



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 October 2019 by Elizabeth Davies BSc (Hons) PIEMA

Decision by Andrew Owen BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/19/3232290

Brickfields Cottage, Littleton Lane, Guildford GU3 1HR

- 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 West against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/P/00333, dated 12 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 9 April 2019.
 - The development proposes extensions and alterations to Brickfields Cottage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for extensions and alterations at Brickfields Cottage, Littleton Lane, Guildford GU3 1HR in accordance with the application, Ref 19/P/00333, dated 12 February 2019 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 materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans: 1425/P-01, 1425/P-02, 1425/S-01 and 1425/S-02.

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.

Procedural matter

3. Amended plans were submitted with the appeal which reflect a scheme that, at that time was being considered by the Council (Ref No. 19/P/01143). The appellant has subsequently advised that that scheme has been granted planning permission. Consequently, there would be no advantage in me considering the amended plans and I will base my considerations on the original drawings assessed by the Council.

Main Issue

4. The main issues in the appeal are:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and development plan policies; and
- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the landscape character of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).

Reasons for the Recommendation

Whether it would be inappropriate development

5. The appeal property is a detached, single storey barn style building, located in a rural area. The appeal property is set back from Littleton Lane and accessed by an unmade track. There is a sense of space and separation between the appeal property and neighbouring properties, which are set in large plots. There are trees and hedges on the boundary of the appeal site.
6. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that new buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt unless they fall within the given list of exceptions. One exception 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. Policy H9 and RE2 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan (2003) were adopted before the publication of the NPPF, but are consistent with it in that they seek to ensure extensions to dwellings within the Green Belt do not result in disproportionate additions.
7. Both parties agree that the proposal would result in a dwelling with a floor area of around 244m². However, the parties do not agree on the floor area of the original building and therefore the calculation of uplift in floorspace as result of the proposal. The appellant has suggested the original total floor area of the building was 188m² which means the development equates to an increase of around 30%, whereas the Council have a corresponding figure of 137m² which relates solely to the ground floor as they consider the floor area at first floor level is of an insufficient headroom as to be useable. Using this figure means the development would represent an increase of around 77%. The Council also suggest the floorspace of the original dwelling was 45m², however as the Framework refers to the 'original building' I consider the size of the dwelling when converted from part of the original building to be irrelevant. I consider the appellant's calculation of floor area to be more accurate as the first floor space is useable evidenced, not least, by the rooflights on the rear roof slope.
8. Whilst this calculation cannot be solely relied upon to assess proportionality, it does provide an appropriate indication of proportionality of the proposed development. In addition to that, there will only be a small increase in the height of the building as a result of the proposed gables, but no increase to the main roof. The appellant has provided a drawing of the existing front (south) elevation with the proposed front elevation overlaid which demonstrates the modest increase in scale which is not considered to add unacceptable bulk or massing to the dwelling at first floor level. The increase in size will be more apparent when viewed from the east and west, but only because of the gable features; not due to any material increase in the main bulk of the building.
9. Overall, I do not consider that the development would represent a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, and it

would therefore not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined by the Framework. The proposal therefore accords with Policy H9 and RE2 of the Local Plan.

Character and Appearance

10. It has been established above that the proposal is proportionate to the appeal property. The scale of extensions and alterations will not substantially alter the height of the appeal property or the massing when viewed from the front elevation or rear elevation. The increase in size will be more apparent when viewed from the east and west elevations, but not unacceptably so. Whilst the proposal will result in a more contemporary appearance, I consider any harm can be mitigated by ensuring the materials used match the existing dwelling and that this can be secured by imposition of a condition. I do not consider the proposal will unacceptably change the character and appearance of the appeal property.
11. The appeal site is within the Surrey Hills AONB and an AGLV. An objection to the proposal was received from the Surrey Hills AONB Officer which references the visually greater impact that will occur as a result of the proposals. However, the appeal property is well concealed from the public realm and neighbouring properties by trees and hedges and the alterations are considered to be proportionate to the host dwelling. On this basis, I find the effect of the proposal on the AONB and AGLV will be neutral.
12. I therefore find that the proposal would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the appeal property or the surrounding area. On this basis the proposal would accord with Local Plan Policy H9 and the Council's SPG: Residential Extensions and Alterations 2018 which seek, amongst other things, to ensure extensions to dwellings in the countryside do not have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the dwelling. It would also accord with Local Plan Policy RE5 and RE6 which seek to conserve the existing landscape character of the AONB and AGLV.

Other Matters

13. I have taken into account the concern from the neighbouring property regarding overlooking, but consider that due to the separation distance from the appeal property and the screening provided by trees and hedges, that overlooking will not be a significant issue. The Council's findings support my view.

Conditions

14. I have imposed the standard conditions relating to the commencement of development and specifying the relevant plans in order to provide certainty. I have included a condition requiring the external materials to match the existing building to protect the character and appearance of the appeal property.
15. A condition has been suggested by the Council to control the enlargement, improvement or other alterations to the dwellinghouse, under rights conveyed by the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order. Such conditions can only be imposed in exceptional circumstances and where there are clear reasons for imposing them. I have no evidence before me to demonstrate that such a condition would be necessary.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal is allowed.

Elizabeth Davies

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is allowed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR