



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 July 2022

by Helen Hockenhull BA (Hons) B. PI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/22/3295967

486 Ash Bank Road, Werrington, Stoke-on-Trent, ST9 0DT

- 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 Pearce against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
 - The application Ref SMD/2021/0641, dated 2 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 23 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is a rear extension with modification to roof and removal of chimneys/front porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are:
 - 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; and the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling;
 - if the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

3. The appeal property forms a detached brick-built bungalow located to the south of Ash Bank Road in Werrington. The property has an existing dormer providing accommodation in the roofspace. It has a hipped roof with a small forward projecting gable at the front of the house. The plot drops significantly from the main road to the south with open views over the surrounding countryside being achievable from the rear garden. The surrounding area is residential in character with mainly 2 storey dwellings of differing architectural style and age. The dwelling is located within the Green Belt.

Inappropriate development

4. Paragraph 149 of the Framework regards the construction of new buildings

within the Green Belt as inappropriate development. Several exceptions are highlighted. These include 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.

5. It appears to me that the Council Officers report conflates the Green Belt issues with that of design and the character and appearance of the dwelling. I have considered the matters separately in my decision.
6. The appellant has stated that the extension would result in a 33% increase in volume of the property and that this just exceeds the 30% allowed in the Borough. However, I have not been made aware of any policy guidance that the Council has produced to explain what they consider to be a disproportionate addition in the Green Belt or where the 30% threshold is referenced. However, I have been provided with the Council's Design Guidance. In light of the above I have used my own judgment on this issue.
7. The appeal scheme proposes alterations to the roof raising the height of the ridge and eaves and the provision of a half-hipped roof. It also includes a new and repositioned dormer, the removal of chimney stacks and front porch, a first-floor front extension, two storey rear extension and lower ground floor accommodation. The extension and alterations make use of the level differences to the rear of the property and incorporates the space previously occupied by a small outbuilding/storage facility. In terms of volume and footprint, on balance I consider that the proposal is not disproportionate to the existing dwelling. The scheme does not therefore constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and does not conflict with the provisions of the Framework or with Policy SS10 which seek to protect Green Belt land and exercise control over inappropriate development.
8. As I have found the proposal does not form inappropriate development in the Green Belt it is not necessary to assess its impact on openness.

Character and appearance

9. Policy DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (LP) requires all development to be well designed. LP Policies SS1 and SS10 have a similar objective seeking to ensure development is appropriate to and makes a positive contribution to the character of an area. The Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Design Principles provide further advice on the Council's design expectations. They seek to ensure that all extensions harmonise with the parent building and are subordinate to it in terms of size and massing so that the original building dominates.
10. The appeal dwelling forms a typical bungalow with a dormer in the roof. The proposed increase in eaves and ridge height and provision of a half-hipped roof would significantly alter the massing of the building giving it a bulkier appearance. The appellant has provided examples of hipped roofs in the locality. Whilst there may be dwellings with this type of roof in the wider area, in terms of the immediate vicinity, I noted on my site visit that most dwellings had a full hipped roof though I observed some with a pitched roof. These styles of roof would be more appropriate in the area. The half-hipped roof proposed would in my view be out of keeping with the character of the locality.

11. The proposed two storey front gable does not relate well to the eaves height and provides a dominant and obtrusive feature on the front elevation. The existing dormer in the roof is repositioned and enlarged and three roof lights are provided to give light to the internal staircase at first floor. The proposed dormer includes glazing to the eaves line. This accentuates its size and appears at odds with the simply designed ground floor windows.
12. Turning to the side elevations, these are significantly changed as a result of the rear extension proposed. However, the eastern elevation would be screened by the garage of the neighbouring property. The western side extension would be more visible but screened to a degree, as the property is set lower than the road and there is boundary vegetation.
13. At the rear, the resultant dwelling would have the appearance of a three-storey house. The existing character of the host property would be completely lost. It is understandable that the appellant wishes to make the most of the countryside views to the rear of the property, however the two storey extensions and extent of glazing results in a modern looking elevation would be at odds with the simple character of the mid twentieth century bungalow. The proposal, due to its scale and massing, cannot be described as subservient to the existing property.
14. I recognise that residential properties close to the appeal site on Ash Bank Road are two storey and that the appeal scheme would not in principle be out of character with these properties. However, the proposal is not for a replacement dwelling, rather it is for an extension to an existing bungalow. Any alterations should be in keeping with the character of the host dwelling as advised in the Council's design guidance.
15. I have taken account of the photographs of other dwellings in the Werrington area provided by the appellant. I accept that there are properties with a half hip roof and with a two-storey front gable. However, it appears to me that most of these elements were part of the original design and reflected the character of the respective dwellings. In any event I have considered the appeal scheme on its merits having regard to its immediate context.
16. Given the above I conclude that the appeal scheme is contrary to Policies SS1, SS10 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan which seek to promote local distinctiveness and high-quality design maintaining locally distinctive character and to the Council's Design SPD and SPG. It would also fail to be compliant with section 12 of the Framework which also aims to achieve a similar objective. Paragraph 134 of the Framework states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government design guidance taking into account local design guidance and supplementary planning documents. This unfortunately is the case here.

Other Matters

17. The appellant has brought my attention to the length of time that the original planning application took and the delays in communication from Council Officers. I have not been advised whether the Covid pandemic and associated restrictions had an impact on the level of service the Council could provide. In any event this is not a matter for me to comment further.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I dismiss this appeal.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR