
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2017

by G Rollings BA(Hons) MA(UD) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 14 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/D/16/3164844

Three Chimneys, Sandhills Lane, Virginia Water, Surrey, GU25 4BW

- 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 Ellis McGlynn against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref RU/16/1244, dated 26 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 19 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The appeal site is within in the Green Belt, and so the main issues are:
 - Whether the scheme represents inappropriate development for the purposes of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework); and
 - The development's effects on the Green Belt's openness, for the purposes of Green Belt Policy; and
 - Whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, or 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?

3. The Framework restricts most types of development in the Green Belt, although some specific exceptions are made as set out in paragraphs 89 and 90. The extension or alteration of a building is one such exception, providing that the works do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
 4. Whether an extension could be considered disproportionate, when compared with the size of the original building, can differ according to the characteristics of the building and its surroundings. As such, some local planning authorities have set a quantitative limit on what is acceptable. Runnymede, being one such authority, has set such a limit within Policy GB6 of the adopted *Runnymede Borough Local Plan* (2001). The limit is set at 30% in excess of the original size of the dwelling, although variations above this limit can be
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allowed in exceptional circumstances. This is a reasonable level based on the local circumstances, and I consider this definition to be broadly consistent with the Framework.

5. Although the proposed extension would have only a small footprint, when considered cumulatively with the existing, previous extensions to the original building, would markedly increase the volume of the dwelling, substantially in excess of the 30% amount defined by Policy GB6. On this basis, considered in totality, I consider the extensions to represent a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. Although the policy allows for variations in exceptional circumstances, I do not consider that any have been demonstrated.
6. I therefore conclude that the proposed development represents inappropriate development for the purposes of the Framework, for the reasons set out above.

Effect on openness

7. By definition, built development results in a loss of openness. Although the extension would be attached to the existing addition and not result in the overall proportions of the building projecting beyond existing building lines or its maximum roof height, there would be a loss of openness. However, given the enclosed location of the proposed extension, and the restricted views of its location from the public realm or surrounding properties, I consider that there would be an insignificant amount of harm caused as a result of a loss of openness.
8. I therefore conclude that although there would be a very minor loss of openness, the harm to the openness and general rural character of the Green Belt would not be significant, and there would be no conflict with Local Plan Policy GB6, which seeks to protect the character of the Green Belt.

Green Belt Balancing Exercise (whether Very Special Circumstances exist)

9. The proposed development would be inappropriate development. Great importance is attached to Green Belts by the Framework, especially with regard to their openness and permanence. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Such circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Council policies also reflect this approach.
10. I acknowledge the relatively minor size of the proposed extension, its limited visibility as set out above, and the fact that its style and appearance would match that of the existing dwelling, and would thus not be out of character within its built context. I acknowledge that there would be a lack of harm in these circumstances, and have given these considerations a moderate amount of weight within my decision.
11. Similarly, as I have set out above, there would be very limited harm to the openness of the site, and thus the open character of the Green Belt. However, such lack of harm can only be a neutral factor in any balancing exercise.
12. I have balanced the above considerations against the fact that the development would be inappropriate and harmful by definition. Substantial

weight has to be attached to any harm to the Green Belt, and in this case, the benefits of the development, alone or in combination with others, do not clearly outweigh the harm. Consequently, no very special circumstances exist and the proposal is contrary to the Local Plan and the Framework.

Conclusion and conditions

13. Although the proposed extension would be small in scale, and that there would be a lack of harm to openness, these considerations do not outweigh the fact that it would be harmful and inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It fails to comply with the adopted development plan for the area, and it does not therefore meet the definition of sustainable development as set out in the Framework. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Rollings

INSPECTOR