
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 March 2020

by R E Walker BA Hons DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/D/19/3230389

Shaynes Cottage, Dorney Wood Road, Burnham, Bucks SL1 8EQ

- 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 & Mrs Torr against the decision of South Bucks District Council.
 - The application Ref PL/19/0063/FA, dated 4 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is a proposed roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description in the planning application form and decision notice differ. I have taken the description from the planning application form which accurately describes the proposal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and
 - if it 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

Inappropriate Development

4. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be

- regarded as inappropriate, other than for several exceptions. One such exception is an extension to an existing building if it does not represent a disproportionate addition over and above the original building.
5. Policy GB10 of the South Bucks District Local Plan (LP) (adopted 1999) says, amongst other things, that extensions to existing dwellings will be permitted provided that the extension, in combination with earlier extensions, would be small in scale in relation to the original dwelling. The explanation for this policy suggests that an extension which would result in the original dwelling having increased its floorspace by more than half will not be regarded as small scale.
 6. The proposed extension would result in a small increase in additional floor space to the existing house, partly within the existing roof space and partly formed by a new pitched roof. Moreover, I note that there is no increase in the footprint of the building at the ground level.
 7. However, both the Framework and Policy GB10 define the original building as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally. In this respect the size of the original property prior to any additional extensions is material to the assessment of the proposal before me. There is no dispute between the main parties that the property has been extended in excess of 50%. Moreover, the Council's calculations that the original property's floor area is likely to have been increased by over 100% are not disputed.
 8. In either case, even though it is a small extension, the proposal in combination with previous extensions would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. It would therefore be inappropriate development for the purposes of Green Belt policy.
 9. In this regard, it would conflict with Policy GB10 of the LP and the Framework. The Framework directs that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It goes on to explain that substantial weight should be afforded to any harm to the Green Belt and inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Openness and Green Belt Purposes

10. The Framework advises that openness and permanence are the essential characteristics of the Green Belt. Openness is the absence of development and has both spatial and visual aspects.
11. The proposal would appear subservient in scale to the existing property but would still result in additional bulk and massing to the building. Moreover, its location and scale is such that it would not be prominent from the public realm. It would be partially visible from the entrance to the property. As such, although largely contained it would result in a reduction in openness both spatially and visually.
12. Green Belt purposes that appear to be served by the designation of the appeal site within the Green Belt include, amongst other things, checking unrestricted sprawl and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
13. I recognise that the extent of impact on the openness and thus, the effect on the related Green Belt purposes, would be small. Nonetheless, this adds to the

harm that I have already identified by reason of inappropriateness and to the conflict with the aforementioned policy documents.

Character and Appearance

14. The existing building is a large brick built detached property set within spacious grounds. It has a variety of roof forms including pitched, hipped and a flat roof. Other properties in the area appeared to share similar characteristics and the appellants highlight that the neighbouring property to the south has 2 crown roofs on its rear elevation.
15. The proposal would result in a crown roof form which would provide an additional bedroom within a link between the house and outbuilding. As outlined previously it would not be prominent within the public realm. The proposal would appear subservient to the existing building and comprise of matching materials. In my view, due to its size, location and variety of roof forms the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host property or surrounding area.
16. I therefore find that the proposal would accord with the requirements of Policies EP3 and H11 of the LP. These policies say, amongst other things, that development will only be permitted where its scale, layout, siting, height, design, external materials and use are compatible with the character and amenities of the site itself, adjoining development and the locality in general.
17. Regarding this matter, I also find no conflict with the Framework and, in particular, paragraph 127, which broadly seeks to secure high quality design.
18. The Council have also referred me to the Chiltern & South Bucks District Councils Chiltern and South Bucks Townscape Character Study (2017). However, I have not been referred to any specific section of this document in relation to the appeal site. In any event, from the evidence before me I find no conflict with this document.

Other Considerations

19. The Framework states 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
20. I recognise that the proposal would be a small-scale addition to the existing building and would be largely screened from the public realm with only a small portion likely to be visible from the entrance. Moreover, I note that the design has sought to minimise the bulk of the roof and, as outlined previously, I consider the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host property or surrounding area. No other harms have been identified by the Council. However, the lack of harm in these respects' weighs neither for or against the proposal.
21. I understand that extending the property might meet the appellants need for increased accommodation. However, personal circumstances will seldom outweigh more general planning concerns and the appellants desire to extend the property does not, therefore, amount to very special circumstances that weigh in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

22. In summary, I have concluded that there would be no harm to the character and appearance of the host property or surrounding area. However, the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the terms set out in the Framework and would lead to a small loss of openness to the Green Belt. Paragraph 144 of the Framework requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
23. 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.
24. Therefore, for all the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Walker

INSPECTOR