
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2016

By Lynne Evans BA MA MRTPI MRICS

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

Decision date: 28 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/16/3155718
Braerlands, Barrihurst Lane, Cranleigh GU6 8LQ

- 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 Mrs Helen Lee against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: WA/2016/0955 dated 5 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 30 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is two storey extension to front of cottage together with first floor extension over front existing single storey to provide new entrance hall and stair at ground floor and a bedroom/treatment room and bathroom at first floor. Internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - a) Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - b) Its effect on the openness of the Green Belt and any other harm, including to the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Area of Great Landscape Value,
 - c) Other considerations; and
 - d) Whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Issue a) Inappropriate development

3. The appeal property is a detached property on a large plot on the southern side of the junction of the A281 and B2130 within the countryside and outside of a settlement boundary and in a relatively isolated location. The property is situated towards the northern apex of the triangular shaped plot with outbuildings and garages along the eastern boundary adjoining the A281. The appeal site and local area are within the Green Belt, the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) sets out the government's planning policies to secure sustainable development. One of its core planning principles at Paragraph 17, as amplified later in the Framework, includes *protecting the Green Belts*. Paragraph 87 confirms that *inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances*. Paragraph 89 sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate except for a limited number of exceptions including the extension or alteration of a building providing that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The Framework does not define further the term 'disproportionate'.
5. The Council's refusal notice also refers to Policies C1 and RD2 of the adopted Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 (Local Plan). I have noted the date of the Local Plan but in so far as the policies are consistent with the Framework, I have taken them into account. Policy C1 refers to a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt and in respect of residential extensions, cross refers to Policy RD2. Policy RD2 relates to extensions to dwellings within the countryside including within the Green Belt and sets out a criteria based approach, including that extensions will be permitted which do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling. The supporting text sets out guidance on how the Council will consider this matter and indicates that a proposal which individually or cumulatively increases the floorspace of the original dwelling (defined as it existed on 31 December 1968, when the Policy was first introduced) by more than 40% will be unlikely to satisfy the requirement relating to disproportionate additions. I have noted that the Council's definition of original dwelling, in terms of the date used, is not the same as the one set out in the Framework. However, I understand that the Council has maintained its definition in order to be consistent; moreover there is no evidence before me that using the earlier date in the Framework would have a material effect in this case.
6. The Council's assessment indicates that the original dwelling was 98 sq m floorspace and that with the proposed extensions taken together with previous extensions the total floorapce of the dwelling would increase to 234 sq m (170 sq m as existing and 64 sqm as proposed). The Council has assessed this increase in floorspace to be in the order of 100% over the floorspace of the original dwelling whereas it would in fact, on the basis of the Council's figures, appear to be considerably more than 100%. Even using the Council's percentage figure, the increase would be substantially more than the guideline figure of 40%. Although the Appellant has disputed which of the two

permissions granted in the late 1980s for a two storey permission was actually implemented, she has not sought to challenge the Council's figures.

7. In addition the proposal would, in my view, significantly add to the overall massing of built development, particularly with the depth and forward projection of the central two storey extension compounded with the additional first floor forward extension over the south-eastern wing.
8. Taking all these matters together, I have no doubt that the proposed extension would be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling and so would be inappropriate development for the purposes of the Framework as well as Policies C1 and RD2 of the Local Plan.

Issue b) Openness and any other Harm

9. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, as set out within the Framework, and in accordance with that guidance, I therefore attach substantial weight to this harm. I have also considered whether there is any other harm.
10. The addition of further built development on the site, with the consequent increase in the overall bulk and massing of the property, would inevitably lead to some reduction in openness, which is the essential attribute of the Green Belt. This harm to openness would therefore add to the harm I have already concluded.
11. Although the scale and massing of the dwelling as extended would be significantly increased, given the location of the dwelling within the site and the mature planting along the boundaries, I consider that the impact on the AONB and AGLV would be minimal. I therefore conclude that it would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and would protect the valued landscape of the AGLV. It would not conflict with the Framework and Policy C3 of the Local Plan, all of which seek to protect valued landscapes and no additional harm would be added in this respect.

Issue c) Other Considerations

12. I have sympathy with the family and health related reasons for seeking the extensions and alterations to the existing property. I have in particular taken into account the constraints of the internal layout including the restricted access between the ground and first floors and the configuration of the first floor layout and the issues they impose given the personal circumstances and health conditions of the family members living at the appeal dwelling. I also have sympathy with the strong desire to keep the extended family living together and the financial constraints in seeking to stay in the local area. These matters weigh in favour of the proposal. I have also noted that the scheme has been reduced in size from an earlier proposal to try and overcome the previous reasons for refusal (under the Council's reference WA/2015/2010).
13. However, and notwithstanding the Appellant's conclusion that the only alternative would be to move from the property, there is very limited information before me in terms of any assessments which might have been undertaken of all potential options across the site, including taking into account the various buildings which are on the appeal site. Furthermore, the impact of

the proposal on the Green Belt would remain long after the personal circumstances referred to have ceased to be material. These matters therefore limit the weight I can give to these family and health related arguments in support of the proposal.

14. I agree that the design of the extension and alterations and the proposed materials to be used across the extension as well as the existing property would be of high quality but this adds only modest weight in favour of the proposals.
15. The absence of harm to matters such as biodiversity and neighbouring residential amenity are welcomed but do not add weight in support of the proposals. Similarly the general improvements that the Appellant has undertaken to the site and its boundaries are fully supported but do not add weight in favour of these specific extension proposals.
16. The Appellant has referred to the future development of the nearby Dunsfold Aerodrome for residential development as well as other greenfield development together with potential future changes to the Green Belt boundaries and designation of AGLV land. I have noted that the Council is at the present time only part way through the processes of preparing its new Local Plan and my decision must necessarily be based on the planning policy position as it stands at the time of my decision. I am therefore unable to give weight in support of potential future policy changes.

Issue d) Balancing of Considerations and whether very special circumstances exist.

17. I have already found that substantial weight must be given to the harm to the Green Belt by reason of the inappropriateness of the proposed development. The harm from loss of openness adds to the harm by reason of inappropriateness. I have afforded some weight to the personal circumstances of the Appellant. However, the totality of the harm I have concluded is clearly not outweighed by the other considerations. I do not find that the very special circumstances required to justify the proposed development exist.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised including in the representations received, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L J Evans

INSPECTOR