

466. **EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE - GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES (REPORT NO 077)**

The report of the Director of Development & Community Services provided advice on the planning considerations to be taken into account when dealing with applications for planning permission to extend residential properties in rural areas.

Councillor Bishop said that, whilst he found the guidelines to be acceptable, the report should be presented to a full Council meeting to enable Members to have further discussions.

**RECOMMENDED:**

That the guidelines set out in section 5 of the report be adopted as supplementary guidance when dealing with proposals to extend existing residential properties in the rural area, subject to the report being considered at the next full Council meeting.

**FORWARD PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**3RD DECEMBER 1997**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**REPORT NO: 077**

**EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**  
**GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES**

**Synopsis:** This report provides advice on the planning considerations to be taken into account when dealing with applications for planning permission to extend residential properties in the Rural Area.

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1. At the Development & Building Control Committee Meeting on 3 September 1997, Members requested that Officers prepare a report giving further guidance on how to consider the planning issues relating to proposals to extend existing dwellings in the Countryside, with particular regard to Policy 4.24 in the Adopted Local Plan.

2.0 **LOCAL PLAN POLICY**

2.1. The Local Plan has established a settlement strategy which provides for the housing and employment needs of the District's population, while protecting the character of the Rural Area. While some development will be allowed in the Rural Area in existing settlements, development outside these settlements will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. The Plan classifies the countryside as the Rural Area, outside towns, Red Lodge, villages and minor settlements. It is characterised by a dispersed pattern of isolated dwellings and small groups of dwellings. Policy 3.4 states that:-

"IN THE RURAL AREA OUTSIDE VILLAGES AND MINOR SETTLEMENTS, NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED AND EXISTING LAND USES WILL REMAIN FOR THE MOST PART UNDISTURBED UNLESS SUCH PROPOSALS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH OTHER POLICIES OF THE LOCAL PLAN."

2.2. Policy 9.1 requires that, in considering proposals for any new developments in the Rural Area outside defined settlements, the District Council needs to be satisfied that certain criteria are met. Criterion (a) of the Policy requires that there is justification for the development to be in the Rural Area, and criterion (i) requires that there will be no significant detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the landscape.

2.3. Where development has to take place in the Rural Area and the requirements of Policy 9.1 are satisfied, the Plan emphasises that it is essential to ensure that any buildings respect their surroundings. With this in mind, Policy 9.2 of the plan requires that development proposals in the Rural Area outside defined settlements are of an appropriate rural character and appearance.

2.4. The Plan refers specifically at Paragraph 4.27 to the issue of replacement or extended dwellings in the Countryside. It states that the replacement or extension to existing dwellings in the Countryside may be allowed, subject to strict criteria. A modest change in the size or

appearance, compared to the original, may be acceptable. Problems may arise from proposals for house extensions, especially where the dwelling has resulted from a conversion of an existing building. It is essential that such proposals are of a scale and design compatible with the existing dwelling and its surroundings and do not adversely affect the landscape. Accordingly Policy 4.24 states as follows:-

**POLICY 4.24**

**REPLACEMENT OR EXTENSION OF AN EXISTING DWELLING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE MAY BE PERMITTED, PROVIDED THAT:**

- (a) THE SCALE AND APPEARANCE OF THE RESULTANT BUILDING IS NOT DETRIMENTAL TO THE AMENITIES OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.**
- (b) THE NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS IS NOT INCREASED: AND**
- (c) IT DOES NOT INVOLVE THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE RESIDENTIAL CURTILAGE.**

**WHERE A PROPOSAL FOR REPLACEMENT OR EXTENSION INVOLVES SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE, IT WILL BE TREATED AS A NEW DWELLING.**

**3.0 RECENT APPLICATIONS TO EXTEND HOUSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

- 3.1. Examples of recent applications considered by the Development & Building Control Committee include:
- 3.2. F/97/115 - Front and rear extensions to existing house at Ryelands Farm, Wilde Street, Beck Row.

This application related to an agricultural dwelling that had previously been extended with the benefit of planning permission to provide additional accommodation. The application was refused in July this year following a Committee site visit. The reasons for refusal were as follows:-

- 1. In the opinion of the LPA the proposed development is contrary to Planning Policy Guidance Notes 7 and to Forest Heath's Local Plan Policies 4.24 and 9.1 in that the extensions involve a substantial change to the existing agricultural dwelling and there is insufficient justification for this scale of development to be in the Rural Area.
- 2. In the opinion of the LPA, the proposed development is contrary to Forest Heath's Local Plan Policies 4.32 and 9.2 in that the extension is not in keeping with the character and size of the existing dwelling and that the scale and appearance of the extended dwelling would not be of an appropriate rural character.
- 3.3. F/97/186 - Erection of first floor rear extension to form additional bedrooms and accommodation for granny flat at Greenlea, The Green, West Row.

