
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 September 2020

by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/20/3255764

1 Trunley Heath Cottages, Trunley Heath Road, Bramley, Godalming, Surrey GU5 0BN

- 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 Jason Kennedy against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/P/00308, dated 12 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Two storey side extension plus porch to new front door after demolition of existing conservatory and side extension'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and its effect on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - If the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development

3. Policy P2 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015 – 2034 (2019) (LP) is concerned with development in the Green Belt. It states that the construction of a new building in the Green Belt will constitute inappropriate development unless the building falls within the list of exceptions identified by the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework'). Paragraph 145 of the Framework lists the exceptions, and this includes the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
4. Policy P2 includes a definition of the term 'original building', which is the building as it existed on 1 July 1948. The submissions before me indicate that the footprint of the original building, which probably dates from the 19th

Century, was around 30sqm giving a floor area of approximately 60sqm. The building has subsequently been extended to the side with a single storey flat roofed addition. This has increased the floor area to around 80sqm. A conservatory has also been added to the rear and the appellant has indicated that this is around 11sqm. I see no reason why the conservatory should not be included as an existing extension. As such, the existing building has a floor area that is about 50% (91sqm) larger than the original.

5. The appeal scheme would see the existing extensions demolished and the house taken back to its original size. It would then be enlarged by a two-storey side extension that would incorporate a porch. The Council is of the view that the property once extended would be 107.2sqm but the appellant suggests it would be 97.1sqm. Neither party has explained in detail how they have come to these figures. Nevertheless, I favour the Council's figure as the drawings show that the external dimensions of the proposed extension would be 5.9m x 3.7m (giving a floor area of about 43.66sqm) and the porch would add around another 4sqm. Thus, the proposed extension would result in a floor space increase of around 77% on the original. The proposed extension would therefore be notably larger than the house as originally built. It would also be comfortably larger than it is with the existing extensions.
6. The LP does not define what would constitute a disproportionate addition and therefore this is a matter of planning judgment. The proposed extension would result in a comparatively large increase in both floor area and volume relative to the original building and this would not be offset by the removal of the existing extensions. Accordingly, the proposed extension, when compared to that of the original building, would be disproportionate.
7. An assessment of what constitutes a disproportionate addition goes beyond mathematical calculations. The matter also needs to be considered spatially, with reference to the massing, scale and general visual perception of the proposal. The proposed extension would appear subservient to the original house due to the set back of the front elevation and the lower ridge height. However, the eaves height would run through and the extension would have a similar width, height and footprint relative to the original house. The property would look as if it has almost been doubled in size. Consequently, the appeal property would appear as having been considerably enlarged. This greater massing would appear disproportionate next to the original house when considered spatially. This would be the case even when allowing for the removal of the existing extensions, which are smaller, light weight (in respect of the conservatory) and significantly lower in height.
8. In conclusion, the appeal scheme would be a disproportionate extension and therefore the proposed development would not meet the exceptions in Policy P2 of the LP. It would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which would, by definition, harm the Green Belt.

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

9. The proposal would result in additional massing to the side of the property, some of which would be at first floor and roof level. This would modestly reduce the openness of the Green Belt when this is considered relative to both the original dwelling and how it currently stands in its extended form. Accordingly, there would be a clear perception that the building had been significantly enlarged and the openness of the Green Belt eroded.

10. As such, the proposal would result in some modest harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The Framework advises that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt, the fundamental aim of which is to keep land permanently open. The harmful loss of openness caused by the appeal scheme would be at odds with this fundamental aim.

Other Considerations

11. The proposal would facilitate the removal of the existing single storey side extension. This extension jars a little with the original dwelling because it is flat roofed and set flush with the front elevation. The proposal on the other hand would be set back and would echo the form of the original house. The proposal would also provide a sense of balance to the semi as 2 Trunley Heath Cottages has a two-storey side extension. As such, the proposal would improve the visual appearance of the appeal property and surrounding area.
12. However, the existing side extension is single storey and modest in size. Moreover, the appeal site is very well screened from the road behind woodland. Accordingly, the existing side extension is not a significant detractor and therefore the improvement to the visual amenity of the area provided by the appeal scheme would be a modest benefit in favour of the proposal.
13. The proposal would increase the size of the appeal property and therefore make it more comfortable to live in by improving the layout and space. However, the property is occupied and therefore appears to function adequately as a dwelling at its current size. The fact that there is no evidence before me of long periods of vacancy and the apparently good condition of the structure are testament to this. As such, the proposal is unnecessary to secure the use of the building as a dwelling or to improve substandard accommodation.
14. There would be some minor economic benefits from the construction of the extension, but these would be short lived and modest in scale. The appeal scheme would be similar to the extension at 2 Trunley Heath Cottages, but that extension predates Policy P2 of the LP, which is a material change in circumstances. As such, this is a point of limited weight.

Whether there would be Very Special Circumstances

15. Policy P2 of the LP states that inappropriate development will not be permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
16. The appeal scheme would be inappropriate development that would, by definition, harm the Green Belt. There would also be modest harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 144 of the Framework requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Alternatively, the other considerations identified are collectively of only moderate weight in favour of the proposal.
17. Accordingly, the harm to the Green Belt is not clearly outweighed by the other considerations identified and therefore the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.

Conclusion

18. The proposal would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeal has failed.

Graham Chamberlain
INSPECTOR