



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 September 2020

by B Davies MSc FGS CGeol

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/D/20/3253173

Silver Birches, Tile Kiln Lane, Harefield, UB9 6LU

- 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 Willmott against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 75438/APP/2020/727, dated 2 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 23 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing single storey linked garage, and replaced [sic] with a single storey and two storey side extension, single storey rear extension and loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for demolition of the existing single storey linked garage, and replacement with a single storey and two storey side extension, single storey rear extension and loft conversion at Silver Birches, Tile Kiln Lane, Harefield, Uxbridge UB9 6LU in accordance with the application Ref 75438/APP/2020/727 dated 2 March 2020, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1334/P/2 (Proposed floor plans, elevations, site plan and location plan).
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing dwelling.

Main issues

2. The appeal site is in the Metropolitan Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area, and

- If the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, 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 development.

Reasons

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

3. Paragraph 145 c) of the Framework states that the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. This is reflected in Policy DMEI 4 of the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020)(the 'LP – Part 2'), which only allows extensions in the Green Belt when the proposal would not have a greater impact on openness or on the purposes of including land within it.
4. Before assessing whether the proposal is proportionate, it is necessary to determine the extent to which the existing building has been extended. The appellant has provided a detailed and compelling history of the site to substantiate the assertion that the entire structure was built as a whole, although tangible evidence, such as photographs, is lacking. The Council have also not provided records to demonstrate that the structures are extensions, despite the house being of reasonably modern construction. At the site visit, I noted that the garage brickwork is clearly of similar age to the main house and no seam between the buildings was visible that could have indicated that the building was constructed in phases. On the balance of probability, I am satisfied that the entire structure was built at substantially the same time.
5. The term 'disproportionate addition' is not defined in the Framework. However, Policy DMEI 4 of the LP (Part 2) lists various criteria that must be considered in relation to the effect of extensions on openness, including height, bulk, the proportion of a site already developed and footprint, which I will use as a basis for the assessment.
6. On the basis that the building has not been extended, I have no reason to doubt the appellant's calculations that the increase in volume is about 52%, and in footprint it is approximately 44%. Changes to height are minor, and in pure volume and footprint terms, I do not consider that the development would be disproportionate. I have also taken into account the relationship of the extension with the retained development and in particular the height and bulk of buildings already on the site, as well as the footprint, character and distribution of buildings, as required by Green Belt Policy DMEI 4 of the LP (Part 2).
7. The single storey garages would be replaced by 2-storey living accommodation and a 1-storey garage. The width of the house would remain the same as the original building, albeit extended upwards in part. As the side extension would largely sit on the footprint of the original building and the 2-storey element is a moderate addition by volume, particularly when the existing pitched garage roof is allowed for, I do not consider the extensions disproportionate when viewed from the front.

8. The bulk of the extension would be to the rear of the house. Although the rear extension would effectively span the entire width of the building, it would be of single storey construction and moderate depth. Given the large size of the original building, the volume of the rear extension would not be disproportionate. It is also of some relevance that the rear extension would not be visible from the public domain and that the alterations would therefore not harm the visual amenity of the Green Belt.
9. I conclude that the proposal would not constitute a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. It would not therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposal would not therefore conflict with the Green Belt requirements of Policy DMEI 4 of the LP (Part 2); Policy EM2 of the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (2012)('LP – Part 1'); Policy 7.16 of the London Plan (2016) and paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Any other harm - character and appearance

10. The appeal site is a large, two-storey detached property with a hint of mock Tudor detailing. It has a single, two-storey projecting front gable and a triple, single-storey garage projecting to the side, which is covered with a combination of pitched and flat roof. Reducing the width of the garage and adding the second front gable would produce a more balanced structure and coherent outline. I therefore find that the proposal respects the design of the original house, in line with Policy DMHD 1 of the LP (Part 2).
11. For the reasons above, I find that overall, the extensions would appear subservient when compared to the original structure, in line with the requirements of Policy DMHD 1 of the LP (Part 2).
12. Policy DMHD 1 of the LP (Part 2) requires that side extensions are set back from the main front elevation, and that alterations to the front must not alter the overall appearance of the house, criteria which the proposal would not fulfil. However, I consider that this case is unusual because the sides of the house were originally set forward slightly from the front entrance, and the principle has therefore been established. Although the recess around the front door would be further exaggerated, in mirroring the existing protruding front gable, I consider that the proposal produces a better-balanced and more proportionate structure when viewed from the front. In the particular circumstances of this case, I therefore do not find the lack of set-back harmful.
13. The host house is one of a row of widely spaced properties along a quiet, private cul-de-sac, facing a meadow. Although of varying ages, most of the houses have an element of mock Tudor architecture, and the design of the appeal site would remain consistent with this. At the site visit, I observed that several of the houses on the lane are double gabled to the front and the host house was notable for being the exception to this and significantly smaller. The proposal would therefore produce a building more in keeping with the character and appearance of the area.
14. I conclude that the proposal is therefore consistent with the requirements of Policy BE1 of the LP (Part 1), and Policies DMHB 11 and DMHD 1 of the LP (Part 2), which together require that development harmonises with the local context and incorporates the principles of good design.

Other Matters

15. I note the objection to the scheme from a neighbouring third party. Various, entirely understandable, concerns are raised regarding the construction process and whether the shared drainage system would be covered, but these are civil matters, and therefore not for me to comment on. The Council have reviewed the potential for harm to the living conditions of neighbours, with particular regard to overlooking and loss of privacy, and based on the degree of separation and lack of side windows, are satisfied that there would not be a harmful effect, a conclusion with which I concur.

Conditions

16. I have imposed standard conditions to control commencement and a requirement for the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans, in the interests of certainty. I have also included a condition to secure appropriate finishing materials, in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

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

B Davies

INSPECTOR