to living conditions and that the appeal site is well screened from Turf Lea Road. The Council has raised no objection to the proposal on this basis. Again, I find this a neutral matter.

Conclusion

15. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would cause harm to its openness. The harm to the Green Belt, as set out in the Framework, attracts substantial weight.
16. Although I find that the removal of the existing swimming pool enclosure carries moderate weight in favour of the proposal, this and the other considerations, do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
17. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into account, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

R. Jones

INSPECTOR