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CRITICAL PEER TO PEER REVIEW

Of the
**FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR A REPLACEMENT DWELLING
WHINNEY CLOSE FARM, KIRKHEATON**

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Introduction

The matter to be considered here is whether the proposed replacement dwelling will have an adverse impact on the openness of this part of the West Yorkshire Greenbelt; or whether the size, design, typology, landscape, and special characteristics of the site mean that the proposals meet the requirements of national and local planning policy.

Design

The design for the replacement dwelling is well-executed, demonstrating an intellectual knowledge of the work of John Carr (1723-1807). I do not consider it simply to be an exercise in Georgian Architecture, moreover a case study of Carr and his contemporaries' work (including the landscape architects of the period).

Elements of the design incorporate subtle developments of Carr and his contemporaries' architecture, evidencing both knowledge and design prowess, and elevating the design process above and beyond an exercise in mere pastiche.

I therefore consider that from a qualitative perspective, the application design to be representative of a small minority of designs for replacement dwellings in the greenbelt, and therefore to exceed the requirements of LP24.

Appropriateness of the building type for a greenbelt setting, 'plan form'.

The 'villa' plan form of the replacement dwelling is synonymous with open countryside.

In contrast to the linear plan form of the existing dwelling (and other traditional 'open countryside' planforms such as the *L-plan*, *Dispersed plan*, or *Loose courtyard plan* *), the villa plan form rarely comprised one of the building blocks of early hamlets, villages or towns. The 'Villa' invariably displaces space whereas the other plan forms have the capacity to define it.

**Historic England, Historic Farmsteads Yorkshire and the Humber.*

The gymnastic solid as le Corbusier referred to it, requires space around it, so the building type is often incompatible with urban sprawl and rarely associated with it. In fact, there are very few examples where twentieth century development has successfully encroached on traditional country houses.

Combined with other factors, the encroachment of urban sprawl has coincided with the demolition of many country houses. An example of this being Bramhope Hall six miles north west of Leeds. The site of this former hall lies well beyond the traditional Leeds suburbs and is located outside the village of Bramhope in the West Yorkshire Greenbelt. There are many similarities between the locations Bramhope Hall and the Whinney Close Farm site.



Bramhope Hall (now demolished)

With this notion, our perception of urban sprawl and the country house are quite separate. The country house requires space around it, and our perception of such houses is that they are part and parcel of undeveloped tracts of countryside. They are synonymous with openness, and this notion reinforces the appropriateness of this building type for the proposed greenbelt location.

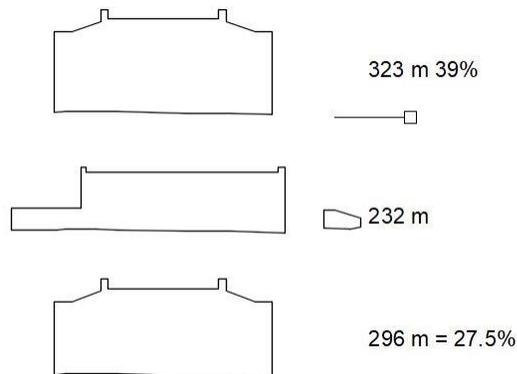
Site and surrounding

I consider the northern boundary woodland to carry significant weight in examining the impact of this application on the openness of the greenbelt. This is due to the woodland's relative permanence.

Moreover, I consider the rising ground towards the northern boundary to be of paramount significance due to the escarpment's absolute permanence. The escarpment shields the site from the north, east and west.

Given that the openness of the site can only be perceived from the south, I consider a key measure of the replacement dwelling's impact on the openness of the Greenbelt to be its impact from this direction. Both the existing dwelling and the replacement dwelling are seen as silhouettes against the backdrop of the wooded escarpment.

The south elevation of the current dwelling has an area of 232 square metres measured from grade. The south elevation of the replacement dwelling has an area of 323 square metres, representing an increase in area of 39%. If the applicant were to consider lowering the plateau on which the replacement dwelling is located by 900mm such that the southeast corner of the plateau is no longer elevated but also at grade, the area of the south elevation would reduce to 296 square metres representing a 27.5% increase in area.



I do not consider either of these percentage increases to be materially larger than the building being replaced, therefore both satisfy the requirements of LP57.

Rule of thumb allowances in greenbelt and Permitted development Rights

A shortfall in the interpretation of planning legislation arises when PD Rights allowances and 'rule of thumb' volumetric allowances become the dominant consideration of designers when determining the architectural form of the enlarged or replacement dwellings. Consequently, the UK greenbelt is peppered with replacement or enlarged dwellings which meet volumetric / area criteria but little else.

In respect of this application, matters of scale, proportion and massing are the dominant considerations.

This is demonstrated in the agent's assertion that the footprint of the replacement dwelling is 44% smaller than the maximum permissible under Permitted development Rights. (The applicant has also demonstrated that other aspects of the replacement dwelling's size, such as the length of the respective elevations, falls considerably shorter than if the current dwelling were extended under permitted development rights).

Appropriateness of a scaled down version

I have considered whether a scaled down version in the form of a Georgian 'executive' home would be more appropriate development in the greenbelt. Such a replacement dwelling is something that is synonymous with settlement fringes. It is often in multiples of more than 1,

and therefore, in contrast to the proposed replacement dwelling, is more likely to be associated with urban sprawl.

In any event and as previously stated, I consider the size of the replacement dwelling to satisfy the requirements of LP57.

Sustainability

The technical merits of the proposed construction methodology have not been put before me. However, I do consider that the aspirations for the lifespan of such a replacement dwelling will far outweigh the average lifespan of a typical dwelling of approximately 60 years. In this respect, the replacement dwelling satisfies the requirements for sustainability.

Landscape

Whereas I note and commend the aspirations of the applicant regarding significant improvements to the landscape and setting of the proposed replacement dwelling, the size of the application site in the context of the wider landscape is small. Therefore, the ability to influence the greater landscape setting will also be small. The improvement to the openness following the removal of the tennis court is also noted, however what is there to prevent an application for a replacement tennis court in the future. The landscape proposals will undoubtedly contribute to the openness of this part of the Greenbelt, however there are other vestiges of the Twentieth Century such as pylons and dwellings etc that remain beyond the control of the application site.

Conclusion

I consider the size of the replacement dwelling to satisfy the requirements of LP57 for the reasons set out above. Moreover, and in this instance, a replacement dwelling of this design and plan form, has a lesser impact on the openness of the greenbelt than an executive home would, or a dwelling designed with permitted development rights' allowances in mind.

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