

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 April 2017

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 04 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/17/3168970

Mayfield, Horsley Green, Buckinghamshire, HP14 3UX.

- 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 Peter Fiske against the decision of Wycombe District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/07530/FUL dated 24 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as single storey rear extension (under existing roof). Rear dormer. Increasing roof height.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues include:
 - a) Whether the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and development plan policy.
 - b) The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - c) The effect of the scheme on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
 - d) If the proposal does amount to inappropriate development, whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, including any public benefits, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt

3. The NPPF explains that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Also, that when considering any planning application local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. The NPPF identifies various forms of development which may not be inappropriate in the Green
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Belt, including the extension or alteration of a building. This is provided that any extension does not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building.

4. Collectively policies GB2 and GB6 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2011(Local Plan) similarly allow for the extension of existing dwellings provided the proposed extensions respect the open character of the Green Belt and are not disproportionate in size to the original dwellings. In addition, extensions will be permitted where, together with all previous additions to the dwellings concerned, they do not increase the floor-space of the original dwellings by more than 50%. There are a number of stated exceptions to this 50% limit, although none apply to the Appeal dwelling.
5. The supporting text to policy GB6 of the Local Plan states that the original dwelling is defined as the building which existed on the site on 1 July 1948 or, if the site was not developed at that time, the first building to be built on the site after that date. It also advises that irrespective of the 50% floor space limit some smaller extensions may still amount to a disproportionate addition due to their scale, bulk or design.
6. It is noted that the Council is proposing to replace this 50% floor area limit with a 50% volume limit in its new emerging Wycombe District Local Plan. In view of the draft status of this emerging Plan little weight can be given to this document. However, in assessing whether or not an extension would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, volume is a material consideration.
7. It is clear from the evidence submitted that the floor area of the existing dwelling on the Appeal site is at least 50% larger than the original dwelling. As such the proposed extension would exceed the 50% limit set out in policy GB6 of the Local Plan. At the same time the resultant dwelling would be materially taller and its volume would be some 60% greater, including the proposed canopy. Given the open and exposed position of the dwelling, which is separated from the neighbouring dwelling by a parcel of open land, the proposed roof extension would significantly increase the actual and perceived size of the existing dwelling.
8. I therefore conclude on this main issue that the proposal would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary to the NPPF and policies GB2 and GB6 of the Local Plan. It would similarly conflict with policy CS9 of the Wycombe Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (Core Strategy), which seeks to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development. Substantial weight must be given to the harm resulting from the inappropriateness of the proposed development.

The effect of the proposal on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt.

9. As stated in the NPPF the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl and to keep land permanently open. The existing dwelling is modest in form and height and has minimal impact on the openness of the site and the surrounding open land. Conversely, the proposed extension would increase the height and bulk of the roof of the dwelling and as a consequence would detract from the open character of the site and its immediate and wider setting.

10. I therefore conclude on this main issue that the proposed extension would detract from the openness of the Green Belt contrary to policies GB2 and GB6 of the Local Plan and the NPPF. Significant weight needs to be given to this harm.

Character and appearance

11. The Appeal dwelling is located within an area that is characterised by a diverse mix of individually designed dwellings occupying varied sized plots and which have staggered building lines. The Appeal dwelling is modest in form, size and appearance and is both discrete and unassuming within the street scene.
12. Collectively, policies GB6, G3, H17 and L1 of the Local Plan and policies CS17 and CS19 of the Core Strategy seek to ensure that new developments achieve a high standard of design and respect and reflect the character and appearance of their surroundings. Residential extensions should not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling or the surrounding area and the AONB should be conserved and enhanced. The NPPF similarly seeks to ensure that new development respects and adds to the quality of the area. It also states that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty within AONBs.
13. The main roof of the resultant dwelling would be steeply pitched, with a flat crown top and half hips on either side. The ridge line of the proposed dormer window would match that of the flat roof and as a consequence would look unbalanced within the roof slope. The proposed single paned first floor windows would have strong horizontal lines and would fail to respect the alignment, design and appearance of the existing ground floor windows. Finally the front porch roof would add to the assortment of roof detailing and the strong horizontal lines of the roof. This together with the overall width of the dwelling would result in the dwelling appearing poorly proportioned and squat.
14. As a result of these factors the resultant dwelling would be visually squat, poorly proportioned and unbalanced. The proposed extensions would seriously harm and undermine the modest, yet well proportioned character and appearance of the host dwelling. It would have a materially adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Appeal site and its surroundings and would fail to conserve or enhance the landscape quality of the AONB.
15. For these reasons I conclude on this issue that the proposal would seriously harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and would unacceptably detract from the character and appearance of the AONB. The proposal would therefore conflict with policies GB6, G3, H17 and L1 of the Local Plan and policies CS17 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Other considerations

16. The appellant has put forward a number of factors in support of the proposal.
17. A moderate amount of weight is given to the fact that the proposed additional living accommodation would enhance the living conditions of the Appellant and his family.

18. It is also acknowledged that the Appellant would like to replace the existing roof tiles and brickwork and is looking to make considerable investments in the property as a whole. However, the visual harm that would result from the form and design of the proposed roof extension would outweigh the benefits of introducing more attractive roof tiles and bricks. Accordingly, little weight is given to this factor.
19. Finally, the Appellant has referred to the recent replacement of the former mobile home at Steppe, with a 6.2 metre high dwelling. Full details of the former buildings/structures on this site and its planning background are not provided. Notwithstanding this, the dwelling at Steppe is an integral part of a continuous row of dwellings, whereas the Appeal dwelling is surrounded by open land. As a consequence the two sites are not directly comparable. Accordingly only a modest amount of weight is given to this factor.
20. I conclude on this main issue that the other considerations put forward in favour of the proposal both individually and collectively fail to clearly outweigh the general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt; the substantial weight to be attached to the harm caused by the inappropriateness of the development; the harm to the openness of the Green Belt; the harm to the host dwelling and the AONB and the conflict with policies GB2, GB6, G3, H17 and L1 of the Local Plan, policies CS9, CS17 and CS19 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF. Therefore the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist.

Conclusion

21. The conclusions on the main issues amount to compelling reasons for dismissing this Appeal, which could not be satisfactorily addressed through the imposition of conditions.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR