



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2020

by David Carter BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/D/19/3240059

68 Horningsea Road, Fen Ditton, Cambridge CB5 8SZ

- 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 Michael Murphy against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/2705/19/FL, dated 2 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is a first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - (i) Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
 - (ii) If deemed inappropriate, the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - (iii) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
 - (iv) 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

3. The appeal property is an extended semi-detached dwelling located on the eastern side of Horningsea Road in a small residential estate to the north of the village of Fen Ditton. The estate is washed over by Green Belt and is located within a rural area. The opposite side of Horningsea Road is in agricultural use.

Inappropriate development

4. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes that new buildings within the Green Belt are inappropriate unless, amongst other things, it involves the extension of a building. This is provided so that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Adopting the appellant's measurements, the gross floor area of the dwelling as proposed would be approximately 240% of the original dwelling. This includes all the previous additions completed either as permitted development or with planning permission.

5. Policies NH/8 and NH/9 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan adopted September 2018 (LP) apply to the appeal proposal with Policy NH/9b specifically referring to disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. However, there is no further indication as to the point at which the scale of extensions would be deemed disproportionate, effectively leaving this to be examined on a case-by-case basis. The appellant refers to a similar sized, existing first floor side extension on the attached property (No 70) but it is the cumulative effect of all the previous and proposed additions to the appeal property that should be the defining factor at this point.
6. My conclusion on this main issue is that the cumulative effect of more than doubling the original gross floorspace must reasonably be considered disproportionate. As a consequence, the proposal would represent an inappropriate development within the Green Belt by virtue of the combined disproportionate scale of the extensions proposed and existing.
7. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Policies NH/8 and NH/9 of the LP. These policies seek to apply national planning policy to proposals within the Green Belt. I am satisfied that the intent of these policies remains broadly consistent with the most recent iteration of the Framework (paragraphs 143 and 145).

Openness

8. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. I have concluded above that, by virtue of its scale, the appeal proposal is inappropriate. As a consequence, it would have a harmful effect on the openness of the Green Belt. The appeal proposal would be visible from publicly accessible areas including Horningsea Road and other parts of the housing estate to the rear of the property accessed from Musgrave Way. This would have some adverse effect by increasing the intensity of built development and, by filling in the gap between buildings, leading to some reduction in the feeling of proximity to, and presence within, the countryside and Green Belt.
9. Therefore, as the proposal would adversely affect the openness of the Green Belt, I conclude it conflicts with Policy NH/8 of the LP. This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals have no harmful impact on rural character and the openness of the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

10. The appeal property forms part of a number of similar semi-detached pairs along the frontage of Horningsea Road. Most of the dwellings appear to be largely unaltered from their original configuration. Nos 68 and 70 are the exceptions to this. No 70 has a large 2 storey extension to the side as well as a rear extension whereas No 68 has single storey extensions to the front, side and rear as well as a recently completed loft conversion and dormer window constructed under permitted development.
11. All of the semi-detached dwellings in the run fronting onto Horningsea Road have hipped main roofs apart from No 68 which is the only dwelling with a gable end, introduced to enable the loft conversion. This is a feature that does stand out breaking the rhythm of the built form when viewed from the street scene. Furthermore, the proposed first floor extension would provide a pitched roof matching that on all of the other semi-detached dwellings. This would have a beneficial effect since it would remove the incongruous feature on the

run of semi-detached properties and help restore the balance between of Nos 68 and 70 as a pair of dwellings. Nevertheless, the existing pitched roof of the existing side extension matches the style of the main roofs of all the other semi-detached dwellings, providing some mitigation to the effect of the gable end of the main house.

12. The gap between Nos 66 and 68 is significantly wider than that between most of the semi-detached pairs and, after the proposed extension, there would still be a wider gap to that separating the other pairs of semi-detached dwellings. However, that point depends on the occupier of No 66 not wishing to extend at some point in the future. Therefore, fears expressed of a potentially harmful terracing effect in this run of properties are a valid concern. While the Council would remain in a position to control this in future it would suggest that by permitting the appeal proposal, No 68 would have to be afforded a degree of prioritisation for extension over adjoining properties. This would not be appropriate.
13. To conclude on this issue the proposed cumulative scale of extensions to No 68 would be disproportionate to the scale of the original property. I accept that in some respects the appeal proposal would help improve the street scene. However, those positive impacts would not overcome the harmful effects of increasing the intensity of built development and consequent reduction in openness and rural character considered in the preceding section. Accordingly, I consider that the appeal proposal would have no overall positive effect on the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to the provisions of Policy H/13 of the LP and specifically point d which deals with disproportionate additions to the original dwelling.

Other considerations

14. Given the cumulative additions to floorspace at No 68, the proposed development 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. In addition, there would be some loss of openness and an adverse impact on the rural character of the area.
15. I acknowledge that No 70 already has a comparable 2 storey side extension which was granted planning permission some years ago whilst covered by Green Belt and that the proposed extension would have some positive effect on the street scene. Additionally, the appellant has suggested that the small estate in which the appeal site is located is not within open countryside and is not dissimilar to other suburban housing estates lying adjacent to countryside. As a result, the appellant effectively suggests that the Green Belt designation should not come into play in dealing with householder extensions.
16. I disagree with this latter point since the Green Belt designation must have a bearing on the acceptability of extensions to buildings otherwise the Green Belt designation itself and national policy in the Framework would be brought into question. Therefore, these other considerations do not clearly outweigh the totality of harm which is the test that has to be met. Consequently, very special circumstances do not exist.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Carter

INSPECTOR