



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2020 by Scott Britnell MSc FdA MRTPI

Decision by R C Kirby BA(Hons) DIPTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/D/20/3254222

Elm Farm, Boveney Road, Dorney SL4 6QD

- 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 Keith Harris against the decision of South Bucks District Council.
 - The application Ref PL/19/4434/FA, dated 19 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 25 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Planning permission for the extension to the main dwelling. The extension includes adding a floor over the existing garage and a linking structure. The application is part retrospective as the garage has already been converted and the floor added. The linking structure is not construction.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matters

3. There are variations on the appeal site address given in the application form, the appeal form and the Council's decision notice. The address in the banner header above has been taken from the application form.
4. The extension to the garage has already taken place, while the extension linking the host dwelling to that building is proposed. I have assessed the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

5. The appeal site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues in this case are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and relevant policies of the Development Plan;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;

- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area; and,
- If the proposal is inappropriate development, 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 required to justify it.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Whether inappropriate development

6. The proposal seeks to link the extended garage to the main dwelling by virtue of a flat roofed structure. This would result in the former garage being physically integrated into the dwelling. Given the nature of the proposals, therefore, and the physical and visual relationship between the host dwelling and the former garage, I consider that it is reasonable to consider the whole of the proposal, including the first floor extension to the garage, as an extension to the main dwelling.
7. Paragraph 145 of the Framework makes it clear that new buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to a number of exceptions. These include at paragraph 145c, 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. The Framework does not define what constitutes disproportionate additions.
8. Policy GB1 of the South Bucks District Local Plan Written Statement Adopted March 1999, Consolidated September 2007 and February 2011 (LP), states that within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted other than for the limited extension or alteration of existing dwellings in accordance with Policies GB10 and GB11 of the plan. I have not been provided with a copy of Policy GB11 so I am unable to assess the proposal against it. I note, however, that the Council did not list that policy in its refusal reason.
9. LP Policy GB10 states that a proposed extension, together with any earlier extensions, must be integral to, and of a small scale, in relation to the size of the original dwelling. The supporting text to this policy states that extensions or alterations which would result in the original dwelling having increased its floorspace by more than half will not be regarded as small scale¹.
10. The appellant indicates that, when taken with previous extensions to the dwelling, the proposal would result in an increased floorspace of 42.8%. The Council have not indicated whether they agree with this calculation. If I were to accept the appellant's figures then by this measure the proposal would fall below the 50% threshold set out under LP Policy GB10. However, the supporting text to this policy also states that in some cases, proposals which increase the floorspace by less than half may also be unacceptable due to their overall size, design and impact on the Green Belt². It is clear, therefore, that the creation of floorspace is only one consideration and that this alone does not determine the acceptability of proposed development.

¹ Paragraph 3.45.

² Paragraph 3.47.

11. The parties agree that the ridge height of the former garage has been raised to 6.25 metres, which the appellant indicates represents an increase of 2.2 metres³. In addition, the walls and eaves have been raised to provide an additional floor, resulting in a substantially larger building with a significant increase in height, size, bulk and mass. The proposed linking structure, although single storey in height, would further add to the overall size and mass of the dwelling. As such, while the additional floorspace may be below the 50% threshold set out under LP Policy GB10, I consider that the size of the extensions would result in a disproportionate addition to the host dwelling. Consequently, the proposal would comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
12. Paragraph 143 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Openness

13. Paragraph 133 of the Framework states that 'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and their permanence.' Openness has both spatial and visual dimensions.
14. The extension to the former garage has significantly raised the height, size, bulk and mass of that structure. This has resulted in a visual change to the appeal site and its environs reducing the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed linking structure would result in both a visual and spatial change to the appeal site. It would introduce an extension to an area where there is currently a garden wall and gate and would link two previously unconnected buildings. This would further reduce the openness of the Green Belt. Although the reduction in openness would be localised, it would result in harm to the Green Belt and I attribute substantial weight to such harm.

Character and appearance

15. The appeal site comprises a detached dwelling set back some distance from Boveney Road. Although there are large buildings to the rear, these are largely screened from public view by the appeal dwelling and neighbouring properties. Due to the sporadic pattern of development and the large open green space to the front of the appeal site, the area has an open and spacious quality.
16. The extended former garage, although lower than the ridge height of the host dwelling and set back from the front elevation, has resulted in a sizable structure. As a result of its height, size, bulk and mass it competes visually with the dwelling, failing to harmonise with it. The proposed single storey linking structure would add to the overall massing of the dwelling and when considered as a whole, the proposal would fail to appear subordinate to the host dwelling. Consequently, harm to its character and appearance would result.
17. Moreover, the extended garage appears incongruous in the context of the wider locality. The contribution that the host dwelling makes to the area has been diminished as a result. Although this element is partially screened by trees to the front, this does not mitigate the harm that I have identified, as I

³ Appeal Statement Page 4, Paragraph 3.7.

observed the building to be visible. Moreover, it is likely that the development would be further exposed through the winter months when the trees have shed their leaves.

18. The proposed single storey linking structure would, due to its location and height, have no harmful effects on the character and appearance of the area. When viewed from the front, this element would not significantly alter the existing situation. However, the absence of harm in this respect does not mitigate the harm that I have identified with regards to the effect of the development, as a whole, on both the host dwelling and the area.
19. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area. There would be conflict with LP Policy EP3, which states that development will only be permitted where its scale and height, among other things, are compatible with the character of the site itself and the locality in general. There would also be conflict with LP Policy H11 which states that proposals to alter and extend existing residential dwellings will only be permitted where, among other things, the extension would harmonise with the existing building in terms of scale and height, form and design.

Other Considerations

20. The appellant has referred me to the approved development at Vine Cottage⁴. The information before me indicates that the Council has approved a rear extension at that property linked to the dwelling by a glazed structure. It is clear from the Council's report relating to that matter that they considered the proposal to comply with the relevant Green Belt policies of the Development Plan. However, each case must be considered on its own merits and I am mindful that the development at Vine Cottage would be seen in a different context to the appeal proposal. Consequently, I afford the presence of that planning permission limited weight.
21. The appellant suggests that a side extension to the property would result in greater bulk than the appeal proposal. However, no details of any alternative developments have been provided and so I consider that the appellant has failed to substantiate this point.
22. The appellant indicates that the proposed linking structure would integrate the former garage with the host dwelling, provide an improved layout for the property and a space for cloaks and boots. While I recognise the advantages of the proposal in this regard, I consider these to be principally private benefits and afford them limited weight.

Conclusion

23. The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and further harm to the Green Belt would be caused as a result of loss of openness. These matters carry substantial weight. I afford, at most, limited weight to the material considerations cited in support of the proposed development and I find that they do not clearly outweigh the harm that I have identified.
24. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist. The proposal conflicts with Policies GB1, GB2 and GB10 of the LP, which collectively seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate

⁴ Application Ref: PL/18/3996/FA, single storey rear extension incorporating accommodation in roof space.

development. There would also be conflict with the Green Belt aims of the Framework. There are no other considerations which outweigh this finding.

Recommendation

25. For the reasons given above, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Scott Britnell

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

26. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

RC Kirby

INSPECTOR