
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2020

by Thomas Hatfield BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H4315/D/20/3251913

Sandy Carr Farm Farmhouse, Hall Lane, Rainhill, L35 6NP

- 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 Angela Bolland against the decision of St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2020/0117/HHFP, dated 4 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of detached two storey garage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development given above is taken from the Decision Notice. This reflects amendments that were made to the scheme at application stage and the application was determined on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are, firstly, the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and, secondly, whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') and development plan policy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is located within a small group of houses close to the edge of Rainhill. These properties are positioned side-on to the road and are surrounded by open countryside.
5. The proposal would introduce a large detached garage block in between the host property and Hall Lane. This would be positioned in advance of the front elevation to the main dwelling and would be 2 stories in height, with only a modest set down in ridge height. In this location, it would be a dominant and overbearing feature that would be prominent in views of the property from Hall Lane. Its scale, narrow dormer windows, and shallow roof pitch, would also relate poorly to the main dwelling and it would have an awkward visual relationship with it. In my view, it would be a discordant feature in an elevated position relative to the road. Whilst it is asserted that the proposal would be

on the footprint of a previous garage building, that was a single storey structure that was demolished some time ago. Moreover, the proposed use of matching materials does not alter my other concerns, as set out above.

6. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy CP 1 of the St. Helens Local Plan Core Strategy (2012), Policies GEN 8 and GB 6 of the St Helens Unitary Development Plan ('UDP') (1998), and guidance contained in the Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document (2011). These policies and guidance seek to ensure, amongst other things, that domestic extensions respect the scale, design, character and appearance of the original dwelling.

Inappropriate development in Green Belt

7. Paragraph 145 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions. One such exception is the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. In this regard, the appeal proposal would be a normal domestic adjunct and should therefore be considered as an extension to the existing dwelling.
8. The Framework does not provide a specific definition of what would constitute a 'disproportionate addition', nor is any such definition set out in local policies or guidance. Accordingly, this is a matter of judgement based on the specific circumstances of the case.
9. Planning permission was granted in 2019 for single storey front and rear extensions to the property (Ref P/2019/0346/HHFP). The Council state that the appeal proposal would result in a cumulative increase of 37.4% to the volume of the original dwelling in combination with the approved extensions. The cumulative increase in floorspace is identified as being slightly higher at 40.5%¹, although this may simply reflect the flat roof single storey design of the approved extensions. I further note that Paragraph 145 of the Framework refers to "*disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building*" (my emphasis). Accordingly, I consider the overall increase in built volume to be the most relevant measure in this case. On balance, I consider that an increase in built volume of 37.4% would not be of a magnitude that would constitute a 'disproportionate addition'. The proposal would therefore accord with the exception set out at Paragraph 145 c) of the Framework.
10. It is asserted that the proposal would result in a loss of openness to this part of the Green Belt. However, Paragraph 145 c) of the Framework makes no reference to openness. As the proposal complies with this exception, it is 'not inappropriate' in relation to Green Belt policy.
11. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would therefore accord with Policy GB 2 of the St Helens UDP, and guidance in the Framework relating to Green Belts.

¹ The appellant has not disputed the Council's figures relating to either built volume or footprint.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. Whilst it would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would provide additional living space to the host property, and would generate some economic benefits, that does not alter my view that the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Hatfield

INSPECTOR