

Appeal made against the refusal of planning permission

Appeal reference	APP/P1805/A/11/2152290
Planning Application	10/0828-MT
Proposal	Change of use of redundant rural building to 2 dwellings (resubmission of 10/0389-MT)
Location	Building at Poolhouse Farm, Hockley Brook Lane, Belbroughton, DY9 0AG
Ward	Furlongs
Decision	Refused by Planning Committee - 1st November 2010

The author of this report is Matt Tyas; in his absence, please contact Laura Buckton on 01527 881336 (e-mail: l.buckton@bromsgrove.gov.uk) for more information.

Discussion

The proposal was for the change of use of redundant rural building to 2 dwellings (resubmission of 10/0389-MT)

The application was determined under delegated powers and refused due to the following reason as detailed below:

1. The proposal would involve major new building works and a significant amount of domestic features contrary to policy C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 and the advice contained in SPG4: Conversion of Rural Buildings. The proposal would therefore constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt contrary to policy D.39 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001, policy DS2 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 and the advice contained within PPG2: Green Belts. It is considered that the inappropriate domestic appearance of the proposal would harm the rural character of this Green Belt area. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated by the applicant to outweigh this harm.

The Inspector found the main issues to be:

- Whether the proposed conversion would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
- The effect of the proposed conversion on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the rural area, including the visual amenity of the Green Belt; and

- If the proposal would amount to inappropriate development whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations, such as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

The proposal

The appeal building is a large, modern agricultural building which has been redundant for many years. It lies close to the dwelling known as Poolhouse Farm and adjacent to open countryside. It has been used in a low-key way for a variety of purposes ancillary to the domestic use for some 15 years.

The building lies within the Green Belt.

Details

In accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Green Belts* (PPG2) the re-use of buildings within a Green Belt is not inappropriate development providing certain criteria are met. Criterion (c) of policy C27 requires buildings to be of permanent and substantial construction and to be capable of conversion without major works or complete reconstruction. A structural report of the appeal building, taken together with other evidence suggests that, although the frame of the building would remain and the floor is robust many other elements would need to be substantially reconstructed. New internal load bearing walls would be required to support the new roof and would also improve the lateral and vertical stability of the frame. The appellant suggests that the Council should indicate what would amount to major works and draws attention to a standard that has been used elsewhere of 33%. However, even without such an indicator it appears from the evidence that the necessary works would be extensive and would amount to major reconstruction. In consequence the Inspector concludes on the first main issue that the re-use of the building would amount to inappropriate development which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

The Inspector notes; the proposal includes the removal of two buildings which abut the appeal building. This would cut the footprint of built development by about half and would reduce the effect on the openness of the Green Belt. Conversely, the gardens of the proposed dwellings would be created over the footprint of the larger building and although it is not clear from the submitted plans where the four proposed car parking spaces would be located it appears inevitable that they would be in the vicinity of the lean-to building to be removed. Nevertheless, overall there would be a noticeable reduction in built development and hence no harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

With regard to the character and appearance of the area, the building lies adjacent to open countryside to its south-east and north-east. Both the Council

and the Inspector feel that the conversion would result in the incongruous domestication of the building and the surrounding area of land which is currently agricultural in appearance. The location of the building, adjacent to open fields and a rural access track, would exacerbate the detrimental effect on the countryside. In particular, the significant amount of glazing in the south-east elevation, which would materially alter the character of the original barn, and the parking of domestic vehicles between this elevation and the open countryside. Therefore it is concluded that the proposal would be materially detrimental to the character and appearance of the rural area and to the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

Very Special Circumstances

Firstly the applicant states the proposal would reduce built development and hence reduction in loss of openness is cited. However, the Inspector deems agricultural buildings are an integral part of the rural landscape and not inappropriate in the Green Belt. The improvement to the openness of the Green Belt, whilst positive, would therefore carry moderate weight in favour of the proposal. Secondly, it is suggested that some other use of the building could have a greater effect on the area through the introduction of HGV traffic and additional hard standings. However, any use other than an agricultural use would require planning permission and would be judged according to Green Belt and other policy. No specific uses have been suggested and in the absence of any evidence of a likely return to an intensive agricultural. Thirdly, it is suggested that the proposed dwellings would help to meet the need for new homes. However, they would be located in a remote, rural location, away from shops and services. Therefore whilst they would make a small contribution to the housing stock, they would be in an unsustainable location.

Finally, a number of other local conversions to dwellings have been cited. There are limited details for most of these and conversions are not necessarily inappropriate in the Green Belt. Whilst some are conversions of large agricultural buildings the circumstances surrounding them are mostly unknown and therefore the Inspector feels they carry little weight.

The Inspector concludes that the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.

In conclusion

For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the recent publication of the consultation draft National Planning Policy Framework, which carries little weight in this case, the Inspector concludes that the appeal should be dismissed.

Therefore the Inspector dismissed the appeal

Costs application

No application for costs was made.

Appeal outcome

The appeal was **DISMISSED** (15th September 2011).

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that the item of information be noted.