This application related to a large detached property standing in a substantial plot of land that had been extended with the benefit of earlier planning permission. An earlier application

reference F/89/448 for first floor and two storey extensions had been allowed on appeal but not built.

The 1997 proposal was similar in floor area and massing to that allowed on appeal in 1990.

The 1997 application was approved by Members following a Committee site visit in July this year.

- 3.4. F/97/275 - Extension to form kitchen and new lounge at Bridge Cottage, Freckenham Road, Worlington. The reason for refusal was as follows:-

The proposed extension by reason of its size would be out of keeping with the scale and character of the existing property with a resultant increased visual impact on this prominent rural site contrary to Policies 4.24, 4.32 and 9.1 of the Forest Heath Local Plan.

#### 4.0 OFFICER COMMENT

- 4.1. The requirements of the Local Plan Policy have to be taken into account, together with Governmental advice and any other material considerations when assessing the planning merits of proposals to extend existing dwellings in the Countryside. Policy 4.24 is the key Policy to be taken into account. The Policy aims to :-

- (a) protect rural amenities by preventing substantial additional building in the countryside where development is not normally allowed; and
- (b) to retain a stock of small affordable dwellings and thereby ensure that an adequate range of house types remains available in Rural Areas.

- 4.2. In order to apply the Policy, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by "substantial change" in the context of an extension to an existing dwelling. Any extension to a dwelling will change the appearance of the property, but if such change is substantial, the proposed development may be unacceptable due to the nature and extent of the works. The extensions may visually harm the character and appearance of the Rural Area. The siting, size, bulk, massing and detailed design of the extensions will determine whether they are substantial, and whether they will be harmful to visual amenity. The cumulative effect of several extensions to the same property may also result in substantial change.

- 4.3. Reference to floorspace figures or percentages can be helpful in establishing the scale of any additions to the dwelling, but it would not be appropriate to adopt specific thresholds beyond which proposals would be unacceptable in policy terms. This is because the size of the proposed extension is only one factor in assessing the nature and acceptability of any proposals to extend a dwelling in the countryside. Other factors include design, materials and the visual impact of the development. In one instance, for example, proposals to increase the floor area of an existing property by 20% may, due to poor design and the prominent or sensitive location of the dwelling, be considered substantial and unacceptable. In another instance, a 50% increase in the floor area of a house on a different, less sensitive, site may be acceptable and have no effect on the visual amenities of the locality.

- 4.4. In the opinion of your Officers, based upon experience of dealing with such applications, the majority of the applications for extensions to increase the floor area of a dwelling by 30% are

unlikely to result in a substantial change to the property, or have an adverse impact on the character of the area, subject to satisfactory design. Extensions seeking to increase the floor area by 30 to 60% require very careful consideration in terms of design, layout and impact on the area. Proposals for extensions beyond a 60% increase in the floor area are likely to result in substantial change, and have an adverse impact on the visual amenities and character of the area.

## 5.0 SUGGESTED GUIDELINES TO ASSIST WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS TO EXTEND RURAL DWELLINGS

5.1. In considering proposals to extend existing dwellings in the countryside, the requirement of the Forest Heath Local Plan Policy 4.24 shall be taken into account, together with the following factors:-

- (a) The need to provide modern amenities such as a bathroom or kitchen especially when considering proposals to extend small unimproved cottages.
- (b) Any structural deficiencies that may be apparent in the existing property. Such deficiencies can sometimes be addressed by modest extensions to the property.
- (c) Whether the extension would remove an existing eyesore or improve the appearance of the existing property.
- (d) The planning history of the existing dwelling, in particular whether previous extensions have been made to the property, or approved but not built. The existing dwelling is defined as the building as it originally stood at 1st July 1948 or, in the case of buildings constructed after this date, as first built.
- (e) Whether the siting, size, massing and detailed design of the dwelling, as extended, will be of an appropriate rural character.
- (f) Whether the dwelling, as extended, by virtue of the scale, design and appearance of the extension, would be harmful to the visual amenities of the rural area.
- (g) Such extensions shall remain secondary and subservient in relation to the size and design of the existing property, although criterion (a) to (c) above will be given due weight and consideration.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1. Proposals for rural house extensions give rise to difficult decision making problems. Each proposal has to be examined on its merits and any decision made following an assessment of the actual impact that the extension would have on the rural character of the area. Adoption of the guidelines set out above will help to provide a more consistent basis upon which decisions on planning applications can be made and it will also assist Officers when providing advice to the public at the pre-application stage.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1. It is recommended that the guidelines set out in Section 5 of the report be adopted as supplementary guidance when dealing with proposals to extend existing residential properties in the Rural Area.

PETER NOCK  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
PN/RP/wp/  
25th November 1997

BACKGROUND PAPER  
Planning Applications F/97/115, F/97/186 and F/97/275.

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