
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2017

by Richard S Jones BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 09 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/16/3159215

High Steeps, Peaslake Lane, Peaslake GU5 9SY

- 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 Andrew Barlow against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/P/01079, dated 23 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 14 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is a part rear, part 2 storey side extension. Enclosure of covered porch and first floor dormer element at the front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

1. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the framework) and development plan policy;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - 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

2. The appeal relates to an extended detached dwelling situated within spacious grounds. The site is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt and Surrey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and adjacent to the boundary of the Peaslake Conservation Area.

Whether the proposal is inappropriate development within the Green Belt

3. Section 9 of the Framework sets out the Government's approach to protecting Green Belt land. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Framework advises that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate. However,
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Paragraph 89 provides a limited number of exceptions to this general approach. This includes the extension or alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the original building.

4. Despite pre-dating the Framework, Saved Policies RE2 and H9 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 (LP) broadly reflect this approach. Specifically, LP Policy H9 sets a presumption against extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt that result in disproportionate additions taking into account the size of the original dwelling. Paragraph 5.39 of the LP explains that the Council do not consider it desirable to state categorically what maximum size of extension is permissible given the wide range of circumstances to which the policy applies, other than the general requirement that it should not result in disproportionate additions taking into account the size of the original building. This is defined as the dwelling and domestic outbuildings as existing on 1 July 1948 or as first built thereafter excluding any extensions or outbuildings built after the completion of the dwelling.
5. In this instance the original building comprises a bungalow with bedroom accommodation in the roof space. It has though recently been enlarged with a single storey extension on its north eastern side. The appeal proposal seeks to add a two storey extension positioned to the side and rear of the south western part of the original building and to enclose the existing covered porch and erect a dormer extension above.
6. At 10.5m wide, between 4 and 5.3m deep and 7.2m high, the proposed extension would be substantial. It would be more than half the width of the original dwelling and only 300mm lower than its main ridgeline. In combination with the proposed dormer and the existing extension, the development would add significant bulk and volume to the original dwelling.
7. The proposed plans also show that the original floor area is 245m² and the total proposed floor area would be 365m², giving a proposed uplift of 119m² or 48.5% from the original building. This uplift figure, which I have assumed to include the existing extension, amounts to a significant enlargement in the floor space of the original building.
8. Taken together, these factors demonstrate that the proposal would result in a disproportionate addition to the original building. On this basis I conclude that the proposal represents inappropriate development that is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and in conflict with the Framework and LP Policies RE2 and H9. I attach substantial weight to this harm.

Openness of the Green Belt and character and appearance

9. Paragraph 79 of the Framework states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Areas that are free of built development within the site contribute to the openness of the Green Belt. A loss of openness occurs through the presence of a built form within the Green Belt, regardless of whether or not it can be seen.
10. I acknowledge that the proposal would replace a summerhouse situated at the rear of the dwelling, however, its scale, visibility and permanence is substantially less than the height, volume and footprint of the scheme currently before me. In combination with the proposed dormer and the existing

extension, the development would fundamentally change the size and appearance of the original dwelling. It would result in a much greater physical presence within the site and would substantially increase the volume and spread of built form into areas currently largely absent of buildings.

11. I therefore conclude on this issue that the proposed extension would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and contrary to a fundamental aim of Green Belt policy.

Other considerations

12. Given the siting of the development and the screening provided by the mature trees in and around the site, I do not find that the proposal would materially harm the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. Nor would it materially affect Peaslake Conservation Area. Consequently, the proposal would preserve the setting of this designated heritage asset.

The Green Belt Balance

13. The Framework states that substantial weight will be given to any identified harm to the Green Belt, and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by virtue of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
14. I agree with the Council that the proposal would not result in material harm to the host dwelling or the character and appearance of the area. I appreciate the appellant's confusion on this matter but this is a neutral factor in the Green Belt balance which does not weigh in favour of the proposal. I also appreciate the appellant's wish to create a modern home that makes the most of its setting, as well as the desire to bring greater natural light into the dwelling. I also acknowledge that there would be a benefit to the removal of the summerhouse building, although, given its size and siting, this would be very limited.
15. Overall however, I conclude that there are no considerations sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm caused by the inappropriateness of the proposal and its effect on the openness of the Green Belt, which carry substantial weight in the balance. Therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to justify allowing the appeal do not exist.
16. The proposal would therefore conflict with national policy contained in the Framework and Saved LP Policies RE2 and H9.

Conclusion

17. For these reasons, and having taken all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

Richard S Jones

Inspector