
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 November 2017

by Timothy C King BA (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22 January 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/17/3181915

North Lodge, Crutchfield Lane, Hookwood, Surrey RH6 0HT

- 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 Moorcraft against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 17/00964/HHOLD, dated 25 April 2017 was refused by notice dated 27 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as '*Demolition of the existing single garage and utility room with new replacement single garage and utility room and first floor en suite extension with dormer roof modifications.*'
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of the existing single garage and utility room with new replacement single garage and utility room and first floor en suite extension with dormer roof modifications at North Lodge, Crutchfield Lane, Hookwood, Surrey RH6 0HT, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 17/00964/HHOLD, dated 25 April 2017, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Nos 143/PP/001, 143/PP/002, 143/PP/003, 143/PP/004, 143/PP/005, 143/PP/006, 143/PP/007, 143/PP/008, 143/PP/009, 143/PP/010, 143/PP/011 and 143/PP/012.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main Issues

2. The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and, in the circumstances, the main issues in this case are:
 - i) whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework);
 - ii) the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
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- iii) the effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling; and
- iv) if it is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and by reason of 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 the proposal is inappropriate development

3. The appeal dwelling's frontage has the appearance of a bungalow, and it is only from the rear of the property that the roofspace accommodation becomes fully apparent. The dwelling has substantial gable projections to the frontage, the central ridges of which are set down from the main ridgeline. It is proposed that the ridgeline be extended eastwards with the side extension requiring for the demolition of a side garage structure and utility room behind.
4. The extension would house a new utility room overlain by an en suite bathroom to one of the two bedrooms. A new single garage would also be erected, set back further than that which exists. The proposal would bring the dwelling's gabled flank closer to the boundary wall with Wrays Cottage, an adjacent two-storey dwelling. To the rear it is proposed that some minor modifications be made to the existing dormer projections.
5. The Council considers that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt in that the development would run contrary to the requirements of Policies Co1 and Ho24A of the Borough Local Plan (LP) and also the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
6. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. All development is inappropriate unless, in the case of any new building constructed, it falls within one of the exceptions referred to in paragraph 89 of the Framework. This includes the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
7. The Framework, which was published some seven years after the adoption of the Council's Local Plan, provides no clear guidance over what may, or may not, amount to disproportionate additions. In this particular instance the Council has calculated that the dwelling's floorspace has already been increased by some 61 sqm, or 43% over and above the size of the original dwelling. The additional net figure of 23 sqm would amount to a total cumulative increase of approximately 60%.
8. The appellant does not dispute these figures but comments as to the small scale of the actual proposal. However, as both the Framework and LP Policy Ho24A concentrate on additions to that of the original dwelling I afford this approach little weight.
9. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that if regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. With reference to the above I consider that the undisputed

cumulative increase of 60% is significant and I must conclude that the proposal would represent a disproportionate addition to the original building contrary to paragraph 89 of the Framework and LP Policies Ho24A and Co1. It would therefore be inappropriate development which, harmful to the Green Belt, carries substantial weight.

The effect on the openness of the Green Belt

10. The Framework states that an essential characteristic of Green Belts is their openness and that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land within them permanently open.
11. The proposed scheme would increase the footprint of the dwelling, but only very marginally, and the flank wall would be projected towards the common boundary with Wrays Cottage. Given also the contextual setting with Wrays Cottage, although a narrow view from Crutchfield Lane to the rear of the property would be lost in part I find that the proposal's impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited.
12. In the circumstances, whilst I accept that there would be some harm to the Green Belt's openness, I conclude that this would only be slight.

Other considerations

13. The dwelling's rear roofslope shows four modest dormer features and the proposal would involve splitting these into pairs and infilling the space between with flat roofed linkages to allow the utilisation of a little more internal floorspace. The flat roofs would be set down, and would be to the height of the dormers' eaves. As such, the distinctive overlying central ridges to the dormers would retain their prominence. The dwelling's appearance would be altered, but not to such an extent as to detract from the dwelling's appearance or create any significant harm. As such, I conclude that the proposal would not be contrary to the design objectives of LP Policy Ho9 nor the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance, provided by the document 'Householder Extensions and Alterations'.
14. I note that an objection has been raised by an interested party regarding possible inconvenience during construction by reason of the driveway being obstructed. However, such a matter has no bearing when considering the proposal's planning merits and this must, instead, remain a private matter between the parties involved.

Very special circumstances

15. Paragraph 88 of the Framework requires decision makers to ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. I have identified harm by reason of inappropriateness and a small degree of harm to its openness. To justify the proposal other considerations in favour of the development must clearly outweigh the harm.
16. In this particular instance the immediate neighbouring dwelling, Wrays Cottage, stands on higher ground and with it being positioned significantly forward of the appeal dwelling which is set more into its curtilage, the presence of North Lodge is somewhat downplayed. Accordingly, any modest physical alterations made to the property would be less perceptible to the passer-by.

17. That said, the proposed development would provide better symmetry to the dwelling's frontage and also involve the removal of a somewhat unprepossessing side garage structure. Admittedly, this is more apparent from the rear with the existing garage acting as more of an angled outhouse, appearing incongruous in both age and form. The proposal would, instead, make for a more cohesive and less fragmented physical arrangement at this side of the property. I have also had particular regard to the appellant's personal circumstances given that the proposed en suite bathroom would help his wife's personal needs given her medical condition.
18. Taken together, I conclude that all these factors combine to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and some loss of openness, and they would provide the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Conclusion and Conditions

19. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all matters raised, the appeal succeeds. In terms of conditions, apart from the statutory time limit, in order to ensure a satisfactory appearance I impose a condition requiring for the use of matching materials. Also, in the interests of certainty, a condition is imposed requiring that the development be implemented in accordance with the approved plans.

Timothy C King

INSPECTOR