



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 August 2024

by E Worley BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W3710/D/24/3337035

The Grove, School Lane, Exhall, Coventry, Warwickshire CV7 9GF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mohan Sungha against the decision of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 039940.
 - The development proposed is described as 'New outbuilding proposed to match existing'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the development in the banner heading above is taken from the planning application form. I have removed the superfluous words that are not acts of development.
3. The development is described on the planning application form as a new outbuilding; however, it is clearly shown on the submitted plans to project from the flank elevation of the existing outbuilding and would appear to be physically attached to it. As such, it would therefore constitute an extension to the existing outbuilding. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the development 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 on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - whether the 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

5. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The Framework 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 Framework further establishes that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to the exceptions set out in paragraph 154. One such exception being 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.
6. Policy DS7 of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Plan adopted 2019 (BP) sets out that the Green Belt in the borough will be protected by restricting development to only that which is considered by national planning policy as not inappropriate Green Belt development, except where very special circumstances can be demonstrated.
7. The proposed development comprises an extension to the existing detached outbuilding, to be used for additional storage space. The extension, which would be at a lower ground level, would not exceed the height of the existing outbuilding. However, it would be considerably greater in length, footprint, and overall scale and volume. Consequently, it would represent a substantial enlargement when compared to the existing outbuilding and would significantly increase its overall size.
8. For these reasons the proposal would constitute a disproportionate addition to the original building. As such it would not fall within the exceptions listed at para 154 of the Framework and would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful. In that regard the proposal would fail to accord with Policy DS7 of the BP.

Effect on openness

9. The Framework outlines that one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness. Openness has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect. The proposal would substantially increase the built form of the existing outbuilding and extend beyond the existing envelope into an area currently free from built development. The open nature of this part of the site would therefore be reduced by the bulk of the extension.
10. With regards to the visual impact to openness, due to the extent of mature landscaping within the vicinity of the site, the proposed development would not be visually prominent within the wider landscape, nor would it be easily seen from School Lane. In addition, given the siting of the development, which would be seen within the context of the existing dwelling and outbuilding, it would have a limited effect on the openness of the Green Belt in visual terms.
11. In light of the above considerations, I find that the proposal would result in limited harm to the openness of the Green Belt. In accordance with paragraph 153 of the Framework, substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

12. The appeal property is a substantial detached dwelling in a generous plot. It lies at the end of a short row of residential properties and is set back from the road behind a large front garden, which contributes positively to the spacious and open character of the area.
13. The single storey nature of the proposed extension, simple form and pitched roof design would allow it to integrate well with the existing outbuilding. Despite the increase in size, the resulting outbuilding would remain subservient in scale to the main dwelling and would therefore not appear overly dominant or at odds with its host dwelling. Moreover, the proposed extension, which would extend the outbuilding along the side boundary of the plot, would not appear to be unduly large or incongruous given the overall size of the site. In light of these considerations, it would not significantly diminish the overall open character of the site or sense of spaciousness.
14. Furthermore, notwithstanding the position of the extension close to the front of the plot, by virtue of the intervening landscaping between it and School Lane, which comprises a dense, tall belt of shrubs and mature trees, the proposed extension would not be a visually intrusive feature in views along School Lane towards the site, even in the winter months. While I acknowledge the Council's concern regarding the longevity of the existing hedgerow, given the area is characterised by established roadside landscaping, in my view such features are highly likely to remain in a similar form, consistent with local character.
15. For the foregoing reasons I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area. In that regard it would not conflict with Policy BE3 of the BP which requires proposals to be of a high standard of design and contribute to local distinctiveness and character or the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document 2020, in so far as it sets out that extensions and alterations should be in harmony with the design, character and layout of the property and surrounding area, and should not dominate the existing house or appear intrusive, prominent or incongruous in the street scene or from public areas.

Other considerations

16. The proposal would be a sympathetic addition to the existing outbuilding in design terms, however this is a normal requirement of new development. Therefore, although the proposal would satisfy the Council's design requirements this would only weigh moderately in favour of the scheme.
17. My attention is drawn to other examples of development which has taken place within the Green Belt, including residential development nearby and commercial units on Coventry Road. However, I do not have full details in respect of such works so I cannot be sure of the circumstances of these cases, and as such I attribute these very limited weight.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

18. The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. By definition, this would be harmful to the Green Belt and 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 are clearly outweighed

by other considerations. The proposal would also result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

19. Overall, the matters weighing in favour of the appeal proposal, do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that I have found. The substantial weight to be given to Green Belt harm is therefore not clearly outweighed by the other considerations sufficient to demonstrate very special circumstances.
20. For the reasons given, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

E Worley

INSPECTOR