



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 6 July 2021

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P2365/D/21/3270928

146 Station Road, Hesketh Bank, Lancashire PR4 6SR

- 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 Goulding against the decision of West Lancashire Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2020/0620/FUL, dated 16 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 8 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is first floor side and rear extension to residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are:
 - i) Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - ii) The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - iii) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area; and
 - iv) If the proposal is inappropriate development, 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 it.

Reasons

Whether or not inappropriate development in the Green Belt

3. No 146 is a 2 storey end of terrace property on the east side of Station Road. It is outside of the settlement boundary of Hesketh Bank, which at this point is formed by the road. It is in the Green Belt.
4. Paragraph 143 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
5. Policy GN1 of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document Adopted October 2013 (the LP) sets out that development proposals within the Green Belt will be assessed against national policy and any relevant

Local Plan policies. In this regard, paragraph 145 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt subject to specific exceptions, including Paragraph 145 c) 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.

6. In terms of what would constitute a disproportionate addition, West Lancashire Borough Council Supplementary Planning Document Development in the Green Belt Adopted October 2015 (the GBSPD) sets out that proposals to extend buildings in the Green Belt should not result in an increase of more than 40% of the volume of the original building. This is caveated that, depending on the particulars of the proposal, a substantially lower increase in the volume of the building might be a disproportionate extension. The Framework defines the original building as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.
7. The GBSPD sets out that proposals should include a Green Belt assessment (GBA) to provide evidence in respect of the original property and full details of volume calculations of the original property and the proposal. In this case, the submitted GBA states that the proposal would be a roughly 35% increase in the volume of the existing dwelling. However, it does not clarify the original building and no detailed calculations or dimensions have been provided. It is not clear that the GBA takes into account the single storey rear extension or the earlier planning permission (Ref 1999/1027) for a two storey extension at rear, rebuilding of front elevation, dormer windows to front and rear elevations, and detached garage at rear. The Council considers that when the later extensions, alterations and outbuildings are accounted for, the proposal would result in a volume increase of the original building significantly above the 40% threshold. There is little compelling evidence to the contrary.
8. Furthermore, Paragraph 145 c) of the Framework refers to the size of the original building, such that consideration of floorspace and external dimensions will also be relevant to the assessment. Irrespective that the ground floor would be open between the pillars, the pillars would be substantial features that would result in a degree of enclosure of the ground floor. Taking into account its width, full height to match No 146 and that it would be the full length of the main side elevation and the rear outrigger, the proposal would be a significant increase in the size of the original building.
9. Therefore, on the basis of the evidence before me the proposal would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. For this reason, it would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Consequently, it would conflict with Policy GN1 of the LP and the policies in the Framework that protect the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt

10. Paragraph 133 of the Framework advises that openness and permanence are the essential characteristics of the Green Belt. Openness is the absence of development and it has both spatial and visual aspects.
11. The proposal would be on the existing driveway such that there would be no spatial loss of openness. However, it would be prominently located to the side of the property and immediately adjacent to the road. It would be roughly half the width of the frontage and it would be the full length of No 146. By virtue of

its large size and scale, first floor elevations, full height roof and thick pillars, there would be a significant increase in the bulk of built development at this site. The proposal would not be visible when viewed from beyond No 142, but it would be visible from the front and also from locations elsewhere including to the north. Consequently, there would be a significant visual impact resulting in a small loss of openness of the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

12. Nos 144 and 146 are substantially matching properties narrowly set back from and open to the footway. They are constructed in multi-coloured brick and with a continuous slate roof, the front eaves line of which is broken by pitched dormer extensions. No 142 differs from the adjoining properties by virtue of its longer frontage, fenestration, red bricks and simple roof set slightly below that of its neighbours. In contrast to the near continuous residential development on the opposite side of the road, the group is widely separated from buildings to either side by undeveloped farmland. Consequently, the visual context for the proposal is the short traditional terrace and the surrounding rural countryside.
13. The extension would be elevated on pillars, at first floor height. It would be finished in materials to match and its windows would be in keeping with the style of its host. However, its front elevation would not be set back from the principal elevation and the roof would continue the ridgeline and the pitch of the main roof. By virtue of its size, height and design, it would not be a subservient extension.
14. The pillared design would be a discordant feature that would not relate well to the surrounding built environment. Irrespective that agricultural buildings such as pole barns can be open at ground floor level, the proposal would not be an agricultural building nor would it have the appearance of such. The appeal site is not part of a farmstead and the proposal, which is a residential extension, would not be seen in the context of agricultural buildings, open or otherwise.
15. Consequently, the proposal would be visually obtrusive and incongruous. It would overwhelm and dominate the original dwelling and it would detract from the terrace. It would not make a positive contribution to local distinctness.
16. Therefore, the proposal would harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the area. It would conflict with LP Policy GN3. This requires, among other things, that proposals should have regard to local historic character and visual amenity, complementing and enhancing local distinctiveness through sensitive design, and the design of extensions should relate to the existing building. It would also conflict with the guidance in the Supplementary Planning Document Design Guide Adopted January 2009, in relation to requiring extensions to be subservient, well related to the character and appearance of the host, and to contribute to local distinctiveness.

Other Considerations

17. My attention has been drawn to other buildings in the Green Belt along Station Road. These include modest 2 storey dwellings and single storey community and commercial buildings. Full details of these schemes have not been provided and I cannot be certain that they are directly comparable to the appeal scheme

or that they were determined in the same policy context. Consequently, they do not provide a justification for the proposal.

18. The appellant would be willing to fully enclose the ground floor of the proposal. However, no plans to illustrate any alternative scheme have been provided either for the Council's consideration or with the appeal. In any case, the Procedural Guide: Planning appeals – England dated 29 March 2021 is clear that the appeal process should not be used to evolve the scheme and if an applicant thinks that amending their proposal will overcome the local planning authority's reasons for refusal they should normally make a fresh application. Therefore, this not a matter that weighs in favour of the proposal.

Green Belt balance

19. I have concluded that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would result in a small loss of openness of the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, these matters attract substantial weight. There would also be moderate harm to the character and appearance of the property and the area.
20. There are no other considerations that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, loss of openness and other harm. Therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons set out above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR