
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2021

by M Scriven BA (Hons) MSc CMgr MCIHT MCMi

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/20/3259105

Lakeside, Oak Grange Road, West Clandon GU4 7UF

- 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 Shaw against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/P/00879, dated 29 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 07 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of extension and alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. I have determined appeal on the plans submitted. For consistency I have taken the description of the proposed development in the banner heading above from the application form.
3. A recent appeal Decision¹ is referred to by the appellant. However, that Decision was challenged by the Council and was subsequently quashed. As such I have afforded it very limited weight in my determination of the appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, 2019 (the Framework)
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - If the development would be inappropriate, whether the harm to the Green Belt by way 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 the proposed development would be inappropriate

5. The appeal site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Policy P2 of the Guildford Local Plan: Strategy and Sites, 2019 (LP) states that except in very

¹ APP/Y3615/D/20/3245301

- special circumstances approval will only be given in the Metropolitan Green Belt for certain developments which are listed as policy exceptions. One such exception which is pertinent to the appeal is where the proposed development would constitute an extension or alteration of an existing dwelling.
6. The Framework makes it clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Furthermore and similarly to the LP, it states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings in Green Belt as inappropriate, albeit with a set of exceptions. One such exception is the extension or alteration of an existing building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
 7. As such it is clear that Policy P2 of the LP is consistent with national Green Belt policy.
 8. It is understood that a Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is being prepared to support LP Policy P2, which will include guidelines and considerations the Council will take in to account when considering development proposals. However, it is clearly stated in the Residential Extensions and Alterations SPD, 2018, that such development should not result in a disproportionate addition, over and above the size of the original building.
 9. The original building had a floor space of approximately 92m sq and the proposed development would increase that to around 470m sq. Although there is some dispute as to the precise measurements, this would clearly result in a disproportionate sized building compared to the original.
 10. The appellant contends that the existing building should be considered as the original building given it has been extended several times in the past. However, I have no substantive reason to consider that the existing building should be considered as the 'original'. That the building is already significantly larger than it originally was does not make further additions acceptable.
 11. Therefore, the proposed development would not represent a limited extension or alteration of the original dwelling. Furthermore, the proposal would be contrary to the Policy P2 and the Framework.

Openness

12. The Framework states that one of the essential characteristics of Green Belt is openness. As the appellant points out and refers to other appeal decisions², openness in this regard can have both a spatial and visual impact.
13. Spatially the proposed development would increase the size of the building overall, albeit the alterations would not result in any significant increase in overall height or footprint, the proposed alterations would create a building of more bulk as a result.
14. Notwithstanding existing boundary treatments, visually the building would appear more conspicuous in its plot than the existing, largely due to the proposed mansard roof arrangement introducing an incongruous addition to the roof space. The effect upon openness in the context of the wider Green Belt would therefore be small. However small I consider the proposal would not

² APP/Y3615/D/18/3210112; APP/Y3615/W/18/3202309; APP/Y3615/D/18/3209793

preserve the openness of the Green Belt either spatially or visually and would have a greater degree of impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the building in its current form. Therefore, I consider the reduction in openness would constitute moderate harm.

15. As such the proposal would not accord with Policy P2 of the LP and the Framework in this regard.

Character and appearance

16. The existing dwelling is set back from the road, filling much of the width of the wide plot. Although it is apparent there have been additions made to the property over time it does not detract from its surrounds, with the central front dormers appearing adequately spaced apart to avoid a cramped appearance.
17. The proposed roof arrangement incorporating a mansard style roof, with steep front and rear pitches, and associated expansive flat roof, would appear at harmful odds with the shallower pitched roofs of the remainder of the building and that which currently exists. Likewise, the two front dormers would appear tightly positioned together when seen in the context of the wider dwelling. The overall effect of these elements of the proposals would therefore harm the character and scale of the existing building. I do not consider that the other intended alterations would offset this harmful effect to a point of neutrality as the mansard style roof in particular would still appear as an incongruous addition.
18. Notwithstanding that the other elements of the proposals would not adversely effect the scale and character of the existing property, and differing property styles do exist on the road, for the reasons above, the proposal as a whole would result in a small amount of harm to the character and appearance of the area. I accept that this harm would be reduced by planting at the front boundary, however the effect would not be wholly offset without the introduction of tall planting which would take time to establish.
19. The proposed development would therefore not accord with Policy D1 of the LP and saved Policy G5 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan, 2003 (saved 2007) which both seek, amongst other things, to ensure that development proposals are of high quality design, respecting and reflecting existing character.

Other considerations

20. The Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and, very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
21. The appellant points out that there would be no harm to the living conditions of neighbours and the scheme was considered broadly acceptable in flood risk terms. I also note that the Council did not object to the proposal on other policy grounds and the Parish Council raised no objection. However, these matters are of neutral weight.
22. I acknowledge that the appellant considers the proposal to better improve the space available and flow around the home, also that it would be more energy efficient and incorporate high quality materials. However, I have little evidence

before me to consider that the proposal in its current form is necessary to achieve those intentions. I also understand the appellant considers the proposals to be less harmful than the demolition of the current dwelling. However, I have no detail of any alternative proposals, or their likelihood of implementation before me to consider as a realistic fallback proposition of any significant weight.

23. The Framework attaches great importance to Green Belts and states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. It is considered the development would cause harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness and to openness. Balanced against that are the other considerations identified above. I find that the other considerations in this case do not clearly outweigh the harm that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
24. As such the proposal does not accord with Policy P2 of the LP. Similarly, the proposal would not accord with Framework.

Other matter

25. Notwithstanding the quashed Decision referred to, the other appeal Decisions² cited do not appear to have associated details to better understand the context of the proposals. Similarly, it would appear the increases in proportional size compared to the original dwellings were substantially less than that before me and I must also consider the appeal on its own merits. I therefore afford them limited weight in the appeal, which does not overcome the identified harm above.

Conclusion

26. For the reasons above, having considered the Development Plan and Framework as a whole, the appeal is dismissed.

M Scriven

INSPECTOR