



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 July 2019 by G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI

Decision by A U Ghafoor BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/19/3226924

1 Beech Acres, Goswell End Road, Harlington LU5 6NZ

- 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 Vincent Morren against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council
 - The application Ref: CB/18/04732/FULL, dated 20 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 14 February 2019
 - The development proposed is proposed extensions, garage conversion, porch, fenestration changes and raised decking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. These are as follows:
 - 1) Whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - 2) The effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - 3) The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the street scene; and
 - 4) Would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons for the Recommendation - *Inappropriate development*

4. The Framework states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be permitted except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 145 indicates that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt subject to a number of exceptions. Sub-section (c) states extension or alteration of a building provided that it does

not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building would not be inappropriate development.

5. The evidence presented shows that the original building was extended to the rear in 1988 which increased the floor area of the dwellings by around 39%. The garage, which is proposed to be converted as part of this appeal, was also approved with that application. The proposed extension would increase the dwellings floor space by around 81%. Therefore, the total increase of the original buildings floorspace equates to around 120%.
6. The Framework does not define what a disproportionate addition could be. The officers report indicates that the Council generally seek to ensure extensions in the Green Belt do not exceed 60% of the original footprint. This is not set out in the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (CS) or in the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide SPG. There is therefore no local policy which stipulates what is a disproportionate addition would be in the Green Belt.
7. The appellants referred to an appeal for an extension in the Green Belt (Ref: APP/N1920/D/16/3153050) wherein the Inspector noted the need to not just consider the increase in absolute size but also the visual increase. It is acknowledged that the percentage increase may not necessarily relate to the visual increase in built form created by the development but the two need to be considered together to fully assess whether it is a disproportionate increase.
8. The original dwelling was a relatively small bungalow. The rear extension and garage added a substantial amount of additional built form in the Green Belt. The appeal site is well enclosed but the proposed connection between the garage and the house would create a wider dwelling with greater bulk. The additional western extension would visually increase the size of the building adding the road facing gable to the building which would further increase the size of the building. Therefore, considering both the percentage increase and the visual increase the proposed development would, combined with the already built extension, amount to a disproportionate addition to the original building. The scheme would not fall within any of the exceptions set out in paragraph 145 to the Framework. The proposals would also conflict with the purposes of keeping land in the Green Belt as it would not safeguard the countryside from encroachment.
9. Taking all of the above points together, I find that the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness

10. The dwelling is surrounded by mature trees and hedgerows and views into the site from the public domain are limited to the two vehicular access into the site. Despite this the dwelling is visible when approaching the house from both directions as a pedestrian and motorist. The extended roof for the connection between the host building and the garage is currently being constructed and the extended roofline is already visible from the roadside and as such it has visually reduced the openness of the Green Belt. The garage conversion would not result in any increase in built form in the Green Belt and as such would have a limited visual impact on openness. The eastern extension would extend the house closer to the roadside and as such, combined with the new gable frontage, would be more prominent than the existing building. The porch, fenestration changes and raised decking would have a very limited impact on

the openness of the Green Belt. Whilst trees should not be relied upon to make the visual aspect of a development acceptable the visual impact on openness would be limited in this case.

11. The land where the extensions are proposed is currently undeveloped and therefore open and contributes positively to the openness of the Green Belt. The garage conversion, porch, fenestration changes and the decking which would not have a detrimental impact on the spatial aspect of the Green Belt. Nonetheless, the other additions will reduce spatial openness. As such the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the spatial aspect of the Green Belt.

The effect on the character and appearance of the street scene

12. The proposals would extend the house westwards by a relatively short distance and the proposed extension to the east would connect the house to the garage and as such would not propose any new built form further east than the garage. Visually the outbuilding would become part of the main dwelling and as such the bulk of the dwelling would be increased. The proposals would extend the dwelling closer to the roadside and would create a gable end which would be taller and have a greater visual impact than the existing roofline. This part of the dwelling would be visible from the public domain and as such would result in harm to the character and appearance of the street scene. The dwelling is the only building on the northern side of this section of Goswell End and as such the harsh edges created by this development are already present in the existing dwelling. I do not consider that by extending the dwelling that this would exacerbate this situation considerably and would not have a detrimental impact on the street scene.
13. Whilst the porch and fenestration changes would be visible to the public domain their impact on the street scene would be very limited and would not harm the character and appearance of the street scene. The decking is proposed to the rear of the dwelling and such would not have an impact on the street scene.
14. The proposed extension would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the street scene by virtue of the existing screening provided by the trees and hedgerows and the modest additions to the existing dwelling. The proposed development would therefore comply with Policy DM3 and CS14 of the CS and the Framework.

Other Considerations

15. The appellants have referred to a previous application that was approved by the Council to extend the dwelling to the rear and to connect the house to the garage. This permission has now lapsed and is no longer extant. The main extension was to the rear of the dwelling which would have had less of an impact on the visual aspect of the Green Belt and the total amount of floorspace created by the development was less than is proposed as part of this appeal. Each case must be assessed on their own merits and the Council granting approval for a similar scheme does not justify this proposal.
16. I note the personal circumstances of the appellant, and in particular the need for more accommodation. However, personal circumstances seldom outweigh more general planning considerations, and it is likely that the proposed

development would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be material.

Conclusion and Recommendation

17. The proposed development would cause harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and as such I give this substantial weight. The visual impact of the development on the Green Belt would be limited, but the spatial harm would be significant. On the other side, the planning history of the site and personal circumstances of the appellant are given limited weight. The proposed development would not harm the character and appearance of the street scene and as such this has a neutral effect on the overall balance in that it neither weighs in favour or against. The advanced considerations in support of the appeal, whether taken individually to cumulatively, do not, on balance, clearly outweigh the conflict with planning policies designed to protect the Green Belt so as to justify the grant of a permanent planning permission on the basis of very special circumstances.
18. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Sibley

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

19. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report, and, on that basis, I too agree that the appeal should be dismissed.

A U Ghafoor

INSPECTOR