



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 January 2023

by K Williams MTCP (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J4525/D/22/3310751

Daintree House, 3 Over the Hill Farm Steadings, Houghton Le Spring, Sunderland DH4 4NY

- 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 Peter O'Kane against the decision of Sunderland City Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01620/FUL, dated 19 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 7 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is a single storey garden room extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. Therefore, the main issues 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 upon the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a former agricultural building, which has been converted to numerous residential properties in 2010. The complex, called 'Over the Hill Steadings,' is situated to the northwest of the A690 between Sunderland and Houghton le Spring. The site forms part of a wider area of open countryside which is included in the Tyne and Wear Green Belt.

Whether inappropriate development

4. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt is inappropriate development but lists certain forms of development which are exceptions. This includes 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 (paragraph 149c).
5. The Council considers that the proposal would represent a cumulative increase of around 15% of the existing footprint and that this does not amount to disproportionate additions. I concur that the proposed single storey extension

would not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. I therefore consider the proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

6. The Council, having also reached the view that the proposal was not inappropriate development, then went on to consider the effect on the openness of the Green Belt. However, this is already taken into account in the exceptions in the Framework.
7. Therefore, for those exceptions where the effect of the development on openness is not expressly stated as a determinative factor in evaluating inappropriateness, there is no requirement to assess the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt in this appeal. The proposal therefore does not conflict with paragraph 145 of the Framework.

Character and appearance

8. The Council advises that the appeal site comprises a non-designated heritage asset registered on the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record. The Framework advises that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm, or loss. The significance of the non-designated heritage asset lies in its historic interest and rural architectural quality and as part of a former rural farmstead.
9. The building is of traditional construction and appearance with stone walls, timber doors and windows within stone surrounds. Of note is a large glazed arched window in the northern end of the wing of the appeal property. Whilst at distance this appears as a whole entity, the upper arched section serves a first floor.
10. The northern elevation of the entire complex is not symmetrical, but the opposing end property at No.1 'Over the Hill Steadings' reflects the appearance of the appeal building with a similar arched window which is set in a shorter and lower wing. The intervening properties also contain smaller arched window openings. As such this large arched window on the appeal property is a uniting feature which contributes to the character of the host building and complex.
11. The extension, to create a glazed garden room, would be of single storey form but would extend across the width of arched window. The existing opening at ground floor would be lost or obscured. Although this would leave the remaining first floor arch, nonetheless it would result in this prominent elevation of the building losing an attractive and characteristic feature, which would harmfully alter the character of the host building and wider complex.
12. The extent of proposed glazing, aluminium frames would also mark this out as a modern domestic extension to a traditional former rural building. The extension with the flat roof is contemporary and domestic in its appearance, rather than reflective of the original form, character and materials of the host building and those used within the wider complex. The extension would appear as an incongruous addition compared to the traditional character of the building.

13. The extension would be subservient to the barn in terms of its height and scale. However, as the appeal property wing is the most prominent and longer element on this elevation, the proposal would harmfully elongate its appearance. Although there is a stepped appearance, there is an element of symmetry and consistent character, which would be eroded by the proposed development and thus be detrimental to the character of the building.
14. The extension would be visible on the approach to the complex along the access lane and the wider complex is highly visible within the open landscape. Although from longer distance views the extension would unlikely be overly perceptible, nonetheless it would be visible to the occupiers of the adjoining properties.
15. I acknowledge that the barn has been in residential use for some time, but the effects identified above would harm the traditional rural character and appearance of the host building and the area. For the same reasons, the proposal would harm the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
16. Consequently, the proposal would not accord with Policies BH1 and BH8 of the Sunderland City Council Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015 – 2033 (Jan 2020). Combined and insofar as they are relevant to the appeal these policies seek to achieve high quality design which reflects local distinctiveness including the setting of non-designated heritage assets. In this regard the proposal would conflict with the aims of chapter 16 of the Framework, which relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Other Matters

17. I am not aware of the full circumstances relating to examples of other extensions, which I observed at my site visit. Whilst the nearby extension is also undoubtedly a more modern and domestic addition, I do not find the circumstances to be the same. To my mind, the appearance and materials are more characteristic of traditional additions to a rural building than the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above and having regard to all matters raised, I find that the proposed development conflicts with the development plan as a whole. I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Williams

INSPECTOR