



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 February 2025

by J D Clark BA (Hons) DpTRP MCD DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/24/3351542

Broadhead Farm, Moorfield Avenue, Ramsgreave, Lancashire BB1 9BZ

- 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 Andrew Bennett against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/2023/0921.
 - The development proposed is ground and first floor extension to accommodate foster children.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024 and is a material consideration in this appeal. Having considered the revisions to the Framework, as well as the principles of natural justice, together with the nature of the determining issues in this appeal it is clear to me that there are no material changes in the revised Framework relevant to the substance of this appeal. Therefore, I do not consider it necessary, in this instance, to invite any submissions from the parties on the revised Framework. Any reference to the Framework in this decision is to the most recent version.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:-
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant development plan policies and its effect on openness;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the original dwelling;
 - the effect of the proposal on bats and other wildlife habitats; and
 - whether any 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 the proposal.

Reasons

Green Belt & Openness

4. Broadhead Farm is a working farm comprising cattle and sheep and also forms the base for the appellant's haulage business. The farmhouse is a detached two-storey house located amongst a grouping of farm buildings and associated land. There is a mature and well established hedge along the eastern boundary.
5. The house has previously been extended. From the calculations submitted the combined extensions, previous and proposed, would almost double the size of the original house (approx. 86% increase). The proposal is described as an extension to the existing house and although it would be attached to the existing house and designed as part of it, it would create self-contained living accommodation. This would provide accommodation on two floors and include a lounge a kitchen/dining room, two bedrooms, one with an en-suite and a bathroom.
6. The Framework explains that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It makes it clear that development is considered inappropriate unless it satisfies one of the exceptions cited in paragraphs 154 or 155. Paragraph 154, sub-section c) allows 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.
7. Proportionally the extension, together with previous extensions, would significantly increase the size of the original dwelling. This would not fall under the exception in paragraph 154 c) of the Framework and therefore would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This carries substantial weight.
8. The appellant refers to the appeal site as being previously developed and therefore falls under the exception cited in paragraph 154 sub-section g) of the Framework. This relates to limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal would not be limited infilling nor the partial or complete redevelopment of the appeal site. This exception does not apply to the proposed two storey extension which clearly falls to be assessed under sub-section c) as referred to above. I note the Case Law referred to but this is not applicable in this case.
9. The Framework sets out that the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 143 lists the five purposes of Green Belt. Whilst there is no dispute between the parties that the proposal would conflict with these purposes, the proposed extension would have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt. In considering this I have taken into account both the spatial and visual impacts. The proposed extension would increase the size and the bulk of the house. The increase over and above the size of the original dwelling would be substantial. Also, the house is located towards the edge of the farm complex and the proposed extension would be at the end of the house closer to open land and therefore visible in the landscape. Notwithstanding the backdrop of farm buildings, the proposed extension would have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

10. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with the Framework and the Ribble Valley Core Strategy¹ Key Statement EN1 which sets out a general approach to development in the Green Belt and seeks to safeguard the countryside and maintain the Green Belt in Ribble Valley.

Character & Appearance

11. The proposal would extend the house out from the side of the existing house and for its full depth. The ridge would continue along the lines of the existing ridge height with eaves lower than the original eaves to the front of the house and at the same height as the rear projection at the rear of the house.
12. The extension would be constructed in random stonework and natural slate to match the existing house but due to its scale and overall massing, would erode the original identity of the house. This is exacerbated by the previous additions which cumulatively, would result in dominant and discordant additions. The proposed extension would therefore conflict with Core Strategy Policy DMG1 and Section 12 of the Framework both of which seek to achieve high standards of design.

Bats / Wildlife

13. A bat survey report has been submitted with the appeal documents. This is a preliminary day-time survey carried out in March 2024. Whilst it found no evidence to suggest bats had been present in the loft space of the house and externally the roosting potential is relatively limited, a further bat activity survey is recommended. This would need to take place during the main bat activity season of May to August inclusive. The survey also states that externally, roosting potential is limited but again the additional survey would clarify any roosting potential. The survey notes the hedge close to the side of the house and advises that birds are likely to nest in it. The hedge would need to be retained until the further bat survey was carried out and not during the bird nesting season unless it is certain that no nest-building or nest-use is taking place. It advises to wait until at least September before removing the hedge.
14. An additional bat survey would be required and measures taken to facilitate bat activity, such as the installation of bat boxes. The latter could be achieved through a suitable worded condition and a condition could ensure that nesting birds were not harmed by the development. Other legislation would also provide protection. However, the appellant's statement recommends at least one bat activity survey to fully investigate the situation and I have no evidence to contradict this requirement. Therefore, without this, the proposal could have a harmful effect on bats and other wildlife habitats and conflict with Core Strategy Key Statement EN4 and Policy DME3 which seek to avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.

Other Considerations

15. The appellant states that whilst he is running the haulage business and works full time as a driver, his son is the primary farmer and tends the farm daily. The extension would create two bedroomed self-contained accommodation for the farmer and his wife to be. The appellant explains the importance of a farmer living on the site full time. I have no reason to dispute this. The existing house would

¹ Ribble Valley Borough Council Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adopted Version, Adopted 16 December 2014.

continue to provide accommodation for the appellant and his family which includes a number of foster children.

16. Whilst the family as a whole require a substantial sized dwelling, the proposal would result in a total of seven bedrooms, only two of the family members are actively involved in the farm. The appellant states that his son must live on site to take majority control of the farm business, for farm security and for the success of the farm. The dwelling as it stands is considered by the appellant to be insufficient to accommodate the whole family. Whilst personal circumstances can be a material consideration, they rarely carry the weight necessary to overcome the substantial harm caused by inappropriate development. In this case, there is insufficient evidence to convince me that the existing accommodation cannot provide accommodation to allow the farm to function. This matter therefore carries only limited weight.

Planning Balance

17. The Framework makes it clear that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other circumstances.
18. Harm caused by inappropriateness carries substantial weight. I have also found that the openness of the Green Belt would be harmed. In addition, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the original dwelling. Whilst I appreciate the personal circumstances that require this additional accommodation, I have afforded it only limited weight which would not outweigh the substantial weight caused by inappropriateness.
19. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the very special circumstances required to clearly outweigh the harm caused by inappropriateness, and any other harm, do not exist. The scheme would conflict with the Framework and with Core Strategy Key Statements EN1 and EN4 and Policy DME3.

Conclusion

20. 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. Consequently, the appeal should be dismissed.

J D Clark

INSPECTOR