



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 September 2020

by C J Ford BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

a person appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/20/3244848

Fairmans, Crazies Hill, Wargrave RG10 8LT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Act') against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Roger Whiteside against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 192950, dated 6 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is a pool enclosure.
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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 in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') and any relevant development plan policies,
 - ii) the effect on the openness of the Green Belt,
 - iii) the effect on the character and appearance of the area, and
 - iv) would the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

- i) *Whether it would be inappropriate development*
3. The appeal site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Framework sets out that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development but an exception is 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. It goes on to specify that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
 4. Policy CP12 of the Council's 2010 Core Strategy (CS) specifies that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the

Metropolitan Green Belt as defined in PPG2. Policy TB01 of the Council's 2014 Managing Development Delivery Local Plan document (LP) specifies that within the Green Belt, development for the purposes set out in paragraphs 89 and 90 of the Framework will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt. Consequently, while the wording of the cross references to national policy are out of date, the policies are otherwise consistent with the latest version of the Framework.

5. Point 3 of Policy TB01 stipulates that the alteration and/or extension of a dwelling and the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling in the Green Belt over and above the size of the original building(s) shall be limited in scale. The supporting text clarifies that changes should not result in disproportionate additions to the original building(s) or cause a detrimental alteration to the scale of the dwelling or to the scale of development on the site.
6. The proposed retractable pool enclosure when fully extended would be 14.95m long, 7.75m wide and have a maximum ridge height of 2.6m. The appellant calculates it would have a volume of 299m³. The enclosure would be close to the house and perceived as an addition to the main house. Due to its size, it would therefore result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the dwelling and should be regarded as inappropriate development for the purposes of the development plan and the Framework.

ii) Openness

7. The Framework emphasises that a fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
8. The application site is a large detached residential property with an extensive large rear garden area. There would be no visual loss of openness when viewed from outside of the site because it would be screened from Crazies Hill by an intervening outbuilding and high hedgerow while a combination of dense woodland and high tree lined hedgerows form the other boundaries.
9. In the context of the spacious site itself, the pool enclosure would appear small. Nevertheless, in spatial terms, the development may not be regarded as small scale and the 299m³ volume of the enclosure would represent a considerable loss of openness. It is therefore considered the harm to openness would be significant. Paragraph 144 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.

iii) Character and appearance

10. The development would be sited within a residential garden area and broadly located between two existing outbuildings. Although its lightweight predominantly glazed sides and polycarbonate roof would not reflect the form and character of the main buildings on the site, its functional association with the existing pool would be apparent. It would therefore not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

iv) Other considerations

11. Paragraph 144 also sets out that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harms resulting from the proposal are clearly outweighed by other considerations. The appellant advises he has been encouraged to use the pool more often for health reasons and the enclosure would facilitate the use of the pool all year round. Although I sympathise with the appellant, the personal circumstances of the appellant are temporary relative to the permanent harm the development would cause to the Green Belt. Limited weight is therefore given to this consideration.
12. The appellant also considers that by enclosing the pool, heating would become easier and more cost/energy efficient and the pool would be easier to clean and maintain. However, the enclosure would require its own cleaning regime and there may be greater energy use in order to heat the enclosure to an acceptable temperature during the darkest and coldest parts of the year. Limited weight is therefore also given to this consideration.

Green Belt balance

13. The combined weight of the other considerations in this case is modest while, in accordance with the Framework, substantial weight is given to the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and the harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt. The lack of harm to the character and appearance of the area is a neutral factor. It is therefore found the other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm that has been identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
14. The proposal would conflict with Policy CP12 of the CS and Policy TB01 of the LP which seek to resist inappropriate development. It would also conflict with the Framework which expresses the great importance the Government attaches to Green Belts.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

C J Ford

PLANNING DECISION OFFICER