



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 26 October 2021

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V4250/D/21/3278726

271 Crankwood Road, Abram, WIGAN, WN2 5YB

- 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 Mark Aldred against the decision of Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref A/20/89787/HH, dated 21 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side and rear extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the Council made its decision, a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been issued. In respect of the matters which are pertinent to this appeal, namely the protection of the Green Belt; the need for development to be sympathetic to local character, and the need to ensure high standards of amenity for existing users, there is little change between the previous version of national policy and the revised document. I am therefore satisfied that the changes to national policy do not prejudice the cases made by either party in this appeal.

Main Issues

3. The site is within the Green Belt and so the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
 - whether the proposal would cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of 269 and 273 Crankwood Road, with particular regard to outlook;
 - 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 it.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. The proposed development involves a two-storey extension which would wrap around the side and rear of the appeal property, which is located within a short row of houses along Crankwood Road, in an area of countryside.
5. The Framework states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 says that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate. It goes on to list a number of exceptions, which include the extension or alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the original building.
6. The Framework does not provide a definition as to what is meant by 'disproportionate additions', but Saved Policy GB1B of the Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP) provides more detailed local guidance which is relevant to this proposal. Specifically, extensions to existing dwellings in the Green Belt will only be allowed where a) they do not exceed the cubic content of the original property by more than 75%; and b) in any case, are not more than 200 cubic metres.
7. The Council has not commented on the scale of the proposed extension in relation to the requirements of Policy GB1B, but the appellant has calculated that it would result in an increase in volume of 74% compared with the original dwelling. Whilst this is just below the percentage specified in the policy, it would equate to an increase of 219 m³, so would exceed the limits set out in the policy. Furthermore, the volume calculation excludes the ground floor of the side extension which, although not fully enclosed, nonetheless contributes to the overall scale and bulk of the extension.
8. The proposed extension would add significantly to the overall mass of the appeal property, and the calculations show that the overall increase in volume would exceed the requirements set out in UDP Policy GB1Bb). As such, in terms of this purely quantitative assessment, the proposed extension would represent a disproportionate addition to the original dwelling.
9. I acknowledge that the complexities of the roof design have contributed to the volumetric increase, but form of the roof is a function of the scale and design of the proposed extension. Whilst I agree that a flat roof would not be acceptable, other options to reduce the volume of the roof may be available which would respect the character of the dwelling.
10. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The bulk of the building would be increased by additional built development, so the proposal would reduce it. However, the location of the property within a row of existing buildings means that in isolation, the loss of openness would be minimal.
11. Notwithstanding that, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It conflicts with UDP Policy GB1B and Policy CP 8 of the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 (Local Plan), which confirms that development within the Green Belt will only be allowed in accordance with national planning policy.

Character and appearance

12. The red brick houses along Crankwood Road form regularly spaced repeating patterns, with groups of four terraced houses interspersed with pairs of hipped roofed semi-detached properties. The row of houses, the majority of which appear to have been built at the same time, has retained a significant degree of architectural coherence. Very few properties have been extended to the side, leaving spaces between the buildings which allow views to the open agricultural land beyond.
13. The proposed side extension would be well set back from the front elevation, which would assist in reducing its prominence when viewed from the street. However, the continuation of the existing ridge line and incorporation of a partial hip would fail to reflect the consistent roof forms of properties along the street. Furthermore, the large expanse of roof would make the extension appear overly large and bulky at first floor level. This would be exacerbated by the retention of an unenclosed space along the side of the house, which would result in the extension appearing top heavy and awkward when viewed from the road. In addition, the two-storey extension would reduce the open gap between the appeal property and its neighbour, which is an important characteristic of the streetscene.
14. The proposed addition would appear as a large and overly prominent feature on the rear elevation of the terrace, which is otherwise free from extensions. Due to its significant scale, the proposal would erode the open aspect at the rear of the existing terrace, causing harm to the character of the area.
15. Owing to its design, bulk and massing, the side extension would fail to respect the existing regular appearance and rhythm of the properties along Crankwood Road, causing harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would conflict with Local Plan Policy CP 10 which requires development to respect and acknowledge the character of its locality and to be integrated effectively with its surroundings. There is further conflict with Framework paragraph 130 which requires that development is sympathetic to local character, and with the detailed requirements contained in the House Extensions Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2019.

Living conditions

16. The extension would wrap around the side and back of the house, filling the entire plot width, with a ground floor projection of some 3m beyond the rear elevation. This would result in a large and overly dominant expanse of brick wall along the shared boundary with adjoining property, 273 Crankwood Road (No. 273), in very close proximity to the rear windows of habitable rooms.
17. The submitted drawings show that the first floor set back would allow the '45 degree rule' to be achieved from the upstairs window at No 273, but this would not be met at ground floor level. Whilst the extent of the rear projection may be comparable to that which would fall within permitted development rights, such rights would only apply to single storey extensions. In this case, the overall scale and height of the extension, combined with the extent of the projection along the rear boundary, would result in an overbearing impact on the occupiers of No. 273, causing unacceptable harm to living conditions. There would also be some overshadowing causing loss of light to the rear windows of No. 273 during the afternoon.

18. The side and rear extension would follow the shared boundary with the adjacent property, 269 Crankwood Road (No. 269) for its full depth and height. A small amount of space between the houses would be retained within the boundary of No. 269, so the proposal would not result in an unacceptable loss of light or outlook from the rear and side windows, but nonetheless the proposed extension would result in a large expanse of built form along the shared boundary. This would appear overly dominant, particularly when viewed from the garden area, and would reduce the existing open aspect to the side of the site. Whilst the impact on No. 269 would be less than that felt by No. 273, harm to living conditions would nonetheless result.
19. I conclude that the scale and bulk of the proposed extension along the full width of the plot would result in harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of 269 and 273 Crankwood Road with particular regard to outlook. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Local Plan Policy CP 17 which requires that development does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on amenity and quality of life.

Other considerations

20. The appellant has referred to a recently constructed detached dwelling adjacent to 249 Crankwood Road. I am unable to comment on the effect of that property in relation to the openness of the Green Belt, as I do not know the particular circumstances of the case and its history. However, I have concluded that the appeal proposal would constitute inappropriate development for the reasons set out. I have also found that the scheme would be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. Any adverse effects of development elsewhere, if they exist, do not justify allowing the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

21. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development which would, by definition, cause harm to the Green Belt. It would also cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, and to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. There are no other considerations which outweigh these findings. As such, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the scheme do not exist.
22. For the reasons given, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

R. Morgan

INSPECTOR