



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2020

by S A Hanson BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/20/3254700

Chelwood House, Vattingtone Lane, Alveston, Bristol BS35 3JT

- 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 and Mrs Simon and Faye Riddiford against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P19/18907/F, dated 9 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as demolition of existing wall which will be undertaken on demolition of the hoarding at the end of the agreed period, erection of 2.4 meter grey plywood hoarding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The Council's description of development describes the development as "demolition of existing wall. Erection of 2.4 metre grey plywood hoarding." However, I note that the Council requested that the appellant amend the description to "demolition of existing wall and erection of 2.4 m grey plywood hoarding". It would appear from the appellant's written confirmation to the Council and from the plans submitted with the application, that what is actually intended is to retain the wall behind the hoarding and secure the hoarding to the wall for an agreed period. Accordingly, I shall deal with this appeal for the proposed erection of the 2.4 metre hoarding and the retention of the boundary walls for a temporary period.
3. The existing boundary walls, fencing and gates are the subject of an enforcement notice. This is the subject of a separate decision¹.

Main Issues

4. These are:
 - i. Whether the development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), and the purposes of including land within it;
 - ii. The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;

¹ APP/P0119/C/20/3255709 and APP/P0119/C/20/3255716

- iii. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area taking into account its location within the Green Belt; and
- iv. If the proposed development is inappropriate development, whether the harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

- 5. The appeal site is located in the Bristol/Bath Green Belt outside of the Settlement boundary of Alveston. The property is set back from Vattlingstone Lane and is located on its north side. The property has a wide frontage where breezeblock walls, wooden fencing and gates have been erected along the boundary with the highway. The proposal is for the erection of a 2.4m high plywood hoarding to the front of and attached to the boundary walls. The hoarding and walls are proposed for a temporary period to provide security for the property whilst building works are taking place.

Whether the development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt

- 6. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The Framework states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 7. The construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to a number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 145. The term "building" refers to any structure or erection, and therefore includes walls and hoarding. However, these are not referred to in the exceptions within paragraph 145, and therefore I conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would be contrary to the Framework.

Openness

- 8. Openness in terms of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect. The appeal site is in a prominent position where there are views towards the front boundary from the surrounding land. Visual impact forms part of the concept of openness of the Green Belt, and the visual dimension of the Green Belt is an important part of the point of designating land as such.
- 9. The existing walls are constructed of breeze blocks and are a solid, man-made feature. The proposed hoarding would be 2.4 metre in height and constructed of grey coloured plywood. Attached to the front of the wall, it would present a significant structure and would further reduce the spatial openness of the land within the Green Belt, albeit for a limited period.
- 10. Furthermore, the proposed hoarding would be set along the raised highway verge to the front of the existing expanse of wall and would thus be visible to all road users. The design, material and particularly the height of the proposed hoarding would inevitably have an adverse visual effect, on the Green Belt.
- 11. I find that the visual intrusion of the proposed development would result in the erosion of openness, which would conflict with paragraph 133 of the Framework which identifies openness as an essential characteristic of the

Green Belt. I therefore consider that in both spatial and visual terms the proposal would have a significant adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

12. The appeal site is located on the edge of the village, where it clearly demarcates the end of the built up area, being the final property along the Vattingstone Road, before the road heads out into open countryside. Coming from the village, the nearby boundaries with the roadside are verdant with landscaping and deep highway verges. At the appeal site, the depth of the highway verge narrows as the road curves. The property boundary to the front of the house is extensive in length and thus clearly visible from its approach in both directions.
13. At 2.4m, the proposed hoarding would be of a significant height. This, when combined with the substantial nature of the development design, materials and colour would result in boundary treatment that would appear more appropriate in an urban or suburban area than in a countryside setting forming the boundary to a rural property.
14. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Such an effect would cause harm to the character and appearance of the rural area. The development conflicts with Policy CS1 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy 2006-2027 December 2013 (CS) and Policies PSP1 and PSP38 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Policies, Sites and Places Plan November 2017 (LP) which, among other things, seek to ensure that development makes a positive contribution to the distinctiveness of the locality and respects the hard and soft landscaping of the street and surrounding area.

Other considerations

15. Paragraph 144 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that 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. I turn now to address other considerations that, potentially, might clearly outweigh harm arising from inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the erosion of openness, the conflict with the purposes of including land within it and the harm to the character and appearance of the area so as to provide the very special circumstances required to justify a grant of planning permission.
16. The appellant's case for the proposal rests on the need for site security alone which needs to be set against any harm to the Green Belt, and that special circumstances do not need to be considered in this case. Furthermore, the appellant provides that the proposed hoarding would be in situ for a short period of time and "strictly limited to 12 months, a period designed to cover the construction programme for the house refurbishment". However, there is no further evidence before me to demonstrate why such a tall solid structure is required for security purposes for a residential property.
17. Overall, I am not persuaded by these arguments that the solid 2.4m hoarding and wall are essential for security purposes at the appeal site. Due to the length of the boundary treatment in this prominent location the proposed

hoarding would visually and spatially have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, the openness of this part of the Green Belt would not be preserved contrary to Policies CS5 and CS34 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy 2006-2027 December 2013 (CS) which, in accordance with the Framework, considers that the Green Belt should be protected from inappropriate development.

18. Substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and I do not consider that any security benefits would clearly outweigh the harm that the scheme would cause. Consequently, very special circumstances that are necessary to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

SA Hanson

INSPECTOR