



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 October 2022

by C Megginson BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E2734/W/22/3301082

Barnfield, Farrar Wood To Plompton Park, Plompton HG5 8NA

- 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 & Mrs Houseman against the decision of Harrogate Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01604/FUL, dated 12 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as the conversion of existing building to single dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the barn and the area; and
 - Whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. Paragraph 150 of the Framework sets out the categories of development which may be regarded as *'not inappropriate in the Green Belt, provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it'* including amongst other things, 150d) *'the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.'*
4. The building has brick and render walls and an asbestos roof. Whilst the structural inspection report is brief, it outlines that the building is in reasonable structural condition and with the existing fabric and framing (steelwork), it would be feasible to carry out a satisfactory residential conversion. I have no reason to dispute the conclusions of the appellants structural survey in respect of the permanence or substance of the existing building.

5. The roof covering has failed in areas and timber rot has developed, however, the appellant states that whilst some of the existing timber roof purlins will need to be replaced, the remainder and majority of the roof structure will be retained as part of the proposal. Timber and zinc cladding will be added to the existing walls of the barn. Whilst a new roof covering will be installed and glazing inserted into all elevations, this would not be unusual as part of a residential conversion. Similarly, internal works such as insulation and damp proofing would be reasonable as part of any building conversion.
6. From my site visit and the evidence before me, I consider that the structure is of permanent and substantial construction and that enough of the existing building would be retained to constitute a conversion and not a replacement dwelling. My attention has been drawn to an appeal decision by the Council. I am not aware of the information that was before the inspector and do not have the drawings or structural survey. I therefore do not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate how the cases are directly comparable.
7. The appeal proposal would include the removal of a lean-to extension on the rear elevation and an adjoining outbuilding and the erection of a double garage and linked passageway between the garage and the barn. The garage and link would be small compared to the retained building so wouldn't be seen as disproportionate extensions.

Openness

8. Under paragraph 150 of the Framework, the re-use of the building is only not inappropriate if it preserves openness. I acknowledge that public views to the rear of the building are limited, however, the openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect which means that 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. In addition, the effect on openness might not be confined solely to permanent physical works.
9. The proposals include residential curtilage to the rear of the building where there is an existing open field. I appreciate that the proposed rear curtilage forms only part of the much wider existing curtilage of the barn and that it adjoins the existing garden area of Barnfield. Nevertheless, the proposed residential curtilage to the rear would be a large area and would be likely to facilitate the introduction of domestic paraphernalia that could not reasonably be controlled by planning condition or by restricting permitted development rights. The openness of the Green Belt is clearly evident to the rear of the barn. By virtue of its location, any domestic paraphernalia associated with the residential curtilage would result in a small but harmful reduction to the openness of the Green Belt.
10. For the above reasons, the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is, by definition, harmful. It would fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and therefore would conflict with Paragraph 150 of the Framework.

Character and appearance

11. The proposals would change the appearance of the building, which is essentially a simple, rendered building with a pitched roof. In contrast, the addition of large areas of glazing, cladding of the walls in timber and zinc and

metal profile sheeting on the roof, would result in a dwelling that would appear contemporary in appearance. However, the resultant dwelling would not be conspicuous within the landscape setting, given its position directly adjacent to the neighbouring large modern dwelling house which includes a significant amount of glazing and illumination. Furthermore, whilst the existing building has an agricultural appearance its frontage has a residential feel, including the existing access gates and gravel driveway.

12. Consequently, whilst the proposal would change the appearance of the existing building, I do not consider that this would cause harm to the character and appearance of the barn or the area, particularly when viewed from public areas and in the context of the existing adjacent modern residential buildings. For the above reasons, I do not find conflict with the character or design requirements of the Harrogate Landscape Character Assessment, Residential Design Guide or Re-use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings Guidance, Policies HS6, HP3 and NE4 of the Harrogate District Local Plan (2020) (LP) and the Framework, which, in summary, seek to protect and enhance local character and distinctiveness.

Other considerations

13. My attention has been drawn to other developments within the Green Belt including East Moor House Farm. I have limited evidence in relation to this case, however, from the drawings provided it appears to retain the form of the existing farmstead and does not encroach into the wider countryside. The circumstances in each proposal are likely to be different and it has not been sufficiently demonstrated how this site is directly comparable to the appeal proposal or that it leads me to consider the development to be acceptable. In any event, I have considered this appeal on its own merits which is a fundamental principle that underpins the planning system. It is clear that the appellant has invested in the site and the wider area in terms of works to improve biodiversity. Whilst this is commendable, such actions are independent of the appeal scheme and do not weigh in its favour.

The Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

14. The Framework requires that any harm by reason of inappropriateness be given substantial weight and that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Whilst the proposed development would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, it would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The very special circumstances put forward, including improvements to biodiversity, do not represent the very special circumstances required to clearly outweigh the harm to the green belt.
15. I have considered all other matters raised, but none outweigh the conclusions I have reached. Whilst the proposal would not conflict with Policy GS1, which seeks to provide new homes or Policies HS6, HP3 and NE4 as outlined above, it would conflict with Policies GS2, GS3, GS4 and the Framework which seek to protect the Green Belt. As such, considering the development plan as a whole, I therefore dismiss the appeal.

C Megginson

INSPECTOR