



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2021

by Lynne Evans BA MA MRTPI MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 February 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/20/3259555

Robin Hill, Southfields Road, Woldingham CR3 7BQ

- 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 & Mrs P Richards against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref: TA/2020/1078 dated 22 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is single storey side/front extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - a) Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - b) Its effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - c) Other considerations; and
 - d) Whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Issue a) Whether Inappropriate Development

3. The appeal property is a detached dwelling on a site which rises steeply from Southfields Road. There are residential properties of individual scale and design on either side and opposite the appeal site with open countryside surrounding. The appeal site is situated within the Green Belt. The proposal would extend forwards with single storey flat roofed additions, on each side of and in line with the existing property.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) sets out the government's planning policies to secure sustainable development. Paragraph 133 sets out the great importance that the Government attaches to Green Belts

and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 143 confirms that *inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances*. Paragraph 145 sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate except for a limited number of exceptions including the extension or alteration of a building providing that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The Framework does not define further the term 'disproportionate'.

5. The Council has also referred to Policies DP10 and DP13 of the adopted Tandridge Local Plan – Part 2: Detailed Policies (Local Plan) in its reason for refusal. Policy DP10 indicates that permission will normally be refused for inappropriate development and the supporting text refers back to the Framework in terms of the definition of the exceptions to inappropriate development. Policy DP13 sets out more detailed guidance and indicates that the Council will take a pragmatic approach to each case, taking into account a range of factors, including, amongst others, bulk, height, mass and proportions of the additions over and above the size of the original dwelling. It further indicates that as a general rule, the Council will take into consideration the increase in the volume of the dwelling over and above the dwelling as originally built or as existing on 31 December 1968 (whichever is the later) to assess whether a proposal would result in a disproportionate addition.
6. The Council's calculations indicate that the original dwelling (31 December 1968) had a volume of some 480.96 cu m, which with previous additions of 207.17 cu.m and the current proposal of 87.16 cu m would result in 775.29 cu m which would represent just over a 60% increase in volume over the original. These calculations have not been challenged by the Appellants and I have no reason to take a different view.
7. Whilst I agree with the Appellants that, taken on their own, the proposals would be modest, when considered cumulatively with previous additions to the property, as required by the Framework and development plan policy, the cumulative increase in the size of the property would be considerably greater. The additions on either side of the property, albeit single storey only, would add to the footprint, bulk and massing of the property.
8. Taking all these matters together, I have no doubt that the proposed extensions would be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling and so would be inappropriate development for the purposes of the Framework and development plan policy.

Issue b) Openness

9. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, as set out within the Framework, and in accordance with that guidance, I therefore attach substantial weight to this harm which I have concluded under my first issue. I have also considered whether there is any other harm.
10. The proposed extensions, by extending both the footprint and the volume of the dwelling would result in some impact, albeit small, to the openness of the Green Belt. This therefore adds, albeit marginally, to the harm I have already concluded.

Issue c) Other Considerations

11. The Framework indicates at paragraph 144 that substantial weight should be attached to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances to justify such development 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 now turn to the other considerations in support of the development which have been put forward.
12. As I have already addressed, I acknowledge that the floorspace and volume increase over the current floorspace and volume of building would be modest. However, the Framework and development plan policy is clear that the assessment is based on the original building, and not as it currently stands, to take account of cumulative increases in built form and cumulative impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The comparison with the building as existing does not therefore add support for the proposal.
13. I agree that the scale, form and siting as well as the design of the proposed extensions would respect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. Although at the front of the dwelling, given the steeply sloping site and the individual scale and design of neighbouring dwellings there would be no harm to the street scene. There would be no conflict with the Framework and in particular Section 12 as well as Policies DP7 and DP12 of the Local Plan and Policy CSP18 of the Core Strategy, all of which seek a high standard of design which respects the local context. However, the lack of harm in these regards does not add support in favour of the proposals; it is a neutral factor in my assessment.
14. The Appellants have referred to a previous approval in 2008 (not implemented) which in their opinion would have resulted in a considerably greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The details of that approved scheme are not available to me, and I am required to determine this appeal on the basis of the proposal before me. I am unable to give this matter weight in support of the current proposals.
15. I have sympathy with the family related reasons for seeking to improve the accommodation at the property. However, the harm I have concluded would remain after these personal reasons cease to be material. I can only give very limited weight to these arguments in support of the proposal.
16. The Appellants have also referred generally to other examples where extensions to properties in the Green Belt, resulting in a cumulative increase in floor area or volume over 50%, have been permitted. No specific examples have been provided to me, but each proposal must be considered on its individual merits. No weight in support of the proposal can therefore be afforded.

Issue d) Balancing of Considerations and whether very special circumstances exist.

17. I have already found that substantial weight must be given to the harm to the Green Belt by reason of the inappropriateness of the proposed extension. The harm from loss of openness and to the character and appearance of the local

area both add to the harm by reason of inappropriateness. The totality of the harm I have concluded is not clearly outweighed by the other considerations. I do not find that the very special circumstances required to justify the proposed development of the extension to the dwelling exist. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with the Green Belt aims of the Framework and Policy DP10 of the Local Plan.

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

L J Evans

INSPECTOR