



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 8 January 2025

by **C Butcher BSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 February 2025

Ref: APP/D1265/W/24/3343698

Coventry Arms, Mill Street, Corfe Mullen, Dorset, BH21 3RH

- 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 James Mills against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/FUL/2023/03504.
 - The development proposed is described as a rear single-storey extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a rear single-storey extension at Coventry Arms, Mill Street, Corfe Mullen BH21 3RH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P/FUL/2023/03504, subject to the following condition:
 - The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawings 23 - T5833/009 D; 008B; 007B; 006B; 005B & 010A.

Preliminary Matters

2. I observed on my site visit that the development has been completed in accordance with the approved plans. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis that retrospective permission is sought for the development which has already been implemented.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are: (i) whether the development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies, including the effect upon the openness of the Green Belt; and (ii) would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Inappropriate Development and Openness

4. Policy KS3 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan, Part 1 Core Strategy April 2014 (the CS) sets out the approach to development in the Green Belt. I am satisfied that this policy is in broad conformity with the Framework. The Framework establishes that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions.

5. In particular, paragraph 154(c) states that the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate as long as it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. In this instance, the development has involved the construction of a single storey extension to the rear of the building.
6. The evidence before me establishes that the public house has been extended over time, and that these extensions have provided a significant increase in floorspace. Therefore, the rear extension must be considered to result in a disproportionate addition. As such, the development does not meet the requirements of paragraph 154(c) of the Framework and therefore represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
7. In terms of openness, the extension is of a fairly modest size, and its single storey nature, in combination with its location to the rear of the public house, means that its impact on visual and spatial openness is very limited.

Other Considerations

8. I have not been provided with any substantive evidence that would suggest that the business would become unviable if this appeal were to fail. However, it is a fact that the public house industry has struggled financially over a long period of time and that many are permanently closed each year due to these challenges. As such, any proposals that come forward that would support the commercial function of a public house should be supported in principle, subject to any other considerations. Furthermore, it seems to me that the work that has been carried out has provided a pleasant space for customers to drink and dine and so this public benefit is also a material consideration. Overall, I am of the view that these benefits should be afforded very significant weight as part of my decision.
9. The Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Substantial weight should be given to the harm to the Green Belt, and very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
10. When considered in combination, the weight that I have afforded to the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the substantial weight that I must apply to the identified harm to Green Belt. As such, very special circumstances exist, and for this reason, the proposal conforms with CS Policy KS3 and the relevant paragraphs of the Framework.

Other Matters

11. The appeal site is located within close proximity to Mill Cottage, a Grade II listed building. In this instance, the Council is satisfied that the development preserves the setting of the listed building. Given the relatively minor nature of the development, and its pleasing appearance, I have no reason to disagree with this assessment. The development therefore preserves the significance of this designated heritage asset and satisfies the requirements of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Conditions

12. I have imposed a condition to identify the relevant plans in the interests of certainty. A condition to identify the relevant timescales is unnecessary given that the development has already been completed.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given, the appeal is allowed.

C Butcher

INSPECTOR