



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 October 2023

by H Miles BA(hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/D/22/3313938

Barnfold Cottage Saints Hill, Penshurst, Kent TN11 8EN

- 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 Mark and Caroline Pickford against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
- The application Ref 22/02133/HOUSE, dated 23 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 12 October 2022.
- The development proposed is single storey extension to side.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. 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.
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
 - 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 required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The Framework sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; and the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The Framework goes on to state that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt. The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, and thus should be approved only if very special circumstances exist, unless they come within one of the categories in the closed list of exceptions in paragraphs 149 and 150 of the Framework.
4. Of relevance to this appeal is that '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, is listed as an exception at paragraph 149 c). Policy GB1 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan

(ADMP), sets criteria for limited extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt. These include that the volume of the extension, taking into account any previous extensions, should be proportional and subservient to the original dwelling. As well as that the total floorspace would not result in an increase of more than 50% of the original dwelling. This is supported by the advice in the Development in the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

5. The evidence from the Council is that Barnfold Cottage was originally on a smaller rectangular footprint with around 97sqm of floorspace. Subsequently, there have been five extensions added to the property, which increased the floorspace by approximately 82sqm. These figures are not disputed by the appellant.
6. The proposed extension would add a further 25sqm of floorspace. This would result in around a 110% increase in floorspace from the original building. Furthermore, together the additions would result in a property with a significantly larger footprint and bulk compared to the original cottage.
7. Therefore, the extension would result in a considerable increase to the size of the original building with a marked enlargement to the floor area, massing and footprint. Additionally, the proposed percentage increase in floor area would appreciably exceed the 50% increase set out in Policy GB1 of the ADMP. As such the development would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building.
8. Consequently, for the reasons described above, the appeal scheme is inappropriate development in the Green Belt both in the terms of the Framework and Policy GB1 of the ADMP as well as the advice in the SPD.

Openness

9. Openness has both spatial and visual aspects. Visually, the extension would be screened by the existing building and the boundary treatment and would not be highly visible in public views. However, the proposed extension would introduce a large and permanent single storey addition to a part of the site which is currently a terrace area free from buildings. Therefore, there would be harm to spatial openness. Taking both of these aspects into account the degree of harm to openness would be modest.
10. Nevertheless, for the reasons above, the proposed development would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, it would be contrary to the Framework in this regard.

Character and Appearance

11. Barnfold Cottage is one of a handful of houses located along Saints Hill. Properties are spacious and set apart from one another and surrounded by rural open fields. Consequently, the appeal site appears as part of a small cluster of houses within the wider countryside. The appearance of the property, and those nearby, are traditional and the materials at Barnfold Cottage include render, tile hanging, a tiled roof and domestic fenestration. Consequently, the host property appears as a clearly residential building within the wider rural area.
12. The proposed extension would have large areas of glazing, with some brickwork and an area of cladding which the appellant states would be tile

cladding. The single storey roof would be low pitched. Although the proposed extension would not be identical to the more traditional appearance of Barnfold Cottage, nevertheless, it would reflect the materials used on the existing dwelling. There would also be a clearly domestic character to the modest extension. As such it would be appropriate to the residential appearance of the house.

13. Consequently, it would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. As such, in this regard, it would be in accordance with policies SP1 and LO8 of the CS and EN1 of the ADMP. Together these seek high quality design, including with regard to the distinctive features of the countryside and local character.

Other Considerations

14. The proposed development would create additional living accommodation for the existing occupiers. However, I am not persuaded that this is anything other than a private benefit and as such I afford this limited weight. The Council have not identified harm to the streetscene, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or residential amenity and I find no reason to disagree with these conclusions. Nor was there any objection from Penshurst Parish Council. However, the lack of harm in these regards is a neutral factor that does not weigh in favour of the appeal scheme.
15. My attention is drawn to an extension permitted at Polbream, Saints Hill. I note that this was not considered to be a disproportionate addition, and it did not increase the floor area of the property by more than 50% compared to the original building. As such it would not have been inappropriate development in the Green Belt and consequently these considerations are notably different to those before me now.

Green Belt Balance

16. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. Paragraph 148 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. I have found harm to the Green Belt by reason of the proposed development's inappropriateness. There would also be harm to the Green Belt due to the proposed development's modest effect on openness. The considerations advanced by the appellant, even when considered together, do not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm.
17. The very special circumstances necessary to justify the development therefore do not exist. Consequently, the proposed development would conflict with Paragraph 148 of the Framework and Policy GB1 of the ADMP, the aims of which are set out above.

Conclusion

18. The proposal would not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR