



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 September 2023

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U2370/D/23/3318869

Aloha, Skippool Road, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 5LD

- 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 Steve Welsh against the decision of Wyre Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00589/FUL, dated 8 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 10 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is roof lift and two storey front, side and rear extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Welsh against Wyre Borough Council. That application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matter

3. The Extending Your Home Supplementary Planning Document 2007 (SPD) provides guidance on proposals for house extensions within the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Borough Council areas. To assist users of the SPD, relevant development plan policies from the three Council areas are reproduced in Appendix 1 of the document. The appellant has referred to Policy NE3, which is listed in the SPD. However, Policy NE3 comes from the Blackpool Local Plan 2006, and does not apply to proposals for development in the Wyre area. I have therefore given no weight to Policy NE3 in this appeal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, including the effect on openness,
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area,
 - whether adequate information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposal would meet development plan policy requirements in relation to flood risk and climate change, and
 - if the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

5. The appeal site is located outside of the settlement of Thornton-Cleveleys, in a rural location within the Green Belt.
6. The Framework states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to say that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt, and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Framework paragraph 149 advises that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless the development would fall within one of the exceptions listed.
7. In this case, the Council asserts that the proposed roof lift and extensions would involve such extensive building works that the development should be treated as a replacement dwelling. I agree that the proposed development, which would turn a modest two storey dormer bungalow into a substantial five bedroomed house, would be substantial, and would change the appearance of the dwelling significantly. That said, other than at the rear of the house, the existing footprint would be largely the same. The rear wall would be removed as part of the proposed extension, but from the information provided, it appears that the front and side walls would remain. There would be some internal remodelling, but the drawings show that the basic form and layout of the original house would remain.
8. Whilst the proposal would involve significant alterations, I am not persuaded that it would be tantamount to a replacement dwelling, so the exception set out in Framework paragraph 149d) does not apply. Rather, I have treated the proposal as a domestic extension, and assessed the scheme in terms of Framework paragraph 149c). This exception allows for 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.
9. The Framework defines 'original building' as the building as it existed on 1 July 1948, or if it was constructed after that date, as it was built originally. No information has been provided about previous additions to the appeal property, and there are no obvious signs that the building has been extended. For the purposes of this appeal, I have therefore assumed that the existing dormer bungalow and attached garage constitute the original building.
10. No further explanation as to what constitutes a 'disproportionate addition' is provided in the Framework, but it is clear from paragraph 149c) that any assessment must take account the size of the proposed extension, compared with that of the original building. In this case, the proposed increase in footprint would not be excessive, but there would be major alterations at first floor level, as a result of which the overall scale of the building would increase markedly.
11. Using the figures on the submitted floor plans, the development would result in an increase in floorspace of around 90%, a considerable proportion of which would be at on the upper floor. To provide this additional living space, the main roof would be raised by some 1.3m. In addition, a new first floor element would be constructed over the existing flat roofed garage, with twin two-storey

gabled elements added, which would project beyond the existing kitchen at the rear.

12. As well as changing the appearance of the dwelling quite radically, the result would be a significant increase in both the scale and volume of the building. When compared with the original modest sized building, the extent of the proposed additions would be disproportionate.
13. The appellant has provided a set of revised drawings as part of the appeal submission. In this version of the scheme, the proposed kitchen extension would be omitted, with a commensurate reduction in the size of the proposed bedroom above. Compared with the refused scheme, the footprint and floorspace would be somewhat smaller, but the overall height of the building would remain the same. The scale of the proposed increase would still be significant in relation to the existing building. The changes shown on the revised plans would not be sufficient to overcome my findings on this matter.
14. The proposed roof lift and extensions would be disproportionate additions over and above the original building, so would not meet the exception contained in Framework paragraph 149c). The scheme would therefore constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There would be conflict with Policy SP3 of the Wyre Local Plan 2019, which states that proposals for development within the Green Belt will be determined in accordance with national planning policy.

Openness

15. Openness is an essential characteristic of Green Belts, which has spatial and visual components. The proposed development would increase the overall footprint of the building, but not by a large amount, so in spatial terms, the loss of openness would be small.
16. The existing dormer bungalow is set back from Skippool Road behind a paved front garden area with shrubs and trees along the boundary. The existing modest sized dwelling is clearly visible from the road, but does not form a particularly obvious or noticeable feature in the streetscene.
17. The proposed roof lift and extensions would increase the scale and bulk of the building. Despite the presence of the existing boundary trees and vegetation, the proposed increase in built form would be readily apparent from the public domain. Compared with the existing situation, the dwelling would appear larger and more prominent when viewed from Skippool Road, both from directly in front and from the side, where it can be seen across the adjacent field.
18. The scale of the proposal alterations would result in a loss of visual openness. That said, the development would affect a building which is already there, and the effect would be modest in extent.

Character and appearance

19. The extensive highway works at the junction of Amounderness Way and Skippool Road are having a significant impact on the character of the area. However, when I visited, the works did not extend far along Skippool Road, ending just before the appeal site. Beyond the roadworks, Skippool Road has retained its rural character as a rural road, passing through open agricultural land, with sporadic buildings interspersed with mature trees and vegetation.

20. Built form along this section of Skippool Road is generally simple in form and style, and the nearby houses are unobtrusive in the street scene. The dormer bungalow opposite is of a similar, modest design to the appeal property. Nearby Thornton Lodge has clearly been altered over the years but retains the appearance of a traditional rural pub, with a simple design and fenestration.
21. I acknowledge that buildings in the wider area vary considerably in style and design, with examples of contemporary buildings nearby. However, the recently built, twin-gabled houses on The Illawalla are set back, and not readily visible from, Skippool Road. Properties on Breck Road are separated from the appeal site by the major road intersection with Amounderness Way. The appeal property is not seen alongside these buildings, rather it is viewed in the context of immediately surrounding farmland and the few nearby properties, which differ in appearance but are of a traditional, simple rural style.
22. The proposed rear elevation of the appeal property would have the appearance of a substantial suburban dwelling, but it would not be readily visible from public vantage points. However, the front and side elevations of the existing building can be seen from the road, and by increasing its scale and mass as proposed, the dwelling would become much more prominent in the streetscene. I acknowledge that a degree of screening would be provided by the existing vegetation around the boundary of the property, but this would only be partial, and in any case, there is no guarantee that the trees and shrubs would be retained.
23. The proposed addition of a two-storey central gable feature on the front elevation would give a contemporary appearance to the building, but would be out of character with the traditional, simple style of the surrounding properties. The overly tall dormer above the garage would also appear out of place here, and would fail to comply with guidance on dormers contained in the Extending your Home SPD.
24. I conclude that, owing to its scale and design, the proposal would appear overly prominent and out of place in this rural area. As it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, the scheme would conflict with Local Plan Policy CMP3, which requires all development to be designed to respect or enhance the character of the area. For similar reasons, there would be conflict with Framework paragraph 130c).

Flood risk and climate change

25. Part of the appeal site is within Flood Zone 3, and whilst the house itself is outside of the area of greatest risk, the wider site has a high probability of flooding. As required by Framework paragraph 167 and footnote 55, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) were submitted as part of the proposals. Following a request from the Council's Engineers, a Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan were also provided.
26. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that an FRA needs to be appropriate to the scale, nature and location of the development. In this case, the proposal is to extend an existing property. Although the property would be substantially larger, it would remain as a single dwelling, so the number of people living here who might be at risk of flooding is unlikely to change significantly.

27. The submitted FRA is brief, but includes information on flood resilience measures, which appear sensible in the context of the proposed development. The Council's Engineer found both the flood risk and emergency plan assessments to be acceptable. Given the nature of the proposal, I have no reason to find otherwise. I am satisfied that sufficient information has been provided to meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy CDMP2, which requires that proposals demonstrate they will not be at an unacceptable risk of flooding, and would not lead to an increased risk of flooding elsewhere.
28. Local Plan Policy SP2 requires that development proposals demonstrate how they respond to the challenge of climate change through appropriate design and making the best use of resources and assets. Other than the flood resilience measures, little information has been provided in this regard. However, the Council has not explained what further details would be expected for a domestic extension such as this. Whilst limited in scope, I consider that the submission has adequately addressed the measures to promote sustainable development required by Policy SP2.

Other considerations

29. The appellant has referred to proposals for replacement dwellings which have been granted planning permission locally, at Throstles Nest and Primrose Hill, both on Skippool Road. Reference has also been made to the Council's approval of a development of four dwellings to the rear of Aloha. However, I have not been provided with any further details of any these schemes, or the Council's reasons for making the decisions it did. I am therefore unable to comment on any implications that these decisions may, or may not, have for the appeal scheme. I have assessed the scheme on its own merits, having regard to relevant national and local planning policy, and have found it unacceptable for the reasons set out. The examples cited do not alter this conclusion.

Green Belt balance and conclusion

30. I have found that the proposed development would be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, so would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposed roof lift and extension would also reduce visual openness, albeit by a modest amount.
31. Framework paragraph 148 establishes that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. I have identified no other considerations which clearly outweigh this harm, and the harm to the character and appearance of the area. The very special circumstances necessary to justify the scheme do not exist.
32. Sufficient information has been provided in relation to flood risk and climate change, but this lack of harm does not overcome the above deficiencies.
33. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the Framework. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR