



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 January 2022

by S Brook BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/22/3306168

Lower Overton Farm, Overton Road, Congleton CW12 3QW

- 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 M. & S. Hill & Hodge against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
 - The application Ref SMD/2021/0726, dated 8 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of single storey side extension and replacement porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A set of revised plans were provided to and considered by the Council during the course of the application, which included an amended design of the extensions. I have determined the appeal based on these revised plans as I am satisfied that my doing so would not prejudice any parties.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - i. Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to any relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
 - ii. The effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the building and the area.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. Policy SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Adopted September 2020 (LP) seeks to maintain the Green Belt and sets out that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy. The NPPF identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to state that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The NPPF further establishes that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a

number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 149. One such exception is 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. 'Original building' is defined as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally. Neither LP Policy SS10, nor the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide Adopted 21 February 2018 (SPD) provides further context to what may or may not be considered proportionate.

5. The appeal scheme relates to a detached, two-storey dwelling which includes a two-storey rear projection, formerly a barn, which was converted to provide further residential accommodation to the host dwelling in the 1970's. There are a number of smaller, single storey rear projections also, along with a porch to the southeast elevation. The proposal would provide a replacement porch of increased footprint and a single storey extension to the northwest elevation.
6. The provisions of NPPF paragraph 149 (c) apply to all buildings, not just dwellings. I have been provided with evidence to demonstrate that both the dwelling and the former barn existed pre-1948. As such, it seems reasonable to find that both the dwelling and barn fall within the definition of an 'original building'. There is disagreement between the parties as to whether these buildings were originally attached or not, and whether they formed one building or two separate buildings. The Ordnance Survey maps provided suggest some form of attachment, nevertheless, as either one building or two closely related buildings, both the dwelling and barn formed an established part of the area pre-1948. The re-use of the barn for residential accommodation has benefitted from planning permission and current national policy continues to support re-use of existing buildings in the Green Belt.
7. The Council has taken the original dwelling to constitute the original building, with the converted barn assessed as an extension, on the basis that this occurred post 1948. In combination with the proposal, the Council suggests that the resulting building would be 94% larger than the original. The appellant considers that the original dwelling and the original barn were physically attached and formed one building pre-1948, and so the converted barn should not be considered as an extension. On this basis, the appellant considers that the proposal, along with previous additions, would amount to a 25.5% increase over the original building.
8. NPPF paragraph 149 is concerned with the construction of new buildings, and the necessary assessment is whether extensions and alterations are disproportionate *additions* over the size of the original building (emphasis added). Albeit now converted to form part of the dwelling, the barn would have been an original building, or part of one. There is no evidence to suggest its conversion required any additions or new build elements over and above what would have comprised the original barn. Therefore, whilst its conversion has provided further residential accommodation, it has not formed a new build addition to the size of an original building. As such, for the purposes of assessing the appeal scheme, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that the barn should form part of the calculation of the original building, rather than an addition to it, as indicated by the appellant.
9. In the context of the predominantly two storey elements which pre-date 1948, the proposed single storey extension and the enlarged porch, along with the existing single storey rear extension, would sit comfortably, without appearing

disproportionate in size. As such, the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having had regard to relevant development plan policies and the NPPF.

Character and appearance

10. This cluster of former farm buildings are mostly traditional in character and appearance, constructed of stone, render and slate materials. Due to its design, forward position and higher ridge, the original part of the dwelling retains its status as the principal building, whilst rear projections sit subordinately in height and scale. The dwelling and barn retain a relatively simple form, albeit the existing single storey projections add variation. The dwelling frontage retains traditional fenestration and detailing, whilst that of the converted barn and outbuildings show modern interventions and styling, albeit whilst attempting to retain the character of the original building.
11. The replacement porch would not be significantly larger than the existing, and would be of similar size and shape, sitting subordinately in relation to the converted barn. The most notable changes would be to the fenestration. The existing porch includes large windows and double doors that are clearly of a more modern style. However, the proportions resulting from the glazing bars assist in breaking up these larger openings and their spacing is similar to those of windows within the barn, providing a degree of integration.
12. The proposed porch would introduce double doors and a large, triple pane window, extending full height, with a roof light above of similar width. The proportions of this glazing, due to the increased width of glazing bars, would contrast with existing windows, and so would not assimilate as successfully as the existing porch, to the detriment of the appearance of the building. This southeast elevation is largely contained though, and so there would be no harm to the wider area.
13. The proposed extension to the northwest elevation would be single storey only, and would sit well below the ridgeline of the converted barn. Its roof slope would reflect that of the barn and its footprint would be set in from the side elevation of the main house. Its scale would be subordinate to the existing building and even in combination with the existing rear projections, the prominence of the original dwelling would be retained in this group. Given its subordinate size, the extension would be read as an addition to the barn, whilst the simple form of the original barn would remain legible.
14. However, for the same reasons relating to the proposed porch, the size and proportions of the glazing to the northwest elevation of the proposed extension would not integrate with existing fenestration. I appreciate that the openings of the barn have changed as a result of the conversion, with a more modern emphasis. Nevertheless, the introduction of further, larger glazing that would be at odds with this existing fenestration would further undermine the traditional character and appearance of the building. Given the elevated position of the dwelling and its relationship to the road, this harm would be visible in public views along the highway. Existing trees would provide partial but not full screening.
15. To conclude on this second main issue, the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling itself and the area. This would not comply with LP Policies SS10 and DC1, which collectively, and amongst

other matters, seek to ensure that new development is designed to respect the site and its surroundings, promoting a positive sense of place through character and appearance. It would not respond appropriately to the SPD, which states that design should work with a buildings character and harmonise with the parent building. Furthermore, the requirements of the NPPF are not met in terms of achieving high quality buildings that are sympathetic to local character.

16. It has been suggested that similar fenestration changes could be made to the existing barn as permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Order) 2015 (as amended). However, no further information has been provided in this respect, and as the appeal scheme would enlarge the dwelling and bring it closer to the road, the impacts could differ. I must determine this appeal based on the plans before me.

Other Matters

17. The proposal would not result in any harm to the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties. This is a neutral matter that does not alter my earlier findings.

Conclusion

18. Whilst I have found that the proposal would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, this is a neutral matter, which does not outweigh the unacceptable harm the proposed development would have on the character and appearance of the building itself and the area. For these reasons, the appeal scheme would conflict with the development plan as a whole, and there are no other material considerations worthy of sufficient weight that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Brook

INSPECTOR