
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 July 2019

by David Fitzsimon MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/19/3221052

Stable Cottage, Coppice Lane, Reigate RH2 9JG

- 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 Mrs L Wilkins against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/01890/HHOLD, dated 6 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 2 November 2018.
 - The development proposed is a first floor rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a first floor rear extension at Stable Cottage, Coppice Lane, Reigate RH2 9JG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 18/01890/HHOLD, dated 6 September 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 hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawing numbers:
J002783-DD02 A, J002783-DD03 A, J002783-DD06 A, J002783-DD07 A, & J002783-DD08 A.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing dwelling.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are as follows:
 - Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - Its effect on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - If it does amount to inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.
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Reasons

Whether or not inappropriate development

3. The appeal relates to a semi-detached dwelling which enjoys a rural position within the Green Belt.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) directs that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, save for a number of exceptions. One of these is 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. The Framework defines 'original building' as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.
5. Policy Co1 of the adopted Reigate & Banstead Borough Local Plan (LP) is broadly consistent with this approach, although as it pre-dates the Framework, it refers to 'dwelling' rather than 'building' when dealing with the exception of 'extensions'. Policy Ho24A reinforces this approach whilst policy Ho9 promotes high quality design that reinforces local distinctiveness.
6. There is no dispute that the 'original building' was a single detached dwelling. The Council suggests that its sub-division to two semi-detached dwellings may have taken place before 1948, becoming The Cottage and The Coach House. Accordingly, the Council asserts that the floorspace of The Cottage when sub-divided should form the basis of any assessment of (dis)proportionality and explains that this dwelling has since been the subject of several extensions including a two storey side extension and a single storey rear extension. The Council explains that these extensions have added almost 90 square metres of floorspace; more than doubling that of the dwelling created by the sub-division. As a result, the Council argues that when considered alongside these earlier enlargements, the proposed extension would be a disproportionate addition.
7. The appellant, on the other hand, has provided historical evidence including a 1963 OS plan which appears to show the larger building as one dwelling, along with Estate Agent's details from 1991 stating that the building had 'recently' been converted to two dwellings. To my mind, this evidence is more compelling than the Council's unfounded assertion. I therefore find it more likely, on the basis of the evidence available to me, that in 1948, the original building existed as a single detached dwelling and my assessment of (dis)proportionality should be made on this basis.
8. I have no information detailing the size of any extensions that have been added to the other section of the original building since 1948, which is now known as The Coach House. However, from my site visit, it appears that the original dwelling was quite sizeable. Furthermore, an analysis of footprint and floor area is only one indicator of proportionality, with scale, form and massing also very relevant considerations.
9. The floor area of the proposed extension would be very modest at some 11 square metres and the Council accepts that its design responds well to the detailing of the host dwelling. It would sit discreetly at the rear of the property and when considered alongside the building as a whole (original or otherwise), I am satisfied that it would not appear as a disproportionate addition. On this

basis, the proposal does not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

10. As the extension does not amount to inappropriate development, it follows that any impact upon openness would be within accepted tolerances. Further, very special circumstances are not necessary to justify it.

Overall Conclusion

11. I conclude, on the basis of the information available to me, that the proposal would not amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. As such, it would not amount to inappropriate development and it follows that it would not unacceptably harm the openness of the Green Belt. It therefore accords with the Framework and the overall aims of the development plan policies outlined above.

Conditions

12. In addition to the standard conditions which limit the lifespan of the planning permission and direct that development takes place in accordance with the approved plans, the Council has suggested a condition requiring the external materials of the development to match those of the host dwelling. I agree that such a condition is necessary in order to ensure a visually acceptable development.
13. The appeal is allowed accordingly.

David Fitzsimon

INSPECTOR