The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 16 March 2021

by William Cooper BA (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/D/20/3262070
Colney Farm, Park Lane, Harefield UB9 6HH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Dempsey against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
- The application Ref: 35307/APP/2020/2037, dated 3 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 1 October 2020.
- The development proposed is erection of a detached garage.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description in the banner heading above is taken from the decision notice as it is more precise than that shown on the application form.

3. Colney Farm House and Nos 1 to 2 and 3 to 4 Colney Farm Barns are included on the Council's Review of Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Importance. Therefore they are locally listed buildings and I assess the proposal on this basis.

4. The new London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London, March 2021 (LP) has been published since the Council's decisions. Policy G2 of the LP replaces previous Policy 7.16 as the relevant London Plan policy on Green Belt. Policy G4 of the LP supersedes previous Policy 7.18 as a London Plan policy on open space. Policy HC1 supersedes Policy HC1 as the applicable London Plan policy on heritage assets. The parties have had an opportunity to comment on the application of these new LP policies in relation to this case and I will determine the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:

   - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
   - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
   - Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Harefield Village Conservation Area, including whether it would preserve the setting of the Colney Farm House Locally Listed Building;

and

- If the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, whether the harm by reason 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

Whether inappropriate development

6. The appeal site comprises the Colney Farm House Locally Listed Building (LLB) which is a two-storey detached dwellinghouse and its garden areas. A single-storey timber-clad outbuilding with verandah is located towards the front of the plot. The site is located on a rural lane beyond the main built up area of Harefield village. The site is within the Green Belt, Harefield Village Conservation Area (CA) and Colne Valley Regional Park.

7. The farmhouse dates from the eighteenth century. Its two-storey pitched roof form, chimneys and front fenestration pattern are historic farmhouse characteristics. Furthermore, its historic farmstead setting is legible in its grouping with nearby locally listed weatherboarded barns to the north and surrounding fields. While some historic layering is evident in the farmhouse's more modern porch and windows and the barns' residential conversion, the above elements of historic rustic character remain noticeable.

8. The proposed outbuilding would be approximately 5m from the host dwellinghouse, and thus relatively close to it. The outbuilding's proposed function is as a garage, in connection with the dwellinghouse. Given these factors, the proposed outbuilding would, while not directly connected to the dwellinghouse, effectively function as an extension to it.

9. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out a small number of exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. One such exception, in paragraph 145c), 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'. The importance of proportionality of an outbuilding to the footprint of the dwelling house and the residential curtilage in which it stands is echoed in Policy DHMD2 of the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 Development Management Policies (2020) (DMP).

10. The proposed outbuilding would entail a triple garage with shed space. It would be around four fifths of the footprint of the farmhouse. In comparison to the farmhouse, the proposed outbuilding's front elevation would be approximately almost as wide, and its south-western side elevation would be deeper. The proposed row of three garage doors would face towards the front of the site and its entrance on the lane. Also, the proposed outbuilding's perpendicular mass and roof pitch, together with its extent of fenestration would resemble a modern bungalow style building in appearance, viewed from several angles. Furthermore, the proposal would have between around a quarter and a third larger footprint than the existing outbuilding which is proposed for removal, and a more bulky roofscape.

11. Currently the farmhouse and Nos 1 to 2 Colney Farm Barns form a row of historic farmstead buildings. The factors described above would together result

in a proportionately substantial south-westerly expansion beyond the farmhouse of the built bulk of this row. The contrast between the proposal's modern bungalow resemblance and the historic farmstead character would accentuate the disproportionately large proposed outbuilding. These impacts would be noticeable from the following combination of viewpoints: the road and pavements on Park Lane; the public footpath to the north-west of the farmstead; the appeal site; and neighbouring property including the entrance drive to the Colney Farm Barns.

12. Given the existing outbuilding does not appear to be a garage used for parking vehicles, the above impacts would not be tempered by replacement of garaging.

13. The above factors, in combination, lead me to conclude that the proposal would entail a disproportionate addition within the Green Belt. Therefore, the proposal would not fall within the exceptions listed in paragraph 145c) of the Framework. As such, it would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which would, by definition, harm the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt

14. Openness has both a spatial and visual dimension. Obviously, a building of the proposed size would clearly, purely in terms of its footprint and volume, have an adverse spatial impact on openness. Furthermore, from the viewpoints identified above, the proposed outbuilding would obstruct some views of the open, verdant countryside beyond the farmhouse. In combination with the increased bulk of the proposed outbuilding, the above would impact adversely on the openness of the site.

15. Garages can be found in some countryside locations. However, the combination of factors identified above would result in a development presence that would not preserve openness in the Green Belt.

16. Furthermore, the proposed expansion of built mass in a south-westerly direction beyond the farmhouse would encroach into the countryside outside the built-up area of Harefield village. This would conflict with one of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, namely to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

17. As such, the proposal would result in some modest harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The Framework advises that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt, the fundamental aim of which is to keep land permanently open. The harmful loss of openness caused by the appeal scheme would be at odds with this fundamental aim.

Character and appearance of the CA and effect on the LLB

18. Paragraph 190 of the Framework requires an assessment of the particular significance of any heritage asset affected by a proposal, including by development affecting its setting. As the proposal is in a conservation area I have had special regard to section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

19. The CA covers an area set around the axis of Harefield village's High Street and Church Hill. From what I saw during my site visit and the evidence before me, the CA's significance, insofar as it relates to this appeal, lies in its illustration of

the village's rural landscape setting and its architectural evolution from the medieval period to the twentieth century, as manifested in its characterful mix of historic buildings.

20. The historic rustic architectural form and setting of the farmhouse LLB are as described above. Consequently, the listed building embodies evidential and historic values. Given the above, I consider the special interest of the LLB, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the legibility of its eighteenth century to nineteenth century farmhouse architecture and rustic setting. The above contributes to both the building's special interest and the significance of the wider CA.

21. The proposal's disproportionately large modern bulk, of bungalow style resemblance, would be a visually discordant intrusion into the LLB's historic farmstead and rustic landscape setting. It would contrast awkwardly with the historic farmhouse and farmstead character, and diminish the rural spaciousness of the western edge of the CA.

22. The identified harm arising from the proposal would be significant, relative to the site and the immediate surroundings of the proposal in the CA. However, the effect would be localised and therefore would constitute less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA as a whole. In such circumstances I therefore necessarily weigh the harm against the public benefits of the proposal.

23. The proposal would provide garaging for three vehicles on the site. It would also remove a more modern garden outbuilding from the setting of the LLB. The construction phase would provide economic benefit to the area. However, the public benefits are limited by the scale of proposed development and do not outweigh the great weight given to the conservation of the CA and the less than substantial harm to its significance which I have identified.

24. To conclude, the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, including failing to preserve the setting of the LLB. It would also not preserve the setting of the LLB. As such, it would conflict with Policies BE1 and HE1 of the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan Part 1 Strategic Policies (2012) (SP) and Policies DMHB1, DMHB4, DMHB11 and DMHB12 of London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 Development Management Policies (2020) (DMP). Together the policies seek to ensure that proposals complement local character and distinctiveness, including through conservation of heritage assets and their settings. The policy is broadly consistent with the approach of the Framework in respect of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, with great weight given to the asset's conservation.

Other considerations

25. The proposed development would provide garaging for three vehicles. It would remove a more modern outbuilding from the setting of the LLB. The construction phase would provide economic benefit in the area. However, the scale of benefit would be modest and thus carries limited weight.

Whether very special circumstances

26. Policy G2 of the LP and Policy DMEl4 of the DMP set out that the Green Belt should be protected from inappropriate development, and development that

would harm the Green Belt should be refused except where very special circumstances exist. Policy EM2 of the SP further emphasizes the very special circumstances test. As per the Framework, very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

27. I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which would, by definition, be harmful. The appeal scheme would also result in significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt and would conflict with one of the purposes of including land within it. Paragraph 144 of the Framework requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the Green Belt. The totality of identified harm to the Green Belt carries substantial weight. On the other hand, the other considerations I have identified are of limited weight in favour of the proposal.

28. As such, the harm to the Green Belt is not clearly outweighed by the other considerations identified and therefore the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy G2 of the LP, Policy DMEl4 of the DMP and Policy EM2 of the SP and the Framework.

Other Matters

29. The proposed outbuilding would not reduce the supply of public open space. Consequently, I find no harm in this case in respect of Colne Valley Regional Park, under the terms of Policy G4 of the LP.

Conclusion

30. The proposed development would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeal fails.

William Cooper

INSPECTOR