
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2019

by M Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/19/3232904

4 The Avenue, Chobham, Woking GU24 8RU

- 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 Philip Syngé against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/0349, dated 22 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 25 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is a replacement single storey rear extension, loft conversion with dormer to rear, new front porch canopy.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The scheme as originally submitted included the provision of a flat roof dormer extension to the rear roof slope. During the course of the planning application, this element of the scheme was removed. I have considered the appeal on this basis.
3. I have not been provided with any policies of the development plan which refer to development within the Green Belt. In the absence of such, I have considered the appeal on the basis of the guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Main Issues

4. The main issues raised in this case are:
 - Whether or not the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - If the proposal is inappropriate development whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and 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 or not the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt

5. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), at paragraph 145, indicates that, other than in connection with a small number of exceptions, the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt. The extension of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building, is listed as one of the exceptions.
6. The dwelling has previously been extended. Using the figures provided by the appellant, the original property had a floorspace of approximately 75 square metres (m²) and as a result of the previous extension, now has a floorspace of approximately 108 m², an increase of approximately 45%. This is excluding the integral garage, which if included would bring the total floorspace to 122m², a 62% increase over the original house. With the addition of the proposed extension, excluding the dormer extension to the roof which has been removed from the scheme, the total floorspace would be 149.4 m². This would be an addition of approximately 74.4 m², over and above the original 75 m², resulting in a 99.3% increase. In my view, the increase cannot reasonably be considered to result in anything but a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building.
7. Consequently, in not complying with the exceptions as outlined by paragraph 145 of the Framework, the scheme would comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which paragraph 143 states is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Therefore, the scheme would conflict with the provisions of the Framework.

The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt

8. The Framework, at paragraph 133, indicates that openness and permanence are the essential characteristics of the Green Belt. The conversion of the loft would entail internal works and the installation of rooflights only; as such there would be no loss of openness associated with this element of the proposals. However, the scheme would also result in the addition of a rear extension to an existing property. Whilst the rear extension is not, when considered in isolation, a vast extension, nor would it generally be visible from public vantage points, it would nevertheless result in an increased quantum of built development at the site. Consequently, the scheme would not preserve, and there would be a small loss of, the openness of the Green Belt.

Other considerations

9. I note that the example of developments at a neighbouring property has been cited by the appellant. However, the Council in its delegated report states that there was a fall-back position in that case which justified the approval of a disproportionate addition. In any event, I have judged the appeal scheme on its merits and found clear conflict with national policy in respect of the scheme being inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
10. I am also conscious that the appellant has referred to the potential to erect an extension under "prior notification". Whilst I note this, there is a separate

process to establish whether or not the prior approval of the local planning authority is required. It is not a matter for me to consider within the context of this appeal, whether prior approval would be required. As such, this matter carries little weight in favour of allowing the appeal.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

11. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the Framework establishes that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. It would also lead to a small loss of openness. The other considerations in this case do not clearly outweigh the harm that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposal would be contrary to the guidance of the Framework.
12. Therefore, for the reasons given and having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR