



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 February 2021

by Andrew Bremford BSc (Hons) MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/20/3263065

Weyfield House, Milford Road, Elstead, Godalming GU8 6HX

- 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 Davidsen against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2019/2026, dated 29 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is extensions and alterations following demolition of existing garage, utility room and carport.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Main Issues

2. The appeal site falls within land designated as Green Belt. The main parties have agreed that the proposal would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined in Policy RE2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites 2018, retained Policy RD2 of the Waverley Borough Council Local Plan 2002 and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). I concur with that position.
3. Accordingly, the main issues in this case are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - 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

Openness

4. A fundamental aim of Green Belt policy, as set out in paragraph 133 of the Framework, is to keep land permanently open. Indeed, the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect.
5. The appeal site comprises a two storey detached dwelling, Weyfield House. It has an attached double garage, utility room and single carport and is set within a substantial plot on the northern side of Milford Road, just outside the Elstead village settlement boundary. The area is rural in character by virtue of the dispersed nature of development, open fields, hedge lines, tree belts and

areas of mature woodland. In these respects, the surrounding area has moderate openness.

6. Although Weyfield House is partly visible through the site access, as a result of its set back position, the tall fencing and mature planting to the southern boundary of the site and the electricity sub-station between the property and the road, it is largely screened from public views. This would lessen the impact of the proposed extensions and alterations on the visual openness of the Green Belt.
7. Compared to the existing dwelling, the appellants state that the proposal would result in a reduction in the gross external floor area, footprint and width of the property and have provided calculations in support of this assertion. I have no reason to disagree with the appellants' calculations and I note that the Council has not disputed them either.
8. However, the element of the existing property that would be demolished is single storey with a flat roof and in part is an 'open' structure (the carport). Although the single storey element of the proposal would incorporate a catslide roof, overall, the proposed part single/part two storey extension, by virtue of its height, roof form and it being a 'solid' addition, would add bulk to the property.
9. Indeed, although the demolition of the garage/utility room/carport would reduce the spread of development across the site, the calculations provided by the appellants confirm that the proposal would result in an increase in the volume of the building. The appellants contend that lowering the ridge line of the two storey extension would reduce the volumetric increase. Nonetheless, the proposal would still result in an increase in the volume of the existing building, albeit to a lesser amount.
10. The proposal would, therefore, for the above reasons, lead to a loss of openness in spatial terms, although the loss would be limited and localised.
11. Consequently, although the proposal would not be readily visible from the public domain, it would have an overall minimal impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Other Considerations

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.
13. It goes on to state, in paragraph 144, that substantial weight is 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.
14. The Council accepts that the materials proposed would be in-keeping with the rural setting and would enhance the aesthetic quality of the building within the setting. Moreover, the replacement porch is of a design in-keeping with the rural character of the area. Overall, the proposal would improve the visual appearance of the building, especially as it would result in the demolition of the garage/utility room/carport extension.

15. As a consequence, the character and appearance of the host building and the wider area would be enhanced. This lends support to the scheme, although I give this matter limited weight due to the location of the proposed extensions and alterations which would not be prominent from the public domain.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the terms set out in the Framework. In addition, there would be a minimal loss of openness of the Green Belt. The Framework establishes that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
17. For the reasons set out above the harm to the Green Belt would not be clearly outweighed by the other considerations. Therefore, very special circumstances necessary to justify a grant of planning permission have not been demonstrated.
18. Consequently, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Bremford

INSPECTOR