
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 June 2020

by R Morgan MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H1033/D/20/3249901

Coach House Farm, Castle Edge Road, New Mills, Derbyshire SK22 4QF

- 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 Mrs Sarah Tyson against the decision of High Peak Borough Council.
 - The application Ref HPK/2020/0005, dated 8 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is to extend and remodel the farmhouse, demolishing existing single storey sections and partial rebuilding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and so the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area; and
 - if the proposal is 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

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to state that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt, and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt subject to a number of exceptions, as set out in paragraph 145.
4. Paragraph 145c) allows for the extension or alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the 'original building', which is defined in the Framework as the building as it was on 1 July

1948. Policy EQ4 of the High Peak Local Plan 2016 (Local Plan) confirms that planning permission will not be granted for development in the Green Belt unless it accords with the national guidance.
5. Evidence from a newspaper clip from 1954 has been provided by the appellant to support their claim that the original building was larger than has been assumed by the planning officer. Although no address is included on the newspaper clip, it is clear that the picture is of the appeal property. The image is grainy but does appear to show a single storey element at the rear of the house, described by the appellant as a large porch, in the position of the current study and bedroom.
 6. The appellant also contends that the existing single storey kitchen was part of the original building. This part of the building has been rendered so it is difficult to tell whether it is original from an external inspection. However, the photo from 1954 does give the impression of a mono-pitch element at the side of the house, in the position of the current kitchen.
 7. The photograph provided is not entirely clear, and does not provide definitive evidence about the extent of the building in 1948. However, it does back up the suggestion that the original building may have been larger than allowed for in the Council's calculations.
 8. Assuming that the existing kitchen did form part of the original building, and that a porch existed in the position of the current study, subsequent additions to the building include the two storey element which partly replaced the rear porch; a conservatory; a single storey lounge/bathroom and another small porch. The appeal proposal would involve a new two storey element at the rear of the building and the removal of the lounge/bathroom. The small porch would be removed and replaced with a new porch at the side of the building. The appellant has suggested that the conservatory would also be removed, but as it is clearly shown on the revised plans and visuals, I have assumed that it would be retained.
 9. Neither the Framework nor Local Plan Policy EQ4 set out a precise definition as to what is meant by 'disproportionate additions', although the Council have said that an increase of up to 30% volume is generally considered to be acceptable. Calculations of footprint and floorspace are also commonly used.
 10. The appellant disputes the Council's suggestion that the proposed extensions, combined with previous additions, would result in an increase in footprint of 133% and an increase in volume of 82%, compared with the original dwelling. However, no alternative figure for increase in volume has been provided, and there is no detailed information to explain how the suggested 19% increase in footprint has been derived.
 11. Assuming that the original building was of a scale suggested by the photographic evidence, subsequent alterations in combination with the proposed development would result in an increase in the footprint of the original building of around 40%, and an increase in floorspace of closer to 50%. This scale of alteration would represent a significant enlargement to Coach House Farm, and would constitute a disproportionate addition over and above the original building.

12. As a result, the proposal does not fall within the exception set out in Framework paragraph 145c) and therefore constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In this regard it would conflict with Local Plan Policy EQ4 and with the Framework.
13. The proposal does not accord with an up-to-date development plan, so the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in paragraph 11 of the Framework and Local Plan Policy S1a are not applicable in this instance.

Openness and character and appearance

14. The Framework makes clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It also states that one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness.
15. The appeal property is a large, stone farmhouse which has a long frontage along Castle Edge Road. The building is of substantial height, which is accentuated by its elevated position. Castle Edge Road is a narrow rural lane, and, other than the houses immediately behind the appeal site, there are few other buildings in the immediate vicinity. As a result, the appeal property is a prominent feature of the lane.
16. On the north eastern side of the existing building, two double height gables form an L-shape. As part of the proposal, this space would be filled with a new two storey element with a rear facing gable. Although the ridge height would be lower than that of the main part of the building, by continuing the line of the side gable at full height, the proposal would not appear subservient to it. Instead, it would result in the building appearing as a large solid block, making it appear far more substantial, losing the distinctive L-shape and subsuming the original side elevation.
17. Despite the use of matching materials, the proposed two storey addition would add significant bulk to this side of the property. Although it would be partly screened by the existing high hedge, the proposal would still be clearly visible when approaching along the lane. This element of the proposed development would result in a small loss of openness to the Green Belt and would also cause harm to the character of the existing house and the wider area.
18. The proposed two storey addition would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Local Plan Policies S1, EQ2, EQ3 and EQ6 which, amongst other considerations, require high quality, locally distinctive design in new development, which respects and contributes positively to the character of the area, including landscape character. There would also be conflict with the High Peak Design Guide 2018, which requires that alterations and extensions be sensitive to, and harmonise with, the parent building. Further conflict exists with Section 12 of the Framework, concerning the need for high quality design.

Other considerations

19. The proposed alterations to the south west side of the building include the demolition of an unattractive single storey extension, which is a prominent feature when viewed from the lane. The reinstatement of a more sensitive single storey element on this side of the building, together with the removal of

white render and cladding to reveal the original stone, would significantly improve the appearance of the building when viewed from this side.

20. Although they could be achieved without the construction of the proposed two storey extension, the proposed alterations on the south western side of the building represent benefits of the scheme, to which I afford modest weight. The alterations would also result in a slight increase in openness on this side of the building, which would help to offset the loss of openness resulting from the proposed two storey addition.
21. The proposal would provide additional living space which would be constructed to current standards, improving the energy efficiency of the building. It would also allow the replacement of a narrow staircase with a wider one, which would meet current building regulations and would be easier to use for older members of the household. However, there may be other ways to achieve these improvements which do not result in the harm I have identified. I therefore give these factors limited weight.

The Green Belt balance and conclusion

22. The proposal would be inappropriate development which would, by definition, cause harm to the Green Belt. The Framework establishes that substantial weight should be given to such harm. In addition, the proposed two storey extension would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area.
23. When taken together, the other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Consequently, very special circumstances needed to justify the proposal do not exist.
24. I conclude, therefore, that the appeal be dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR