
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 September 2016

by K H Child BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 03 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/P1940/D/16/3157136

3 Park Close, Rickmansworth, Herts WD3 1QH

- 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 J. Flynn against the decision of Three Rivers District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/0793/FUL, dated 1 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The appeal site lies in the Green Belt. Therefore the main issues are:
 - Whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Park Close is located to the south-east of Rickmansworth, within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The close comprises a small number of houses in substantial plots, and is surrounded by tracts of open land and golf course development.
4. Number 3 Park Close is a detached house, with a large rear garden. The property is located on a corner plot with its west and north boundaries adjoining Park Close. To the east and south it adjoins other residential properties.

Whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

5. Paragraph 89 of the Framework advises that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless they fall within the specified exceptions. This includes the extension or alteration of a building

provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

6. The Framework also needs to read alongside the Council's development plan policies. Policy DM2 in Three Rivers District Council's Development Management Policies Local Development Document (the DMP Plan) (2013) states that extensions to buildings in the Green Belt that are disproportionate in size, either individually or cumulatively, will not be permitted. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance No 3 on 'Extensions to Dwellings in the Green Belt' No.3 (SPG) (2003) is referenced in the supporting text, and provides further guidance on what may be considered disproportionate extensions. Although the SPG dates from 2003 and was prepared to support policies in a previous plan, it has been found in other appeal decisions¹ to remain relevant, and has been subject to consultation and formal adoption. Accordingly, I have attached significant weight to the document.
7. The SPG states that extensions resulting in a cumulative increase in floorspace of over 40% to the original dwelling will normally be unacceptable. The proposed extension itself would be small in scale, with a floor area of some 20 square metres (sqm). However, the Council officer's report indicates that the appeal dwelling has already been significantly extended beyond the original dwelling as it existed on 1 July 1948, with a two storey side extension and a single storey rear extension, as well as the insertion of dormer windows. The report indicates that, cumulatively, the existing extensions plus the appeal extension would result in an increased floorspace of 57% above the original dwelling. This figure excludes additional habitable floorspace created in the roof volume through the conversion of the loft.
8. The appellant has not disputed the Council's floorspace figures, but has suggested that the proposal should be assessed on the basis of site area and proposed coverage, rather than floorspace increase. However, the Council's approach is set out in adopted planning documents, and there is no substantive evidence before me to indicate that it is unreasonable or inappropriate in other regards.
9. The proposed scheme, in conjunction with previous extensions to the original dwelling, would exceed the limit of 40%. On this basis the proposal would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as defined in the Framework and Policy DM2 in the Council's DMP Plan (2013).

Openness of the Green Belt

10. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt and relates to both spatial and visual effects. The proposed extension would be located on an undeveloped area of the rear garden, and would increase built form in this vicinity. Nevertheless, it would be modest in scale and height compared to the size of the existing dwelling, and the remaining garden would be substantial in size. Furthermore, the effect of the structure on openness would be reduced by its partly glass construction, and views from the adjoining highway would be limited by existing boundary landscaping. Overall, I consider there would be some adverse impact on openness, albeit this harm would be limited for the reasons described above. In this respect the scheme would be contrary to the purposes of the Green Belt as identified in the Framework, and relevant

¹ Appeal decisions APP/P1940/D/13/2209050, APP/P1940/D/14/2224597 and APP/P1949/D/14/2220962.

requirements in Policy DM2 in the DMP Plan (2013) and Policy CP11 in the Council's Core Strategy (2011).

Character and appearance

11. As described above, the proposed extension would be modest in scale and not overly prominent in its setting. The position of the extension to the rear of the house means that the current gap between the appeal dwelling and the neighbouring property to the south would be unaffected. Furthermore, due to the substantial rear garden and extensive boundary landscaping the gap between the appeal property and the dwelling to the rear would not be notably eroded.
12. Overall, I consider that the extension would be sensitively designed, discrete and integrate well with the site. I therefore consider that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and in this regard would accord with Policy CP12 in the Council's Core Strategy (2011) and Policies DM1 and Policy DM2 in the Council's DMP Plan (2013), insofar as they seek to secure development which is of good quality design and conserves or enhances the character of an area.

Other considerations

13. The proposed extension would provide addition living accommodation for the occupiers. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to justify why the additional space proposed is essential beyond the 40% threshold. Accordingly, I attach only limited weight to this matter.
14. The appellant has highlighted the quality of previous work carried out on the appeal dwelling, and indicated that a flat roof extension on a neighbouring property is more harmful than the proposed scheme. On my site visit I observed a flat roof side extension on a house north of the appeal site. Nevertheless, each case should be considered on its own merits, and the quality or existence of other extensions in itself does not justify the proposal. Consequently, I have attached limited weight to these matters.

Conclusion

15. In conclusion, I have identified that the proposed extension would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as defined in Policy DM2 in the Council's DMP Plan (2013) and related guidance in the Councils' SPG (2003). As set out in the Framework, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. Accordingly, I have attached substantial weight to this issue.
16. Having regard to the evidence before me, I conclude that no very special circumstances exist that are sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness and to the openness of the Green Belt. For the above reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

KH Child

INSPECTOR