
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2017

by Michael Boniface MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 10th January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/W/16/3157653
Lesure, Honeyden Road, Sidcup, DA14 5LX

- 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 Ms Kathryn Wakeman against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 16/01237/FUL, dated 25 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 14 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of garages, erection of a 3 bedroom bungalow and alteration to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - (a) Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and whether it would have a greater effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - (b) The effect on the character and appearance of the area;
 - (c) If the development is inappropriate, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development and the effect on openness

3. Policies ENV4 of the Unitary Development Plan (2004) (UDP) and CS17 of the Bexley Core Strategy (2012) (CS) seek to protect the function, appearance and openness of the Green Belt and restrict inappropriate development.
4. Paragraph 79 of the Framework makes it clear that the Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt and the protection of its essential characteristics, those being openness and permanence. Paragraph 87 confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. New buildings are to be regarded as inappropriate development, subject to the express exceptions outlined in paragraph 89.

5. Amongst others, these exceptions include limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings). However, this is subject to the caveat that development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it than the existing development.
6. The site is currently garden land associated with the existing bungalow on the site and such land is specifically excluded from the definition of previously developed land contained within the Framework. Although two existing garage buildings would be removed from the site, these cover a far smaller area than the proposed bungalow and the development cannot be considered to be located on previously developed land.
7. In addition, the development would introduce a bungalow to the site that would cover a much greater floor area than the garages to be removed and be of greater volume and height. The building would be clearly visible from the public realm, intruding on the currently open aspect within the site and the views available towards gardens and greenery. Therefore, the openness of the Green Belt would also be harmed, as would its purpose to check the unrestricted sprawl of development. As such, the proposal is not excluded from being inappropriate development.
8. The development would be in conflict with Policies ENV4 of the UDP and CS17 of the CS, as well as Part 9 of the Framework. I attach substantial weight to the harm that would arise to the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

9. The existing bungalow occupies a large plot with good amounts of garden space surrounding. This is a common characteristic, with gaps between buildings in the street allowing views towards gardens and greenery, creating a verdant and spacious appearance. This character prevails, despite the eclectic mix of house types, designs and sizes in the area and notwithstanding the higher density three storey development at the end of the road.
10. The proposed bungalow would be set back behind the building line of other properties in the street and infill the gap between the appeal property and its neighbour. This would harmfully erode the sense of spaciousness in the street scene, appearing visually intrusive and discordant. The development would be readily visible from Honeyden Road and the public footpath running along the site boundary, which would be very close to the proposed building, appearing cramped within the plot.
11. Whilst I noted the presence of outbuildings to the rear of dwellings on some plots in the area, these were of much smaller size, scale and height and are not prominent in the street scene. The siting of dwellings behind other dwellings was not a characteristic of the area.
12. For all of these reasons, the development would harm the character and appearance of the area. This would be in conflict with Policies ENV39 and H3 of the UDP which seek high quality design that reflects the character of the area, including in respect of layout and the space around buildings; and Policy CS06 of the CS which has similar objectives applicable in the Sidcup area. I attach significant weight to this matter.

Other considerations

13. The development would make efficient use of the site and deliver a new dwelling, contributing to supply. I attach this matter limited weight

Conclusion

14. I have identified that the proposed scheme would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the Framework and would harm openness. The development would also harm the character and appearance of the area. I have considered the limited grounds presented in support of the development but together they do not outweigh the harm the scheme would cause. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development have not been demonstrated.
15. In light of the above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Michael Boniface

INSPECTOR