



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 June 2014

by **J Westbrook BSC(ECON) MSC PGCE MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 19 June 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/D2320/D/14/2218894

The Coach House, Chorley Road, Withnell, CHORLEY, PR6 8BG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Paul and Lucy McGuigan against the decision of Chorley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 14/00274/FUL was refused by notice dated 8 May 2014.
 - The development proposed is the erection of double garage (as previously approved under 12/01114/FUL) and incorporation of a basement floor.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Procedural matter

2. In reaching my decision I have had regard to the recently published and updated National Planning Practice Guidance.

Main issue

3. The main issue in this case is whether the proposed garage with basement represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, if so, whether the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by any other considerations

Reasons

4. The Coach House is a detached dwelling with a separate single-storey annex situated within a large garden area. It is located to the south-east of Chorley Road from which it is accessed via a long driveway that also serves a large care home. It lies within the Green Belt. It is bounded by a tall hedge to its north-western side and a fence and tall hedge to its north-eastern side. The proposed garage with basement would be sited within the northern part of the plot and would not be readily visible from outside of the site.
5. The house was apparently converted from a coach house subsequent to a planning permission granted in 1999. The development permitted also included a double garage to the south of the dwelling. That double garage has subsequently been converted to ancillary accommodation, such that car parking at the property is now confined to a driveway to the front of the dwelling. The current proposal would involve the construction of a double garage to the north of the house and it would have a full basement area excavated beneath to be used for storage purposes.

6. The Council contends that the development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Green Belt, and that it would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. There are exceptions to this basic requirement, but the proposal does not fall into any of the exception categories. It is, therefore, inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt. In accordance with guidance in paragraph 88 of the NPPF, I give this harm substantial weight. I must therefore examine whether this harm, and any other harm is clearly outweighed by any other considerations.
7. The appellants contend that if the garage were attached to the house it would then be classified as an extension that could be considered as an exception to the requirement in the NPPF. However, it is not attached and, in any case, I have no details as to the size of the original building or of subsequent extensions or alterations, and so it may equally well be the case that such a proposal could have been considered as resulting in a disproportionate addition.
8. Permission has already been granted on appeal for a garage without a basement on the same footprint as the current proposal. In his decision, the Inspector noted that the proposed double garage would not adversely affect the character or appearance of the area and, given its location and above-ground design, I concur with that view. However, the addition of a basement with an internal staircase access would result in one or both of the car parking spaces being well below the standard of 5.5 metres in length as required by the Council's Householder Design Guidance – Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). On this basis, I have significant concerns that the garage would become effectively unusable for car parking purposes, resulting in a continuation of car parking outside of the house. This would run counter to the appellants' stated desire to use the garage for the safe housing of the family's cars.
9. In addition to my concerns regarding the lack of internal space in the garage, I note that the front elevation of the garage would include a central pillar. This is appropriate in design terms. However, there is no detailed indication on the submitted plans of vehicle manoeuvring space in front of the garage and, I have further concerns that the limited space between the front gates to the property and the front of the garage, together with the existence of the pillar, could significantly restrict the ability of a vehicle to enter the northernmost space within the garage.
10. The SPD also indicates that it is unlikely that planning permission will be forthcoming for more than the equivalent of a double garage, a small shed, and a small greenhouse on a single dwelling in the countryside. The current dwelling already has an outbuilding that is the equivalent of a double garage. The proposed building, including the basement, would add a further outbuilding of twice the volume of a normal double garage to the dwelling, albeit a substantial part of that building would be below ground. It would, in this case, and on the basis of its overall scale, conflict with guidance in the SPD.

11. In conclusion, I find that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. By virtue of its situation, design and limited above-ground visibility, it would not be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. However, this lack of harm does not compensate for the likelihood that the restricted car parking space within the garage, caused by the need to provide access to the basement, would result in the spaces becoming effectively unusable. This would counteract any benefit to the appearance of the area resulting from the removal of car parking from the driveway to the front of the house. I therefore find that the considerations put forward by the appellants do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm that would be caused by the proposal, and that there are, therefore, no very special circumstances to justify this inappropriate development.
12. The proposal would conflict with guidance given in the NPPF relating to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would also conflict with Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan, which relates to the design of new development, including car parking, and with guidance in the SPD. I therefore dismiss this appeal.

J Westbrook

INSPECTOR