



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 March 2025

by **L Wilson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1033/D/24/3351568

Meadows Farm, Ridge Top Lane, Hayfield, High Peak SK22 2JQ

- 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 and Mrs Coverley against the decision of High Peak Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is HPK/2024/0210.
 - The development proposed is remodelling to the house, conversion of the existing barn annex, construction of a link structure between the house and annex and associated landscaping.
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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 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 site and surrounding 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. Policy EQ4 of the High Peak Local Plan (2016) (LP) states that within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted for development unless it is in accordance with national planning policy. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the listed exceptions applies. 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.
4. The appeal site has an extensive planning history. Meadows Farm is a converted farm which consists of two dwellings comprising the original farmhouse and converted barn. The site also includes a relatively new barn which is used partially as a residential annex, but a significant proportion of its floor area is for storage.

The Council state that the lawful use of the barn space is for agricultural storage, and this has not been disputed.

5. The proposal seeks to erect a link between the converted barn dwellinghouse (which I refer to as the dwelling) and newly built barn as well as converting the barn into residential accommodation. The existing storage portion of the barn would be converted to living accommodation which would make the barn a fully residential use. Accordingly, the dwelling would be enlarged by virtue of the link element and proposed converted barn.
6. The appellants have drawn my attention to pre-application advice and set out that during the conversion of the barn, a significant proportion was removed. Even taking that into account, the proposed link and barn conversion would significantly increase the accommodation of the dwelling. Considering both the size and primary use of the barn, the proposed development would substantially increase the overall floorspace of the dwelling. Thus, the proposal would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
7. Consequently, for the reasons given above, the proposal would not fall under any of the exceptions listed in the Framework. The development would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to Policy EQ4 of the LP and chapter 13 of the Framework.

Openness

8. Paragraph 142 of the Framework states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
9. The proposal would have a spatial impact upon the Green Belt as it would result in an increase in built development through the link extension. This would add to the bulk, scale and massing of the dwelling. In terms of visual impact, the proposal would not be conspicuous from public vantage points due to the existing boundary treatment which consists of high hedging and trees.
10. Consequently, for the reasons given above, the development would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, albeit to a very limited degree having regard to its siting, size and visual impact. As such, the proposal would conflict with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy, as stated in the Framework, to keep land permanently open.

Character and appearance

11. The proposed western elevation would contain an extensive amount of glazing that would not reflect the character and appearance of the buildings and wider site. The recently built barn was designed to have a distinctly agricultural appearance. In contrast, the proposed first-floor glazing would have an overtly domestic appearance.
12. Furthermore, whilst the existing dwelling contains extensive glazing to the western elevation, it largely maintains an agricultural character and appearance reflecting its origins as an agricultural barn. The extent of further glazing proposed to the western elevation would diminish the agricultural nature and design of the buildings and wider site which was originally a working farmstead. The high void to solid ratio would not respect the agricultural character and appearance of the

buildings and site. The development would therefore fail to positively contribute to the character and appearance of the site and area. Thus, the proposal would be contrary to the Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document (2006) which states that conversion of farm buildings should maintain a simple, functional form and not involve additional development.

13. Notwithstanding the above conflict, a planning condition could ensure that the materials are appropriate. Furthermore, the proposed alterations to the roof design would not be significant and would not cause harm to the host building or area.
14. The glazing would maintain a feeling of light structures and openness, but that could be achieved without such extensive glazing. In addition, the appellants highlight that the scheme would create spaces for their multi-generational family in anticipation of their future needs and the development would not be conspicuous from public vantage points. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have found.
15. For the reasons given above, the proposed development would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. Consequently, it would conflict with Policy EQ6 of the LP which requires development to be well designed, and to respect the character, identity and context of High Peak's townscapes and landscapes.
16. The proposal would also conflict with the High Peak Borough Council's Local Development Framework: Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document (2005), the High Peak's Design Guide SPD (2018) and the Framework. These seek, amongst other matters, to achieve good design and ensure developments are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history. Whilst the supplementary planning documents do not form part of the local plan, they provide guidance which is relevant to the case.

Other considerations

17. The appellants have not clearly set out other considerations in support of the proposal. Nonetheless, I have considered the sustainability statement¹ as well as that the scheme has been designed to provide a home for the appellants multi-generational family to live together.
18. Given the scale of the development, I give very limited weight to the benefits highlighted in the sustainability statement, which sets out improvements to enhance the energy use and requirements of the existing buildings. Having regard to the information provided, there is not an exceptional need for the proposed development. Therefore, I give very limited weight to the benefits of the multi-generational family living together.

Other Matters

19. The appellants highlight numerous other matters including that the Delegated Decision Report was not uploaded at the same time as the decision notice, there was a lack of contact from the Council, and the planning officer had confirmed that they had recommended the application for approval. The highlighted other matters are neutral factors which do not serve to weigh either for or against the proposal.

¹ set out in the Design and Access Statement

Conclusion

20. I have found that the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It would also be harmful to openness, albeit to a very limited degree. In addition, it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. Paragraph 153 of the Framework is clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness, and that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
21. The appellants have not put forward any clear other considerations in support of the scheme. Nonetheless, I give very limited weight to the matters outlined in the sustainability statement and multi-generational benefits. When drawing this together, the other considerations do not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm that I have found. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. I therefore conclude that the proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.
22. For the reasons given above, the appeal does not succeed.

L Wilson

INSPECTOR