
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 October 2017

by John Felgate BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 13th October 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/d/17/3180739

18 Grove Heath North, Ripley, Surrey GU23 6EN

- 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 Graham Sykes against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 17/P/00936, dated 26 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 15 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is to demolish the existing rear conservatory and erect a single storey rear extension with rear dormer including loft room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of the existing rear conservatory and the erection of a single storey rear extension with rear dormer including loft room, at 18 Grove Heath North, Ripley, Surrey GU23 6EN, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 17/P/00936, dated 26 April 2017, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plan, No GH/17/04.
 - 3) The materials to be used on the external surfaces of the proposed extension shall match those used on the existing building.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - whether the proposed development would constitute 'inappropriate development', in terms of green belt policy;
 - and the development's effects on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons for Decision

Green Belt policy

3. Under paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), built development in green belts is normally 'inappropriate development'. However, the paragraph goes on to specify various exceptions. One of these is the extension or alteration of an existing building, provided that this does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original.

4. In the present appeal, No 18 Grove Heath North is a detached 3-bedroomed bungalow, with an L-shaped floorplan. The building has been extended slightly at the front, with a single storey porch and a small extension adjacent to this, forming what is now a study and bathroom. At the rear, a conservatory has been added, between the arms of the 'L', but this would be replaced by the new extension now proposed.
5. The new structure would be longer and slightly wider than the existing conservatory, but would still be contained within the 'L' of the original building. As shown on the submitted plans, its footprint would be no more than 6.65m x 5.30m. Above this, there would also be a further new room at first-floor level, but this would be largely within the roof space, except for a proposed dormer window. Apart from the dormer, the roof height and profile would match the existing building. The first floor would therefore add little to the building's size.
6. The Council argues that the replacement garage approved in 2004 should also be taken into account. But the garage is well separated from the house itself, and therefore does not comprise an extension or alteration to it. The cumulative increase would therefore be limited to the present proposal plus the previous porch and front extension. On this basis, the additions would not be disproportionate, and thus would satisfy the NPPF requirement.
7. In the adopted Local Plan (the LP)¹, the definition of inappropriate development differs slightly from that in the NPPF, in that saved Policy RE2 allows for the limited extension of existing dwellings, without reference to proportionality. For the same reasons as those given above, I consider that the present proposal falls within this category. The same Policy RE2 also requires, amongst other things, compliance with the further provisions of Policy H9, which relate to the character of the dwelling and its surroundings. But in relation to the question of inappropriateness, this requirement is inconsistent with NPPF paragraph 89, and therefore carries less weight than the more recent national policy.
8. I accept that the development would result in a minor reduction in the Green Belt's openness. But openness is not mentioned in any of the above policy provisions relating to extensions. In this case therefore, the effect on openness does not make the appeal proposal inappropriate.
9. For these reasons I conclude that, for the purposes of the relevant green belt policies, the proposed development would not constitute inappropriate development.

Effects on character and appearance

10. The proposed dormer window would have an elongated, box-like shape, with a flat top, and I accept that this would not relate particularly well to the design of the existing building. However, the development would not be visible from any public vantage points. And in any event, notwithstanding its inclusion in the Green Belt, in terms of visual and architectural character, Grove Heath North is essentially a suburban street. In this context, the proposed development would be in keeping with its surroundings.

¹ The Guildford Borough Local Plan, adopted January 2003

11. Although the development might potentially be seen from the two adjoining properties, it would be well away from their boundaries, and partially screened by the existing vegetation. These private views would therefore not cause harm.
12. Consequently, the development would have no significant visual impact outside the appeal site itself. As such, it would not conflict with the relevant provisions of LP Policy H9, or Policy G5 relating to design.

Conclusions and conditions

13. The proposed development would not be inappropriate in terms of green belt policy, and would not cause any significant harm to the area's character or appearance. The appeal is therefore allowed.
14. In granting permission, I have imposed conditions regarding materials and compliance with the approved plans. These are needed to ensure a satisfactory appearance, and for reasons of certainty.

John Felgate

INSPECTOR