



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 2 July 2021

by Mr A Spencer-Peet BSc(Hons) PGDip.LP Solicitor (Non Practising)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V1260/D/21/3275332

Tubbs Cottage, Merley Park Road, Poole, BH21 3DD

- 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 A Matthes against the decision of Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council.
 - The application Ref APP/21/00187/F, dated 3 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 16 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is to erect a 2 storey side extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether the proposed development is inappropriate development within the Green Belt, including its effect on the openness of the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building; and
 - If the development is inappropriate, 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 the development.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development and the Effect on Openness

3. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. Criterion 6 of Policy PP2 of the Poole Local Plan (2018) (the Local Plan) provides that the Council will carefully manage the Green Belt in accordance with national planning policy. Paragraph 133 of the Framework outlines the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The Framework, at paragraphs 145 and 146, set out the categories of development which may be regarded as not inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to certain conditions.

4. One of these categories contained within Paragraph 145c) of the Framework says an extension of a building is not inappropriate provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
5. Planning history for the site indicates that the original dwelling was extended in 2004 following the demolition and replacement of a rear extension. The appeal proposal now seeks to extend the dwelling further, with the Appellant's submissions indicating that the overall floorspace would be increased by approximately 60%.
6. Neither the Local Plan nor the Framework define what would constitute a disproportionate addition to an original building. However, in my view, assessing proportionality is primarily a test based on size and, therefore, floorspace is not the only possible measure of the degree of change. It is important and useful to compare any changes to the original physical size and scale of a building, including the degree of bulk or mass that might be added.
7. In this instance, the proposed extension would add noticeably to the built form at this location. The extension would increase the spread of built form beyond the footprint of the original building, with the resulting dwelling being approximately double the width of the original and, whilst not extending rooms to the rear of the appeal building, would significantly add to the overall bulk and mass of the dwelling.
8. For these reasons, I find that the increased amount of floorspace and the increased bulk and mass of the dwelling, would represent a substantial uplift and that the proposal would significantly change the modest scale and proportions of the original building. In my assessment, the proposed extension would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling. I therefore find that the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of paragraph 145 of the Framework and, consequently, the scheme would also fail to accord with the provisions of Policy PP2 of the Local Plan.
9. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. Openness can mean the absence of development irrespective of the degree of visibility of the land in question from public vantage points; development which would harm openness could be acceptable visually. In this respect, openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect and the absence of visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on the openness of the Green Belt as a result of development.
10. The proposal would be a substantial extension to the original dwelling as described above. The proposed extension would be positioned between the existing dwelling and a relatively substantially scaled detached garage at the site. Therefore, while the harm to this essential characteristic of the Green Belt would be limited there would nonetheless be some degree of to the Green Belt in this respect. As such, the proposal would fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
11. In summary of the above, the appeal scheme would not accord with any of the exceptions to inappropriate development within the Green Belt as provided under paragraph 145 of the Framework. The proposal would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and would conflict with the purposes of the Green

Belt. Therefore, I conclude that the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and, consequently, would be contrary to Policy PP2 of the Local Plan which seeks to protect the openness of the Green Belt from inappropriate development in accordance with national planning policy.

Character and Appearance

12. The appeal building is a locally listed non-designated heritage asset. Whilst I acknowledge the Appellant's submissions that the appeal building is not an uncommon example of Lady Wimborne Cottages within the area, based on the evidence before me and on observations made on my site visit, the significance of the appeal building as a non-designated heritage asset appears to lie in its traditional form, its age and architectural interest.
13. Paragraph 197 of the Framework provides that "the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset". Policy PP30 of the Local Plan concerns Heritage Assets and, amongst other matters, provides support for proposals which preserve or enhance the historic and architectural significance of heritage assets and their settings.
14. The proposed extension would replicate the scale and many of the existing architectural features of the existing cottage. As I observed on my site visit, previous alterations to the existing building have been sympathetically incorporated into the existing structure with the use of high quality materials that reflect those as used in the construction of the original building.
15. Further, the original building is one of a matched pair of cottages. The neighbouring cottage has previously been extended and through the use of materials and design that does not appear to be consistent with its host dwelling, the pair of cottages have somewhat lost their symmetry and which has resulted in the loss of significance of the assets in terms of their historical association as workers cottages. I appreciate that the overall scale of the building would be altered and increased but I am satisfied that, subject to the use of high quality matching materials, the proposal would retain the visual and architectural contribution of the host building to the locality.
16. Consequently, I find that the proposal would comply with Policy PP30 of the Local Plan and would accord with the provisions of paragraph 197 of the Framework.

Other Considerations

17. Paragraph 143 of the Framework highlights that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Consequently, within paragraph 144, the Framework states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other

harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

18. Whilst, for the above reasons, I have found that the proposal would not result in harm to the significance of the identified non-designated heritage asset, the proposed scheme would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and would cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt. These are matters to which I attach substantial weight, as required by Paragraph 144 of the Framework. The proposal would provide symmetry to the pair of semi-detached dwellings at this locality and would provide additional space for current and future occupants and, cumulatively, these are matters to which I attach moderate weight in the determination of this appeal. However, these considerations do not clearly outweigh the substantial weight I must give to the harm I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist.

Conclusion

19. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the Framework establishes that substantial weight should be given to harm by reason of inappropriateness. There would be a loss of openness, albeit limited, to the Green Belt. The other considerations advanced by the Appellant offer only moderate weight in favour of the scheme and do not outweigh the harm I have identified.
20. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Mr A Spencer-Peet

INSPECTOR