



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 April 2021 by Thomas Courtney BA(Hons) MA

Decision by Martin Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/20/3262020

1 Carewell Cottages, St Piers Lane, Lingfield, RH7 6PN

- 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 T. Grimley against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2020/1214, dated 10 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is two-storey side and single storey rear extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and development plan policy;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area; 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 for the Recommendation

Whether the development would be inappropriate development

4. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that new buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt unless they fall within the given list of exceptions. One exception 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. Policies DP10 and DP13 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies
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(the 'Local Plan') are broadly consistent with the NPPF in that they allow for proportionate alterations and extensions to buildings in the Green Belt.

5. The proposed development is similar to a previous scheme which was refused and dismissed at appeal in 2020 (ref 2019/1280). In this case, the width of the proposed two-storey side extension has been slightly reduced and the roof pitch of the proposed ground floor rear extension has been lowered.
6. The appellant has provided detailed calculations of the volume increases over the original dwelling and states that the proposal would represent a 43.3% increase in volume. The Council contends the extensions would result in an 86.9% increase in volume over the original dwelling. The considerable difference between the two figures has arisen from a dispute over whether the existing single-storey rear extension as well as the shed and coal bunker to the rear of the property form part of the original dwelling.
7. Despite the disagreement, I find that an increase in volume of 43.3% represents a significant increase in size. Furthermore, turning away from a purely mathematical perspective on the matter, I note that national guidance on measuring 'proportionality' refers to 'size'. This can, in my view, refer to volume, height, external dimensions, footprint, floorspace or visual perception. In this case, it is clear that the substantial increase in volume and width of the dwelling from the extensions, particularly at first floor level, would result in a considerably greater visual bulk, the scale of which would subsume the original dwelling and would be disproportionate.
8. On the basis that the proposed extensions would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling, I therefore find the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would conflict with Paragraph 145(c) of the NPPF, as detailed above, and policies DP10 and DP13 of the Local Plan, which together seek to resist inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness

9. Openness is identified in the NPPF as one of the Green Belt's essential characteristics. The increased volume and bulk as a result of the extensions would undoubtedly have an adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt in a spatial sense.
10. Furthermore, the increased height, width and bulk of the dwelling, plus the prominence of the dwelling in the street scene, means the proposal would also have a greater visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt when seen from St Piers Lane. Whilst I note there is hedging and mature trees within the garden along the western boundary which offers a degree of screening, the resultant dwelling would nonetheless be readily visible from the road when approaching the appeal site from the south. The spatial and visual impact on openness when taken in combination, would result in moderate harm to the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

11. The appeal property is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling. Together with the attached property at 2 Carewell Cottages, it appears as a traditional brick-built cottage which has been sub-divided. It is located within a rural area in close proximity to black feather-edged timber buildings and a large warehouse

hosting an equestrian supply business. To the west, lies the entrance to Lingfield College.

12. Although I acknowledge the proposed two-storey side extension would be set-back from the principal front elevation and the proposed roof height would be lower than the main roof ridge, I find that the double-storey side extension would not appear distinctly and sufficiently subservient. Indeed, the set-back would be limited and the lower height of the proposed roof ridge would also be relatively marginal.
13. Whilst the width of the side extension would be narrower than the existing frontage, it would still be unduly large. The extensions would unbalance the building as a whole when seen with the adjoining property at No. 2, constituting incongruous additions which would adversely impact the prevailing architectural form of the host building. The proposal would also reduce the garden space between the existing dwelling and the road, therefore unacceptably eroding the open character of the site.
14. Although I recognise that the use of matching materials would go some way to assimilating the proposed extensions with the existing dwelling, given the above, the development would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. It would conflict with Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy and Policy DP7 of the Local Plan which together seek to ensure proposals are of a high standard of design and respect the distinctive character and appearance of the local context.

Other considerations

15. The NPPF states that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances, and that 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. Substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
16. The appellant highlighted that the adjoining property at 2 Carewell Cottages has been extended at ground and first floor level. However, whilst I have not been provided with the full detail and background to this case, No.2 does not feature a two-storey side extension which differs markedly from the circumstances of the proposal before me. The neighbouring extensions do not therefore lend any positive weight to the proposed development.
17. I have also had regard to the other developments in the vicinity referred to by the appellant, and whilst I am mindful that each proposal should be assessed on its own merits, these appear to be either more subordinate in appearance than the proposed extensions or more respectful of their surrounding contexts. The reference to those appeal decisions do not therefore attract any significant weight in support of the proposal.

Planning Balance and Overall Conclusion

18. I consider that the development causes harm to the Green Belt by way of its inappropriateness and to its openness, and substantial weight should be given to these harms. It would also adversely impact the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. I conclude that cumulatively there

are no other considerations that clearly outweigh the harms identified and therefore there are no very special circumstances to justify the development.

19. Consequently, the development conflicts with Paragraph 145(c) of the NPPF and the development plan as a whole and in particular Policies DP10 and DP13 of the Local Plan which together aim to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development, and with Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy and Policy DP7 of the Local Plan which together seek to ensure proposals are of a high standard of design and respect the distinctive character and appearance of the local context.

Recommendation

20. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Courtney

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

21. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Seaton

INSPECTOR