
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 October 2019 by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPL MRTPI

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

Decision date:

Appeal Ref: APP/W4325/W/19/3235154

Three Lanes End Farm, Herons Well Holiday Cottage, Saughall Massie Road, Meols, CH48 1PT

- 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 Lavelle against the decision of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref APP/19/00330, dated 4 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 26 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is a detached garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. The appeal site lies within a cluster of buildings forming part of the Three Lanes End Farm. This proposal is for the erection of a detached double garage to be sited adjacent to a converted farm building now used as holiday accommodation.
5. Policy GB2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan 2000 (the UDP) sets out guidelines for development in the Green Belt, specifying certain types of developments which may be granted. Policy GB5 of the UDP, sets out a maximum floorspace for the extension of dwellings in the Green Belt. These policies are not entirely consistent with the more recently published National

Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which carries considerable weight in my consideration of this appeal.

6. The Framework establishes that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, with a limited number of exceptions. None of these exceptions refer explicitly to outbuildings as proposed in this case.
7. Paragraph 145 (b) sets out, as an exception, 'the extension or alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building'.
8. Both main parties consider the proposed garage to be an extension to the host property, for the purposes of the approach to assessing development in the Green Belt. Given that the garage would be sited in very close proximity to the cottage and would be used for purposes ancillary to the function of the use, I have no reason to disagree.
9. The Framework does not set out what constitutes a disproportionate addition, however policy GB5 of the UDP notes that the extension of dwellings in the Green Belt will be permitted provided that the floorspace of the resultant dwelling is no more than 50% larger than that of the habitable floorspace of the original dwelling. The appellant has provided figures which suggest this proposal would result in a 27% increase in the floorspace of the property. This figure is not disputed by the Council and there is no reason for me to disagree.
10. Therefore, from the evidence before me, I am satisfied that the proposal falls within paragraph 145 (b) and as such does not constitute inappropriate development. On that basis there is no need for me to further consider the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, which is implicit in the exception, or whether there are special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Character and appearance

11. The holiday cottage is a part single, part two-storey converted farm building which is largely finished in stone with a slate roof and is attached to the farmhouse. The conversion has retained the simple form and appearance of the original building. The buildings have a linear form and are set on a well-defined building line at a distance back from the highway. The form of the buildings makes a positive contribution to their character and appearance.
12. The proposed garage, which would have a pitched roof, would be finished in materials to match the main building and it would be set within the space between the holiday cottage and modern agricultural building to the rear. However, whilst it would be seen, in part, against the backdrop of the agricultural building, given its domestic appearance it would relate poorly to it. Moreover, it would be sited forward of the front elevation of the holiday cottage and would be of a significant mass given its double width, and of a similar height to the single storey element of the building. In that respect, as a result of its position and size, it would dominate the appearance of the converted building.
13. In addition, it would project forward of the side elevation of the agricultural building to the rear. As such it would not relate well to either the linear pattern of residential buildings or the agricultural building. For these reasons

the proposal would be at odds with the layout and character of the buildings surrounding it.

14. There is an existing hedge along the south and east boundaries of the site. Whilst there are some gaps along its length, the hedge appears to generally provide a good degree of screening to the driveway. However, notwithstanding its lower ridge line, the forward position of the garage within the site would result in much of its roof and an element of its elevations being readily apparent from the public realm. As such, it would read as a prominent addition to the site and thus would appear at odds in the wider street scene.
15. Photographic evidence indicates that at one time there was a modest flat-roofed garage on the site. This appears to have been demolished some considerable time ago. In any event, this proposal seeks to erect a double garage which is of greater scale, height and massing than that which existed previously. The proposal would thereby have a more significant effect on the street scene. Accordingly, the fact that there was a garage at one time, does not justify the proposal.
16. For the above reasons, the proposed garage would harm the character and appearance of the wider area and would therefore conflict with policy HS11 of the UDP which seeks to ensure the scale of extensions is appropriate to the size of the plot and does not dominate the existing building.

Other matters

17. The appellant suggests that the holiday cottage has been specifically designed to be accessible for less able-bodied guests. In order to provide guests with high quality accommodation the appellant states the need to have safe and secure parking. I acknowledge that garaging may be a useful addition to the accommodation although there is limited evidence before me that it would enable the business to grow. Moreover, I am not aware of any specific concerns with the existing parking arrangement. Whilst there is no covered provision, the driveway provides ample space for parking of numerous vehicles. Further, guests can park immediately outside the front door.
18. I acknowledge that there may be a need for storage in association with the business. However, I have limited evidence on how the business has operated to date and it is unclear what proportion of the garage is required for storage. In any event, any benefits of the proposal in that respect do not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion and Recommendation

19. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the support from a local councillor, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Hannah Ellison

Appeal Planning Officer

Inspector's Decision

20. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Susan Ashworth

INSPECTOR