



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2020

by B Davies MSc FGS CGeol

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/20/3256272

Outbuildings to the south east of Coppice, Frieth Road, Marlow, SL7 2JQ

- 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 Matthew Evans against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/05835/FUL, dated 23 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is alterations and enlargement of existing outbuildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. In April 2020 Wycombe District Council merged with other local planning authorities into a new Unitary authority named Buckinghamshire Council. While the original application was submitted to Wycombe District Council, the authority's new name has been referred to in the banner heading above.
3. During the appeal, the Council issued a Certificate¹ of lawfulness for the continued use of the existing outbuildings and surrounding land for ancillary domestic use. I have therefore taken this into consideration in my reasoning.

Main issues

4. The appeal site is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues are:
 - whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework and development plan policy;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - whether or not the proposed development would conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and,
 - if the development would be inappropriate, whether the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness and any other harm, would be clearly

¹ 20/06792/CLE (30 November 2020)

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

5. Paragraph 145 c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') states that the extension of a building is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The term 'disproportionate addition' is not defined in the Framework and a degree of judgment is therefore necessary.
6. The site comprises 4 single-storey barns used for small-scale domestic storage. It is proposed to convert 3 of these into a single building by infilling the small gaps between them, and to extend the fourth by 0.5 metres to the rear. Together, the 4 outbuildings would be enlarged by nearly 30% from 861 m³ to 1119 m³, which I consider to be a significant increase in volume. The footprint would increase from 300 to 414 m², or nearly 40%, which is also a substantial increase in size. The result of linking the 3 barns together would be a very large outbuilding with a continuous roof, which would appear disproportionate in size when compared to the existing, more modest, individual buildings. For these reasons I conclude that the proposal comprises disproportionate additions to the existing buildings and is therefore inappropriate development.
7. The appellant refers to the site as redevelopment of Previously Developed Land and there is support for this in the Green Belt in paragraph 145 g) of the Framework. However, the proposal would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, as explained in the section below, and this exception does therefore not apply.
8. Policy DM43 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (adopted August 2019) (the 'LP') provides additional rules regarding extension of domestic outbuildings in the context of inappropriate development. This application would meet the height criteria set out in d) and e) of the policy. I am unable to conclude on application of a) and c) because I do not have details of the original dwelling before me. However, criterion b) requires that the total volume of all outbuildings should not exceed 140 m³. The existing outbuildings are 861 m³ in size, which is already significantly in excess of the threshold. I consider that any further increase in size would conflict with this policy and would therefore constitute inappropriate development as defined by the LP.
9. I conclude that the development would constitute a disproportionate addition to the original buildings and would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in conflict with national policies and the equivalent Policies CP8 and DM42 of the LP. I have also found conflict with local policy DM43, which limits the size of domestic outbuildings.

Openness

10. The substantial increase in the scale and bulk of the development would reduce the openness of the Green Belt in spatial terms. However, the external footprint of the main collection of buildings would not change, and the rear of barn 4 is already occupied by a large mesh cage, which would be removed. The

increase in openness would therefore be contained within the existing footprint, which I consider reduces the harm.

11. The site is largely screened by a deciduous woodland from the road, although I noted there were still leaves on the trees at the time of my site visit and cover will therefore be less over the winter. The neighbouring house to the east overlooks the site. The site and any minor loss of openness would therefore not be widely visible from the public domain.
12. For the reasons above, I conclude that the loss of openness would be small, but a loss nonetheless, and the proposal would therefore not preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Any other harm – the scenic beauty of the AONB

13. According to the LP, the special qualities of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) include the steep chalk escarpment, and chalk streams, broadleaved woodlands, tranquil valleys, and villages built of brick and flint. It has areas of tranquillity and visibly sensitive skylines.
14. The outbuildings already exist, and I do not consider that the proposed infill, moderate changes to the roof line and a small extension would harm the AONB. In addition, the site is well screened from the wider public domain by woodland and I therefore conclude that there would be no impact on the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB.
15. On this basis, I do not find conflict with Policy DM30, which requires that development should conserve, and where possible enhance, the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB.

Other Considerations

16. There would be a minor benefit to the character and appearance of the area from updating the existing outbuildings and removal of the large, redundant wire enclosure, but this outcome is not something that relies upon planning permission being granted, and I have therefore given it negligible weight.

Planning balance and conclusion

17. The development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is a matter that I afford substantial weight in the planning balance, and there would be a small loss of openness. I conclude that the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness would not be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

B Davies

INSPECTOR