

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2019

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/D/19/3225812

Trussell Cottage, Church Lane, Warfield, Bracknell RG42 6EG

- 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 Jonny Good against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. 18/01177/FUL, dated 6 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 20 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is a part rear single storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a part rear single storey side extension at Trussell Cottage, Church Lane, Warfield, Bracknell in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 18/01177/FUL, dated 6 December 2018, 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 shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: (Drawing No. Series 2555) Plan Nos. GA001/A; GA002/A; GA003/A; GA004/A; GA005/A; GA006/A; GA010/A; GA015/B;
 - 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 Issue

The main issue is whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 ('the Framework') and any relevant development plan policies.

Reasons

2. In respect of the Framework, Paragraph 143 says that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 145 explains that LPAs should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. However, there are a number of exceptions listed and these include 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.
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3. As regards the development plan, the Council's Notice of Refusal cites two policies as being relevant. Firstly, Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2008 ('the Core Strategy'). This explains the Council will maintain the Green Belt boundary within Bracknell Forest and protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
4. Secondly, Policy GB1 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan 2002 ('the Local Plan'), insofar as it relates to extensions to existing dwellings, is explained by paragraph 4.38 of the Local Plan. This says that the Council regards a cumulative increase of 40% is 'normally' being the limit in the gross floor area of the original building before extensions are considered as being disproportionate additions to the original building and therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
5. The use of the word 'normally' implies some flexibility in the application of the 40% limit and indeed this can be found in the next sentence of paragraph 4.38: *'Account will also be taken of the design and siting of the proposed extension; the visual character of the site and its surroundings; the prominence, visual and physical impact of the extension; the effect of the proposal on the open and rural character of the area in general and of the overall scale of development on the site'*.
6. My interpretation of this amplification of Policy GB1 is that these matters, both individually and in combination, should be a significant factor for the decision-maker in assessing whether the 40% should be adhered to. This element of discretion and flexibility is consistent with the much more up to date paragraph 145 of the Framework, which makes no attempt to place a figure on the size of an extension or alteration of a 'building' (which includes a dwelling) that would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
7. It is agreed between the parties that the appeal scheme would result in a cumulative increase in the gross floor area of Trussell Cottage of almost 60%, a figure substantially above the normal 40% limit. However, whilst in many instances it would be reasonable to conclude that this scale of increase would be disproportionate, in my view it is also the case that the appeal scheme performs particularly well when appraised against each of the five additional factors in paragraph 4.38 of the Local Plan.
8. The grounds of appeal explain this in some detail but in essence I consider the extension to be of a good design with a discreet siting to infill at single storey height a recess in the footprint of the building (plus a little more); it would be entirely in keeping with the visual character of the site and its surroundings; it would not be prominent and would have little discernible visual and physical impact; it would have a minimal impact on any reasonable perception of openness and no effect at all on rural character, and with a floorspace increase of under 4% it would not lead to any meaningful change in the overall scale of the development on the site (the terrace as a whole) that in itself sits discreetly rather than assertively within the surrounding rural landscape.
9. I acknowledge that incrementally there would be at least some loss of openness, but do not agree with the officer's report that *'the development would significantly alter the open, rural and undeveloped nature of the Green*

Belt'. Indeed, the same report says 'The proposed extensions would be set lower than the main roof, and would project slightly from the main dwelling, in line with the existing porch the proposed extensions would appear complementary to the host dwelling it is not considered that the proposed extensions would adversely impact the character of the area'. In short, there are in my view elements of inconsistency in the Council's approach, as although there are differences between them, I do not accept that the effect on openness and the effect on character are mutually exclusive.

10. Overall, I conclude that the extension and its cumulative effect would not be disproportionate to the original building and would therefore not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Accordingly, there would be no harmful conflict with Local Plan Policy GB1, Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy and national policy for Green Belts in the Framework.
11. I shall therefore allow the appeal. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is needed for the avoidance of doubt and is in the interests of proper planning. A condition stipulating matching external materials will safeguard the appearance of Trussell Cottage and preserve visual amenity.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR