



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 August 2009

by **Les Greenwood** BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

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Decision date:  
30 September 2009

## Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/A/09/2106296 Old Croft, Levedale, Stafford ST18 9AH

- 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 John Bickford against the decision of South Staffordshire Council.
- The application Ref 09/00118/FUL, dated 15 February 2009, was refused by notice dated 14 April 2009.
- The development proposed is a front kitchen extension.

### Decision

1. I allow the appeal and grant planning permission for a front kitchen extension at Old Croft, Levedale, Stafford ST18 9AH in accordance with the terms of the application 09/00118/FUL dated 15 February 2009, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
  - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

### Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the local countryside, having regard to development plan policies.

### Reasons

3. Old Croft is a very large detached bungalow, occupying a spacious plot within a ribbon of other detached properties, set in the countryside. The proposal is for a ground floor kitchen extension to the front of the property, with an extended boiler room under. The Council raises no objection to the specific impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building or the area, accepting that it would be a relatively minor addition that would be sympathetic to the rest of the dwelling.
4. The Council's concern is about the cumulative impact of the extension, taken together with previous extensions. The property has been extended a number of times in the past, so that by the Council's calculation its floor area is now more than double that of the original bungalow. South Staffordshire Local Plan (LP) Policy C4 states that the alteration of a dwelling which involves substantial

rebuilding and results in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building will not be permitted in the open countryside. The supporting text for the policy indicates that this is to protect the appearance of the countryside, while a further reference to the cost of service provision is not relevant to this case. Policy C4 does not, however, help with the interpretation of the word *disproportionate*. The Council is currently bringing forward a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): *Extensions to Dwellings within the Green Belt and Open Countryside* which proposes to deal with this matter by generally limiting extensions to 30% above the size of the original dwelling. The emerging SPD has been through a period of public consultation, but I have seen no report of the results of that process. The document is accordingly still at an early stage and carries little weight in decision-making.

5. In the absence of an adopted definition of what constitutes a disproportionate extension, I consider that this should be assessed on a case by case basis bearing in mind LP Policies OC1 and C8. These policies aim to ensure that extensions are appropriate to the character of the area and protect the appearance of the dwelling and the countryside. As accepted by the Council, the proposed extension would harmonise with the existing building, subject to the use of matching materials. It would be an unremarkable feature in the street scene, sitting back from the road in a position where it would be seen against the backdrop of the existing bungalow. It would be a modest addition to the dwelling and would fit comfortably within the overall plot, which would not become cramped or overdeveloped. The resulting bungalow would not be out of character with the area, which contains other sizeable detached properties.
6. For these reasons I find that the proposed extension would not be a disproportionate addition, even though it would, when taken together with previous extensions, represent a large cumulative increase in the size of the original dwelling. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the local countryside and would accord with LP Policies OC1, C4 and C8.
7. No other objections have been raised. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed, with conditions as suggested by the Council and dealt with above.

*Les Greenwood*

INSPECTOR