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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 January 2020

**by T A Wheeler BSc (Hons) T&RP MRTPI**

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

**Decision date: 31 January 2020**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/H45050/D/19/3239233**

**The Farm House, 4 South Wardley Farm, Wardley Lane, Wardley, Gateshead NE10 8AL**

- 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 Chris Geach against the decision of Gateshead Council.
  - The application Ref DC/19/00805/HHA, dated 1 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2019.
  - The development proposed is: Single storey rear garage extension to existing dwelling and replace two existing garage doors with a single roller shutter door.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. These are: whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the relevant development plan policies; and if the development is inappropriate, 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 required to justify the proposal.

### Reasons

3. South Wardley Farm is located on the edge of a suburban area of Gateshead. It forms part of a cluster of dwellings formed from the original farm, access to which is gained via a bridge across a railway line. The site is within the Green Belt.
4. The appeal property occupies a large plot to one side of the former farmyard. The proposal is to extend an existing attached garage by approximately 5.9m to provide additional space for the storage of high value cars. The existing twin garage doors would be replaced with a single roller shutter door, and the extension would be built of stone with a pitched roof finished in slate. The extension would be located to the rear of the property and therefore well screened from public areas.

*Inappropriate Development and openness*

5. The Framework confirms that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential characteristics of which are their openness and permanence. The Green Belt serves five purposes including to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas, prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another and assistance in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
6. For the purposes of the Framework, with certain exceptions, the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt is inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should only be approved in very special circumstances.
7. A number of exceptions are set out within paragraph 145 of the Framework. The third of these exceptions, c) allows the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
8. The appellant does not consider that the proposed would be a disproportionate extension to the property, however he provides limited reasons why this should be the case. The Council refers to 2 previous extensions having been approved on the same side of the house to provide garages, plus a sun room extension to the other side of the property, which I saw on my site visit.
9. The application plans state that the total volume of the existing dwelling is 842m<sup>3</sup>. It was assumed at the time that the application was submitted that the only addition to the original building was the sun room, with a volume of 50m<sup>3</sup>. The volume of the proposed extension to the garage was assessed as 190m<sup>3</sup>. It was therefore suggested that the cumulative increase in size would be less than a third of the size of the original building.
10. The planning officer report refers to the 'HAESPD' as providing guidance on whether an extension should be regarded as a disproportionate addition, and suggests a guideline of one third, above which an increase in volume would have an adverse effect on the Green Belt.
11. It is suggested that both the existing garage, and that which has now been converted to a lounge, are extensions to the original building<sup>1</sup>. The point is not disputed by the appellant and I have no other reason to believe these parts of the property are part of the original house. The parties have not provided me with an alternative volumetric calculation to reflect the actual position. However, based on the submitted plans and my observations on site, I am satisfied that the size of the proposal, in addition to the previous extensions, would constitute a large extension to the original building which would to be disproportionate. As a result exception c) is not engaged.
12. In Green Belt terms the concept of openness encompasses both the visual and spatial aspects of development. In introducing further built development at the appeal site, the proposal would, together with the previous extensions, have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development in spatial terms. Although the site is well screened, the very limited visibility of the appeal proposal would not mean that the proposal has no effect on openness.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework February 2019

13. Although the effect on openness would be limited, I conclude that the proposal would nevertheless constitute inappropriate development, which the Framework establishes should not be approved except in very special circumstances, and would also be in conflict with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan for Gateshead and Newcastle upon Tyne 2010-2030<sup>2</sup> (the Core Strategy) which seeks to protect the openness of the Green Belt in accordance with national policy.

#### *Other considerations*

14. The appellant sets out a number of matters which are considered to weigh in favour of the proposal, including that the original garage extension should be regarded as an essential part of the house.
15. The appellant keeps cars of considerable value as a hobby, and the proposal would enable these vehicles to be kept inside, rather than on the forecourt. This would avoid the storage of the vehicles causing visual harm to the local area and the Green Belt.
16. The extension would be designed and built of materials to match the property, would be attractive and would improve the privacy of the property by enclosing part of the rear patio area. It would occupy only a small part of the garden area and would have no impacts on neighbours, the street scene, or views of the Green Belt. In the appellant's view it would not harm the openness of the Green Belt.
17. The appellant sought pre application advice from the Council on the acceptability of the proposal. At that time it was assumed the only previous extension was the sun room and the appellant was not advised that the proposal would be regarded as disproportionate in terms of Green Belt policy.

#### **Green Belt Balance**

18. I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposed extension would, in spatial terms, have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than existing development and very limited impact in visual terms. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 145 of the Framework.
19. I have considered matters put before me in favour of the scheme by the appellant, however I conclude that these other considerations taken together do not clearly outweigh the harm that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.

#### **Conclusion**

20. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Tim Wheeler*

INSPECTOR

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted March 2015