



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 March 2021

by Martin Chandler BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/20/3261867

Manx Farm, Steep Hill, Chobham, Woking GU24 8SZ

- 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 John Anderson against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/0477/FFU, dated 4 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is first floor extension over existing ground floor foot print.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for first floor extension over existing ground floor foot print, at Manx Farm, Steep Hill, Chobham, Woking GU24 8SZ, in accordance with the terms of application Ref: 20/0477/FFU, dated 4 June 2020, and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: EB/370/03; EB/370/04; EB/370/05; and EB/370/07.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Reasons

3. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
4. 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. The construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, an identified exception to this is 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.

5. The Framework does not provide a definition in relation to what constitutes disproportionate. In addition, based on the evidence before me, no definition is provided within the Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2011 – 2028 (2012) (CS). Accordingly, my assessment should simply be based on the merits of the proposal, having regard to the overall requirements of local and national policy.
6. The Council seek to qualify its concerns with the size of the addition with reference to percentage increases in volume and floorspace. However, although such an approach has some merit, it does not have a basis in policy. Accordingly, I attach limited weight to the figures before me. I also agree with the appellant that volumetric assessments are not the only way to judge whether a proposal would be disproportionate over and above the size of the original dwelling.
7. The existing dwelling is a detached property with an 'L' shaped footprint. It has a hipped roof and has been extended at ground floor level. Due to its existing scale and bulk, the building has a distinct presence on the appeal site, but it could not be described as being excessively large or being of an imposing scale. I note that the Council confirm that the design of the extension would cause no real harm to the character and appearance of the area and in the evidence before me, they confirm that the proposed extension would represent a complementary addition to the existing building. I entirely agree with this conclusion. The extension would not dominate the building and I am satisfied that it would be comparable in scale and mass to the forward projecting element of the original dwelling. In this respect, the proposal would complement the size of the original building. It would not overwhelm the property, nor increase its scale to a degree that would be imposing or dominant on the site or in the wider area.
8. The term 'disproportionate' can be defined as something that is either too large or too small in comparison with something else. The comparison in this appeal is of course with the original dwelling, and based on my findings set out above, I am satisfied that the proposal would represent an extension that would be entirely proportionate to it. As a consequence, I conclude that the proposal would not represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It would therefore accord with the Green Belt protection aims of the Framework, as well as Policy DM9 of the CS which establishes good design principles.

Conditions and Conclusion

9. Conditions are necessary in the interests of precision to establish the time limit for commencing development, as well as to list the approved documents. Subject to these, and for the reasons identified above, the appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted.

Martin Chandler

INSPECTOR