
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2017

by Lynne Evans BA MA MRTPI MRICS

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

Decision date: 13 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/17/3173876

Clouds Hill, 1 Lascombe Lane, Puttenham GU3 1BA

- 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 R Behrmann against the decision of Guildford Borough Council
 - The application Ref: 16/P/02354 dated 16 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is erection of single storey side and rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory and erection of single storey side extension incorporating front porch.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - a) Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - b) Its effect on the character and appearance of the existing property and of the local area, including with regard to its location in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Area of Great Landscape Value.

Reasons

Issue a) Whether inappropriate development

3. The appeal property is a semi-detached property in a short row of modest cottages in a very rural location and within the Green Belt, the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as well as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) sets out the government's planning policies to secure sustainable development. One of its core planning principles at Paragraph 17, as amplified later in the Framework, includes *protecting the Green Belts*. Paragraph 87 confirms that *inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances*. Paragraph 89 sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate except for a limited number of exceptions including the extension or alteration of a building providing that it

does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The Framework does not define further the term 'disproportionate'.

5. Policy H9 (following on from Policy RE2) of the adopted Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 (Local Plan) relating to extensions to development in the countryside, including within the Green Belt, also refers to 'disproportionate additions' taking into account of the size of the original dwelling. However, the policy also does not define the term. Indeed the supporting text states that a definition is not desirable because of the wide range of circumstances which apply across the district. In this case, there is a difference in the calculations and resultant percentage increase in floorspace over the 'original' dwelling as presented by the Council and the Appellant. However, the Council has concluded that the proposed increase would not be disproportionate to the size of the original dwelling.
6. On the basis of the assessments before me and my site visit, I have no reason to reach a different conclusion. There would inevitably be some increase in the overall extent of built development but in the context of the existing building, the plot and surrounding development, I do not consider that it would result in a disproportionate increase in the size of the original dwelling, in the context of Green Belt policy, or that there would be a material impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
7. Taking all of these factors together, it is my conclusion that the proposed development would not be inappropriate development for the purposes of the Framework and development plan policy. There is therefore no need for the development to be justified by special circumstances.

Issue b) Character and appearance

8. The existing house is modest in size with a simple, rectangular layout and distinctive bay window at ground floor level on the front elevation. Although there is an existing conservatory projection to the side at the rear at the property, it is relatively small in scale with a largely glazed form. The proposed replacement and additional extensions would be larger in size with a varied building line. The forward projecting porch would compete in scale and bulk with the traditional bay window and be a discordant element.
9. I understand the need to retain the light well to the basement, but the staggered side building lines would result in a very uncomfortable and dissonant relationship with the simpler and clean lines of the existing property. As a result, I consider that the extensions, taken together, would appear obtrusive and an incongruous addition to the existing property. They would therefore detract from the character and appearance of the existing property.
10. Although set back with a deep front garden, the front of the property, together with the adjoining cottages, is visible from the public right of way which runs across the plot frontage. The extensions would be visible in these views and the discordant relationship of these with the existing property and in turn the adjoining semi-detached pair and other cottages, would detract from the character and appearance of the local area.

- 11.I therefore conclude that the proposals would harm the character and appearance of the existing property and the local area. This would conflict with Policies G5 and H9 of the Local Plan as well as the Framework and in particular Section 7, all of which seek a high standard of design which respects the local context.
- 12.I note that the Council's reason for refusal did not include specific reference to either the AONB or AGLV and the application consultation response from the AONB officer, whilst not supporting the proposal, concluded that he could not substantiate a recommendation for refusal on AONB grounds given the small scale of the proposals. However, although small scale, the proposed extensions would be visible from the public right of way passing along the frontage, and the harm I have concluded to the character and appearance of the local area would also not conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, contrary to the provisions of Section 11 of the Framework. This adds to the harm I have concluded.
- 13.The Appellant has drawn my attention to an extension permitted by the Council at No 6 Lascombe Lane under the Council's reference 13/P/00289. Each proposal must be considered on its individual merits but I have nonetheless taken that permission into account. However, I do not consider that the details of that proposal and the relationship with the host property are directly comparable with the proposal before me. It does not therefore persuade me that planning permission should be granted in this case.

Conclusion

- 14.I have found that the proposal would not be a disproportionate addition to the original dwelling, nor result in material harm to the openness of the Green Belt. However, these findings do not outweigh the harm I have concluded both to the character and appearance of the existing property as well as to the local area, including with regard to its location in an AONB and AGLV.
- 15.For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L J Evans

INSPECTOR