



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 January 2021 by Ben Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

Decision by R C Kirby BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/D/20/3262246

**Lower Over Farm, Badgers Lane, Over, Almondsbury, Bristol, England
BS32 4DE**

- 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 & Mrs David Smallridge against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/03209, dated 2 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as the erection of two storey rear extension to form additional accommodation. Alterations to existing front porch.
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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.

Procedural Matters

3. The description of development above is taken from part E of the Appeal Form and the Council's Decision Notice, in the interest of clarity.

Main Issues

4. The appeal site is located within an area of Green Belt (GB). Accordingly, the main issues are:
 - Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') and relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the design of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; 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 outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons for Recommendation

Whether Inappropriate Development

5. Policy PSP7 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan, Policies, Sites and Places Plan (2017) (PSP) requires the Green Belt to be protected from inappropriate development. Paragraph 145 of the Framework establishes that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless they fall within the list of exceptions set out in this paragraph. Part c) of this paragraph lists 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, as one such exception.
6. Although the Framework does not define what constitutes a disproportionate addition, criteria 3 of PSP Policy PSP7 sets out the local interpretation of proportionality stating that *'an addition resulting in a volume increase up to 30% of the original building would be likely to be proportionate.'* It also states that *'The larger a building becomes in excess of 30% over and above its original size, the less likely it is that the new extension(s) will be considered proportionate,'* and *'Additions resulting in a volume increase of 50% or more of the original building would most likely be considered a disproportionate addition and be refused as inappropriate development.'*
7. The appellants set out that the proposed extensions would result in the dwelling's volume increasing by 56%. This is clearly in excess of what is considered to be a proportionate addition for the purposes of PSP Policy PSP7.
8. I acknowledge that in terms of the reference to volume increase of 50% or more that the use of 'most likely' in PSP Policy PSP7 is not an absolute. However, I consider that the doubling or more of the original volume of the property would substantially increase its size. Moreover, the resultant depth of the dwelling, extending from a double gable to a triple gable design, would amount to a substantial increase in the building's size, scale and bulk. It would also significantly alter the building's form and appearance.
9. In light of the above I conclude that the proposal would comprise a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and would result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in conflict with PSP Policy PSP7 and Paragraph 145 of the Framework as set out above.
10. It is understood that other Local Authorities may have differing consideration of what constitutes disproportionate, including a larger threshold, however each case is considered against local and national policy.
11. An historic photograph is referenced which it is stated shows a rear catslide roof projection and side lean to projection. No details of this is provided to substantiate the amended volume calculations provided, and as such I cannot give this matter any weight. I note that the photograph also does not appear to show the rear gable projection shown on plan as original.
12. Paragraph 143 of the Framework says inappropriate development is harmful by definition and paragraph 144 identifies that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.

Openness

13. Given its modest scale, the replacement porch would have a limited impact on the wider property and would be seen in the context of the existing two storey property. It would have a neutral effect on the openness of the Green Belt, given its largely open design.
14. However, the proposed rear extension, whilst not visually prominent from the front of the property or from the open countryside to the south, would be apparent in views from the road where the additional depth along the side elevations and the massing of the property would be noticeable. The proposal would have both a visual impact upon openness as well as a spatial impact. Consequently, it would result in a reduction in openness of the Green Belt.
15. Although the reduction in openness would be limited and localised when assessed against the Green Belt as a whole, the Framework makes it clear that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt and any harm to it should be given substantial weight.

Character and Appearance

16. The appeal property is located in a rural setting outside of any settlement boundary within the open countryside. The wider landscape is characterised by open and pastoral expanses of farmland, with wide open agricultural expanses to the south and limited development dotted along the highway, which is a narrow rural lane, mostly screened by roadside trees.
17. The detailing and features of the extension would be in keeping with the original property, which is an attractive traditional rural cottage. However, the proposal would substantially alter the form of this property, introducing a dominant gable feature which would not reflect the proportions of the host property. The rear extension would not be subservient to, would overwhelm and would not be informed by the original scale and form of the property. Furthermore, I consider that the scale and character of the original property would not be readily apparent, particularly when viewed from the rear. Harm to the character and appearance of the host property would result. Accordingly, the contribution that the existing property makes to this attractive area would be reduced also and harm would result to the character and appearance of the area.
18. In light of the above, I conclude that the proposed development, in so far as it relates to the rear extension would be contrary to South Gloucestershire Local Plan Core Strategy 2006 – 2027 (CS) Policy CS1 and PSP Policies PSP1 and PSP38 which collectively seek to ensure that, amongst other matters, development proposals are of the highest possible standards of design, respond constructively to buildings which make a positive contribution to the distinctiveness of the area, and that massing and scale are informed by, respect, and enhance the character, distinctiveness and amenity of both the site and its context.

Other Considerations

19. The appellants point to the scale of the wider plot and the common nature of large dwellings within the locality, in addition to stating that the extended footprint would be limited. The scale of the plot and other dwellings do not

have a bearing on the matter of proportionality, which is considered on the merits and scale of each dwelling.

20. My attention is also drawn to a fall-back position possible under permitted development rights. However, no drawings have been provided of such a fall-back position, or whether there would be a greater than theoretical possibility that such development might take place. This therefore limits the weight I can give this matter.

Green Belt Conclusion

21. The proposal would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and further harm to the Green Belt would be caused as a result of the loss of openness. These matters carry substantial weight. Additional harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the existing property and surrounding area. These issues are not outweighed by the considerations advanced by the appellants and I find that the other considerations advanced do not clearly outweigh the harm that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist. The proposal therefore conflicts with PSP Policies PSP7, PSP1 and PSP38 and CS Policy CS1 and the development plan as a whole. There are no other considerations which outweigh this finding.
22. The Council reference PSP Policies PSP38 and PSP40, which appear to relate to extensions within the urban areas and rural settlements with defined settlement boundaries, and for new dwellings in the open countryside respectively. As such, neither are relevant to the proposal before me.

Recommendation

23. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

B Phillips

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

RC Kirby

INSPECTOR