

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 November 2016

by Jim Metcalf BSc DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 09 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/16/3160151

The Wellan, Sandy Lane, Polecat Valley, Hindhead, GU26 6BE

- 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 & Mrs Hunter against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2016/1134, dated 2 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 28 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of an extension and alterations following demolition of existing utility room and attached garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of an extension and alterations following demolition of existing utility room and attached garage at The Wellan, Sandy Lane, Polecat Valley, Hindhead, GU26 6BE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref WA/2016/1134, dated 2 June 2016, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans:- 1698 03; 04; 05; 06; 07; 18; 19; 20; 21 and 22.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether the extension is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the local countryside.

Reasons

3. The Wellan is a detached house, set back from Polecat Valley in a generous garden, in an area of attractive, wooded countryside. The lane serves a number of similar properties. The site is located within the Green Belt. The surrounding area is designated as both an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and
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an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). Previous work at the property includes the erection of a double garage, a two storey extension, a first floor extension, a pitched roof above the garage and a conservatory.

4. Paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explains that the extension of a building need not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Policies C1 and RD2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (LP) reflect this approach. LP Policy RD2 explains that to assess whether extensions are disproportionate regard will be given to the relative increase in floor space involved together with the form, bulk and height of the proposal in comparison to the original dwelling. Extensions which individually or cumulatively increase the floor space of the original dwelling by more than 40% would generally constitute inappropriate development.
5. The Council calculate that the original house had a floor area of about 120m², based on information submitted with a planning application in 1978. The appellant calculates, from survey, that the floor area of the original house was about 146m². From the information available to me I am unable to reconcile these two calculations. In comparison, as a result of the extensions that have been made, the floor area currently amounts to about 205m².
6. The extension, at the front corner of the house, would be two storeys high and measure about 3.9m wide and 4.75m deep, adding a new floor area of about 36m². The existing roof would extend over the extension with the existing hip replaced by a gable to accommodate the upper floor. The garage would be demolished to accommodate the extension.
7. In assessing whether extensions would be disproportionate LP Policy RD2 explains that non-habitable space, including garages, is excluded from the measurement of the floor space of a dwelling. However, the garage at The Wellan is for all intent and purposes an integral part of the house, contains a utility room and is linked to the house through internal doors. It could readily be converted to living space. The appellants explain they would use the garage as living accommodation if unable to otherwise extend.
8. In these circumstances I give weight to the fact that the garage would be demolished to allow the extension to proceed. I note, in this context, that when implementing LP Policy RD2 the Council acknowledges that proposals to use part of the non-habitable volume of an existing building, such as a loft, will visually have less impact on the rural character of an area than wholly external enlargement. I find this approach useful when considering the effect of the demolition of the garage.
9. The scale of work proposed can be measured in various ways. In considering this issue I start from the assumption that the existing building is not disproportionately larger than the original, resulting as it does from various planning permissions. As a result of the extension, and the related demolition of the garage, both the footprint and volume of the building would be less than at present. The width of the building, when seen from the lane would be less, whilst the average height would be greater as a result of the garage being replaced with a two storey extension. The amount of living space would increase but by less than if the garage was converted for such use.

10. Overall, the scale of development and built form on the site would be somewhat less than at present. It is for this reason that I find that the extension and demolition of the garage would not result in a building disproportionate in size to the original building. The work would therefore not, in the terms set out in NPPF, be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
11. The extension would reduce the footprint and volume of the building, as a result of the demolition of the garage, and consequently there would be no adverse effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. The appearance of The Wellan, when seen from Polecat Valley, would change. However, the property is well set back from the lane. The Council found that the scale and mass of the extension would be appropriate to the existing building and the materials used would match the existing property. I have no reason to disagree with this assessment and find that the development would not adversely affect the character of the local countryside within the AONB and AGLV.
12. For the reasons set out above I find that the development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and would not harm the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt or the character and appearance of the local countryside, within the AONB and AGLV, and would consequently be compliant with LP Policies C1 and RD2 and NPPF.
13. I have imposed standard conditions, limiting the time available to commence development, and to ensure the extensions are built as proposed and with suitable materials. These are needed to ensure the extended house relates satisfactorily to its surroundings and the local countryside.

Jim Metcalf

INSPECTOR