

Two Storey Extension

Sheepgate Farm Cottage, Bradshaw Road, Tottington, Bury BL8 3PL

INTRODUCTION

Sheepgate Farm Cottage was originally a small, stone cottage which has a single storey extension at the rear and a two storey, brick built extension at the side which obtained planning permission in June 2000 (application number 36481). The house is within a small cluster of dwelling and outbuildings in the Green Belt. There is a large garden at the side but the rear of the house is very close to a field boundary.

The interior of the house has an odd layout with two separate staircases to different parts of the first floor. This is clearly unsuitable for a family with three small children. A pre application enquiry for alterations and extensions resulted in somewhat encouraging advice from the planning officer.

The proposed development in the subsequent planning application (number 69581) was described as:-

“Modifications to roof/first floor roof extension to accommodate additional living space to first floor. Porch to front elevation. Reduction in size of existing garage. External alterations to include solar panels to front/rear roof slopes, new stone/render finish to external elevations and alterations to doors/windows/glazing with 2 no. Juliet balconies to rear elevation”.

As the description suggests it involved the complete remodelling of the house, including a first floor extension and large areas of glass on the rear elevation with two Juliet balconies. Permission was refused on 1 November 2023 for the following reasons:-

1. The proposed development by virtue of its scale, location, design and use of materials would lead to inappropriate development within the Green Belt that erodes the character of the property in question and the openness of the surrounding area. The proposed alterations would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling and subsequently harm the openness of the Green Belt and is therefore contrary to the following policies of the Bury Unitary Development Plan: OL1/2 – New Buildings in the Green Belt and associated Supplementary Planning Document 8: New buildings and Associated Development in the Green Belt, H2/3 –Extensions and Alterations and associated Supplementary Planning Document 6: Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The proposed development would result in unacceptable overlooking of land outside of the applicant's ownership by reason of the sub-standard distances between habitable windows and the directly facing boundary and the increase of glazing. The proposed development therefore conflicts with Unitary Development Plan Policy H2/3 Alterations and Extensions and associated Supplementary Planning Document 6: Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties.

A subsequent appeal to the Planning Inspectorate was dismissed by letter dated 9 July 2024. The Inspector agreed with the Local Planning Authority and concluded that the development was "inappropriate development" that would harm the Green Belt without the justification of "very special circumstances". In addition there would be harm to the privacy of users of land to the rear.

The new application provides the essential linkage of the first floor rooms and seeks to overcome the failings of the previous proposal. The small and unobtrusive extension now proposed is not disproportionate to the existing dwelling and will not harm the openness of the Green Belt. There is no addition to the glazing on the rear elevation and therefore no overlooking of adjoining land.

Planning Policy

The previous refusal was based on the LPA's interpretation of guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies in the Bury Unitary Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents 6 and 8.

The UDP was adopted as long ago as August 1997 but, despite its age, it is still Bury's development plan. The NPPF states that decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan with the emphasis on sustainable development. In addition, Local Planning Authorities are urged to be positive in their decision making and to use planning conditions to make developments acceptable where appropriate.

The latest version of the NPPF was issued in 2023. Despite the 26 year time difference Green Belt guidance is little different from UDP Policy OL1/2. The Policy states that "the construction of new buildings inside the Green Belt is inappropriate development" unless is for a specific purpose such as "limited extension or replacement of existing dwellings, provided that this would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling".

Similarly, the NPPF also regards the construction of new buildings as inappropriate with exceptions including "the extension or alteration of a building providing it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building". Planning permission can be granted for "inappropriate development" where "Very Special Circumstances" can be proved.

Paragraph 4.25 of SPD6 states that, In general terms, the Council may allow an extension to be up to a third of the volume of the original dwelling. However each proposal will be considered "on its own merits". This was conceded in the Planning Officer's Report which points out that "the concept of openness of the Green Belt is not narrowly limited to volumetric approach..... (in the context of which, volumetric matters may be a material concern, but are by no means the only one) and factors relative to the visual impact on the aspects which the Green Belt presents" (Turner v Secretary of State 2016).

Justification

A volume calculation was submitted with the previous planning application contending that the “original dwelling” should be that which resulted from the subdivision of the original Sheepgate Farm house in 1982 or thereabouts. I agree with the Planning Officer that the original building as it existed in 1948 is more relevant. However, I do not know the volume of original house or historically what other buildings may have been demolished. There was certainly a barn. In the absence of a comprehensive planning history since 1948 it is not possible to produce a realistic volume calculation. As there is no full comprehensive planning history for the property it may be more helpful to consider the extension on its own merits. The “appropriate” volume increase of one third or 30% is not a rule but a guide to what may be acceptable.

Very Special Circumstances justify what is now proposed.

- The proposal is a simple and unobtrusive way of providing the linkage of the first floor rooms which is essential to the family’s needs.
- The proposed extension has an area of only 10 square metres on each floor and a volume of only 90 cubic metres. A dormer will be removed.
- The existing house is L-shaped and the extension is tucked into the angle of the L. It will be set back behind the front elevation to further reduce any visual impact.
- The size, shape and massing of the existing house does not change. The extension will be barely noticeable, with the pitched roof of the original cottage carried over the extension.
- The extension and existing brickwork will be rendered with stone detailing, materials that are appropriate to the house’s rural, Green Belt location.
- Unlike the previous proposal there will be no change to the fenestration of the rear elevation and consequently no overlooking of the neighbouring land.

The extension is clearly not disproportionate to the existing dwelling and there will be no harm to the openness of the Green Belt. There are now no reasons why planning permission should not be granted.