



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 May 2021

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Friday, 04 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W1905/D/20/3265832

Oak House Farm, Newgatestreet Road, Goffs Oak, Hertfordshire EN7 5RU

- 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 V. Barclay against the decision of Broxbourne Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 07/20/0825/HF, dated 1 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 28 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing link and erection of part two-storey extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt;
 - the effect on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
 - if the development is inappropriate, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The site is located in the Green Belt. The development plan, in Policy GBR1 of the Adopted Local Plan 2018-2033 (2020) (the Local Plan) states that applications should be determined in accordance with national planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) regards the erection of new buildings as generally being inappropriate.
4. There are, however, some exceptions to this that are listed in Paragraph 145 of the Framework. These include the provision of proportionate extensions to buildings.

5. In this case, the proposal would result in an increase in the building from a structure that has rooms on the ground floor, with further rooms in the roof shape, to a two-storey flat roofed building. Whilst this would not result in significant increase in the building's floor space, it would result in a significant increase in mass at parts of the building.
6. This would mean that the form of the building would change from one that has an ancillary appearance to one that is of more regular proportions, with an increase in bulk.
7. The flat roof design of the proposed development means that the scheme would have a similar height to the existing building. However, notwithstanding this, the proposed development would have a much greater mass arising from its bulkier design. This means that the similarities in height do not overcome my previous concerns.
8. Whilst the proposed development would result in a gap between the site of the proposed development and the main dwelling, this would be comparatively small. In addition, it would not overcome the adverse effects arising from the bulk and massing of the proposed development. Therefore, the extension would be a disproportionate addition to the existing building.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would represent an inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The development would therefore conflict with the requirements of Local Plan Policy GBR1 and the Framework.

Effect on the openness of the Green Belt

10. The proposed development would result in a reconfiguration of the existing building at the front of the property. In summary, the proposed extension would increase the height of parts of the building and would have a bulkier form and massing.
11. Owing to the increase in built form, the spatial sense of openness within the Green Belt would be eroded. In addition, the bulkier massing of the proposed development would mean that the proposed development would have a notable increase in the form of the building,
12. This is a concern as the proposed development would be located in close proximity to the front boundary of the appeal site and would be readily apparent over the boundary treatments of the property. In consequence, the proposed development would be readily apparent and would be visible from several different vantage points in the surrounding area. This means that the development would result in a loss of the physical sense of the openness within this section of the Green Belt.
13. The appeal site features some boundary treatments, including hedges. However, owing to the form and positioning of the development is such that the screening would not be significant and would not overcome the adverse effects as previously described. In addition, the screening effect offered by hedging is likely to vary depending on season and its health. Therefore, this does not provide me with sufficient certainty that this could be retained throughout the life of the development.
14. Whilst I note that the vicinity of the appeal site features several different buildings, these buildings are generally set back from the highway edge and

within areas of landscaping. In consequence, the existing buildings are consistent with the more open character of the wider surrounding area.

15. In contrast the proposed development would result in the provision of a disproportionate addition in a prominent location. In consequence, the proposed development would result in an erosion of the area's openness. The presence of developments elsewhere does not overcome my previous concerns.
16. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in an adverse effect on the level of openness in the Green Belt. The development would therefore conflict with Local Plan Policy GBR1 and the Framework. Amongst other matters, these seek to ensure that the openness Green Belt's openness is retained.

Character and appearance

17. The appeal site is located on the periphery of a residential area. The appeal site and its surroundings consist of buildings constructed to a variety of designs. These are generally set back from the boundaries of their respective sites. In addition, outbuildings such as garages are constructed to designs that have an ancillary design. These features mean that the character and appearance of the surrounding area can be summarised as being complimentary towards the more rural surroundings of the wider area.
18. The proposed development would result in a larger building closer the front boundary of the site, which would be prominently located. The proposal would therefore result in significant increase in built form that would erode the prevailing character within the surrounding area.
19. In addition, the development would result in a large building close to the highway edge, which would also erode the character of the area as the relationship between dwellings and their landscaped settings would be eroded.
20. The proposed development would be prominently located adjacent to the highway. The erosion of the area's character would therefore be readily apparent. This would be exacerbated by the relatively level topography of the appeal site and the surrounding area, which would enable views of the development from some distance away.
21. In result, the distinctive character of the surrounding area, which can be defined as including dwellings with appropriately designed extensions and outbuildings in an open and landscaped setting would be eroded.
22. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development, in this regard, would conflict with Policies DCS1 and DCS2 of the Local Plan, and the Borough-Wide Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004, updated 2013). Amongst other matters, these seek to ensure that new developments where possible enhance local distinctiveness; respect the character and design of the existing building; and be visually integrated with the main building.

Other Matters

23. I acknowledge efforts made by the appellant in attempting to overcome a previous refusal of planning permission. Whilst this is a matter of note, it does not overcome my findings in respect of the Main Issues.

24. I am also aware of concerns raised by the appellant regarding the manner in which the planning application was determined by the Council. However, in assessing this appeal, I have limited my considerations to the planning matters before me.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

25. The development plan and Framework set out the general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt. They explain that such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate 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.
26. I have concluded that the appeal scheme would be inappropriate development and would, by definition, harm the Green Belt. In so doing I have found harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 144 of the Framework requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
27. The other considerations I have identified individually and collectively carry a limited weight in favour of the proposal. As such the harm to the Green Belt is not clearly outweighed by the other considerations identified, and therefore the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
28. In addition, the proposal would also harm the character and appearance of the area. The scheme would therefore conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR