



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 November 2021

by D Szymanski BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W1905/D/20/3265830

Oak House Farm, Newgatestreet Road, Goffs Oak, Hertfordshire EN7 5RU

- 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 and Mrs V Barclay against the decision of the Borough of Broxbourne Council.
 - The application Ref 07/20/0244/HF, dated 13 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing rear link and extension to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the Council's decision was issued the Council has adopted the Broxbourne Local Plan 2018 – 2033 (the Local Plan) which replaces the policies of the Broxbourne Local Plan Second Review (2005) referenced in the decision notice. Since the appeal was lodged the revised National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021. I have given the Council and the appellant the opportunity to comment upon the implications of these and taken the views into account in determining this appeal, which are reflected in my findings below.

Main Issues

3. 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;
 - the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the host building and the area; and,
 - if the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Inappropriate development

4. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. Policy GB1 of the Local Plan states within the Green Belt applications will be considered in line with the provisions of the Framework. Paragraph 147 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (paragraph 147).
5. The Framework identifies the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to exceptions set out. One exception listed in paragraph 149 is the extension of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The appeal site comprises a linked gable roof dwelling with most accommodation on the ground floor and two bedrooms in the roof space.
6. The proposal includes the demolition of a rear link, a new ground floor side extension and first floor side and rear extension. While the footprint of the building would proportionally change little from that integrating a previous extension, it would result in a significant increase in the size of the first floor. Based upon the plans before me this would increase the useable first floor floorspace by approximately three-fold.
7. Notwithstanding the proposed valley double gable roof design limiting the height and demolition of the rear link, the significantly increased floorspace and the increased height and new roof shape would result in significant increase in bulk, mass, and scale of the dwelling. This would be such that it would result in a disproportionate addition to the building.
8. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In this regard, it would conflict with Local Plan Policy GB1 and the Framework, insofar as they state the proposal would be inappropriate development which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Effect on openness

9. The Framework identifies the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (para 137). The appeal site building is one of a number of buildings on Oak House Farm. However, it is a separate dwelling, and this complex of buildings is relatively narrow with the appeal site building prominently sited to the front and side of this group of buildings.
10. Given the amount and position of the proposed development, particularly along its flank elevation, it would significantly increase the bulk, mass, and scale of the dwelling. This would result in a significant adverse effect upon both the visual and spatial openness of the Green Belt. The position close to the highway frontage, the relatively open side driveway and surrounds, and the height of boundary treatments, means the visual and spatial harm to openness would be particularly prominent from Newgatestreet Road. Visibility would be likely to increase from the front and side during months when deciduous trees and hedgerows are not in leaf. Conditions could not mitigate this harm.
11. The proposal, therefore, would have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt in spatial and visual terms. It would conflict with Policy GB1 of the

Local Plan and the Framework, which aim to ensure the openness of the Green Belt is preserved.

Character and appearance

12. The appeal site is located within a primarily rural area comprising some large open gaps between groups of buildings of a variety of different designs and forms, mostly set within generously landscaped plots. The group of buildings of Oak House Farm differs given the narrow deep plot accommodating a variety of buildings. Its set-back from the front of the plot, gable front and landscaping mean the appeal site is in keeping with and makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
13. Notwithstanding the increase in bulk and mass, the resulting dwelling would maintain a similar distance to respective landscaped boundaries. The roof height increase would be relatively limited, remaining below that of the dwelling immediately to its rear. Overall, it would not result in an appearance of overdevelopment of the site, and it would maintain a subservience to and satisfactory relationship with the building to its rear.
14. The existing flat roofed projections, particularly that towards the front of the flank elevation, are at odds with the character and appearance of the host dwelling and many in the street scene. This and the height and composition of features of the new flank wall means, overall, its somewhat limited features and fenestration would not be harmful. The double pitched roof is of pitch and form that would be in keeping with and sympathetic to the host building, and that to its rear which has a double gable. It would be viewed in the context of dwellings of a variety of different designs including multiple and double gables, many of which appear of a similar height to the appeal proposal. Therefore, in this context, overall, the proposals would not be incongruent to or harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the area, or street scene.
15. For the reasons set out above, I do not find the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and the area. It would not conflict with Policies DSC1 and DSC2 of the Local Plan. In combination and amongst other things these require development including extensions respect character and distinctiveness taking into account building form, typology, height, and existing patterns of development.
16. In the absence of a specific reference, I find no conflict with the guidance in the Borough-wide Supplementary Planning Guidance (2013) with particular reference to this main issue. This is because, having regard to paragraphs 5.8, 5.9 and section 6, amongst other things, the development does not result in a cramped appearance and I do not find it out of scale and appearance with the properties to which it relates.

Whether very special circumstances exist

17. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It is clear that substantial weight should be given to any identified harm to the Green Belt.
18. The appeal site comprises a three bedroom dwelling, with one bedroom on the ground floor. This proposal would significantly increase the floorspace and offer benefits to the layout and useability for family life. However, the

evidence before me does not demonstrate modest internal re-configurations could not resolve some of the useability issues. The benefits of the development attract limited weight in favour of the scheme. Not harming the character and appearance of the host building, the area, and highway safety are neutral matters attracting neutral weight.

19. However, the factors and benefits set out by the appellant would not clearly outweigh the harm identified to the Green Belt, which carries substantial weight, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with the development plan and the Framework in this regard, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

20. The proposed development would be contrary to the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework read as a whole, and there are no considerations, including the policies of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.

Dan Szymanski

INSPECTOR