



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 November 2019 by Alex O'Doherty LLB(Hons) MSc

Decision by V Lucas LLB (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/19/3234638

84 Frog Grove Lane, Wood Street Village, Guildford, GU3 3HA

- 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 Victoria Fear against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/P/00508, dated 19 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is alterations and addition including raising existing ridge height to form additional floor space.
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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.

Procedural Matter

3. During the course of the appeal, the appellant submitted an amended site plan, as the original did not show the full extent of land in the appellant's ownership. A copy of the amended site plan was provided to the Council. The amended site plan does not alter the nature of the proposal, and I am satisfied that the interests of interested parties would not be prejudiced by the revised plan being considered in this appeal. Therefore, the appeal has been considered on the basis of the revised plan.

Main Issues

4. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') and development plan policy;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building;

- If the proposal would be 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 it.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Whether Inappropriate Development

5. As the site is in the Green Belt, it is imperative that national and local policies relating to the Green Belt are considered. The Framework establishes that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt is inappropriate. There are however a number of exceptions to this, as set out in paragraph 145 of the Framework, including 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 P2 of the Guildford borough Local Plan: strategy and sites (2015 – 2034) (adopted 25 April 2019) ('Local Plan') also provides that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt will constitute inappropriate development, unless the buildings fall within the list of exceptions identified by the Framework.
6. These policies assist in safeguarding the five purposes of the Green Belt. Of particular relevance to this appeal is the Green Belt's purpose in relation to its assistance in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
7. Calculations provided by the Council, which have not been disputed by the appellant, show that the existing enlargements combined with the appeal proposal would create an increase in floorspace of more than 150%, over and above the size of the original building. This percentage increase in size over the original building is substantial. It is acknowledged that the original building may have been constructed prior to 1965, when the needs of families may have been different, but the Framework is clear that the 'original building' must be taken as the building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.
8. The dwelling is sat within a long plot, but even so, the proposal would result in a bulky and prominent addition, with a conspicuous increase in mass. Accordingly, the proposal would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. The proposal therefore constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the Framework and Policy P2 of the Local Plan. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness

9. The Framework denotes openness as an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect. 'Open' can mean the absence of development in spatial terms, and it follows that openness can be harmed even when development, or a part of it, is not readily visible from the public realm.
10. The proposal would increase the size of the property, and due to the additional mass the openness of the Green Belt would be reduced, both visually and spatially. The screening provided by the existing mature hedging and planting would not reduce the spatial impact. Even though the impact to openness would be limited and localised, harm would result to the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

11. The appeal property presents as a dormer bungalow, with a legible design. The existing roof pitch would be adhered to, but the proposal would increase the height of the roof by 1.4m and this, in combination with its sizeable depth, would add a considerable portion of built form which would significantly depart from the current design. The resulting effect would be to create an over-dominant feature that would not sit comfortably with the existing property and which would be partially visible in the street scene. Furthermore, the bonnet hip would appear as a contrived add-on. Whilst the roof alterations at the rear would be similar to that on the adjacent property to the south, the large expansion of the building would result in a bulky addition.
12. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the building. The proposal is in conflict with Policy D1 of the Local Plan which provides that new development shall achieve high quality design. The proposal does not comply with the advice given in Supplementary Planning Guidance: Residential Extensions (adopted 25 September 2003) in relation to proposals respecting the scale and character of the host property.

Other Considerations

13. The Framework makes it clear at paragraph 144 that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. It establishes that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
14. The proposal's unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the building (referred to above), has been accorded moderate weight. Moderate weight has been given to the fact that due the size of the plot the extended dwelling would sit appropriately within it.
15. The proposal has merit in that the footprint would not be significantly increased, and only a small amount of previously developed land would be taken up by the proposal (via the enlarged replacement porch). This porch would enhance the appearance of the property somewhat. These matters, which serve to maintain the character and appearance of the area, are neutral factors, which do not weigh in favour of the proposal.
16. The appellant has referred to permitted development rights for the addition of porches and also for roof alterations, but as no detailed drawings have been provided in this regard, I am unable to conclude whether or not such development would have a greater impact on the harm to the Green Belt than the proposal before me, and therefore limited weight has been given to this matter. Similarly, whilst the appellant has referred to the property immediately to the south of No 84, and to other houses on Frog Grove Lane, no details have been provided to enable a comparison, and therefore very limited weight has been given to this matter.
17. The proposal would modernise the property and provide more space for family living, but this could be claimed for many proposed developments in the Green Belt, and accordingly I have given limited weight to this consideration. Little detail has been provided as to how the proposal would contribute to

improvements in housing quality or energy efficiency or accommodation for wildlife, and therefore limited weight has been given to these matters.

18. The appellant has referred to a planning permission for a 2 bedroom bungalow to be demolished and replaced with a 4 bedroom dwelling with an increase in ridge height (19/P/01080). No details have been provided, but it is likely that this permission was determined under different planning policies, and therefore is not comparable to the scheme before me. As such, very limited weight has been given to this matter.

Balancing of Considerations and whether very special circumstances exist

19. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and further harm to the Green Belt would be caused as a result of loss of openness. These matters carry substantial weight. Additionally, moderate weight has been given to the harm arising via the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building. Taken together, I find that 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.

Conclusion and Recommendation

20. Based on the above, and having regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alex O'Doherty

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

V Lucas

INSPECTOR