



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 May 2021

by R. Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 July 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3635/D/21/3267579

21 Thames Meadow, Shepperton TW17 8LT

- 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 K Dracup against the decision of Spelthorne Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01099/HOU, dated 21 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is proposed side extensions and first floor extension with new roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies.
 - the effect on the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area.
 - Whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate

3. No.21 Thames Meadow (No.21) is a very modest single-storey house with a low-profile roof and a river frontage. It is located within the Green Belt, a floodplain and a locally defined Plotland Area. It is proposed to extend either side of No.21 by between around 0.8m and 3.37m to provide a regular plan form at ground floor. In the north-east corner, the house would be extended to allow stair access to a new first floor accommodating two ensuite bedrooms.
4. The extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building (paragraph 145(c) of the Framework). Policy EN2 of the Spelthorne Core Strategy and Policies

Development Plan Document (2009) (CS) is consistent with the Framework in that only extensions that would not significantly change the scale of the original building would be permitted in the Green Belt. Additional requirements are, however, made for Plotland Areas, where developments should be compatible in size with traditional Plotland dwellings, the scale of adjoining properties and should retain a low roof profile.

5. I have not been provided with the existing floor area of No.21, but from the information before me, the ground floor additions would not significantly or disproportionately increase the footprint of the original building. However, because a new first floor is proposed over much of the ground floor, overall, there would be a significant increase in floor area. The proposed roof would be vaulted at a ridge height of around 16.39m and although the eaves have been kept relatively low, it would substantially increase the volume of the building and would read as a true two-storey house with first floor windows in all elevations. Taking these elements together, the proposals would result in disproportionate additions over and above the original building and, as such, would constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The Framework and CS Policy EN2 make it clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and substantial weight should be given to such harm.

Openness and character and appearance

6. Paragraph 133 of the Framework identifies that an essential characteristic of the Green Belt is its openness. It is proposed to extend either side of the existing dwelling, increasing its width and proximity to site boundaries to a minimum of around 1m. The additions would, however, be modest and in isolation would not particularly change the views from Thames Meadow through to the river. The first-floor extension would however increase the overall bulk and massing of the dwelling because of both the higher ridge height and vaulted barrel design. In that the bulk of the dwelling would be increased by additional built form, there would be moderate harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt.
7. The guidance in the *Design of Residential Extensions and New Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document (2011)* (SPD) is that where it is proposed to add an additional floor to an existing property, raise the height of the roof or change its shape, particular attention is required to be given to the scale and proportions and the extended property must be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining properties.
8. Thames Meadow is a private road that follows the north bank of the River Thames. It is characterised mainly by very modest scale dwellings with a low-key appearance. The appellant has drawn my attention to examples of houses, notably Nos. 19 and 25 Thames Meadow, that would have similar ridge height to the roof proposed for No.21. I saw from my site visit, however, that these houses, whilst larger in scale than others, are designed as chalet style bungalows with pitched roofs and accommodation within the roofspace. This contrasts with the appeal proposal which because of the vaulted roof design would have first-floor windows in all elevations and would effectively appear two-storey in height. Further, in this case, the appeal property is located between dwellings that remain very modest in scale, with a low-profile roof. The proposed substantial vaulted roof would not assimilate well with its

neighbours and would dominate and visually overwhelm its immediate neighbour at No.20 Thames Meadow, as well as the host dwelling. There would therefore be a conflict with the SPD guidance.

9. The dwellings on Thames Meadow typically have traditional pitched roof forms, but there is no overriding style or uniformity in appearance. Whilst I agree that softer, curved lines of a building can be appropriate to a river setting, the scale and massing means that the extension would appear an incongruous addition within the streetscene. It would further entirely change the character and scale of the original dwelling and would lose the low-profile roof, which is part of the distinctive character of the Plotlands area.
10. Consequently, in addition to the SPD guidance, the appeal proposals would conflict with CS Policy EN1 and EN2 because it would significantly change the scale of the original building and would not make a positive contribution to the streetscene and character of the area.

Other considerations

11. I note that the proposal would provide additional bedroom accommodation and more generous living space at ground floor which would allow for modern, convenient living for future occupiers. This would be a benefit of the scheme, but one I afford minimal weight.

Conclusion

12. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the Framework establishes that substantial weight should be given to harm by reason of inappropriateness. There would be a moderate loss of openness to the Green Belt and the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. The other considerations advanced by the appellant offer only minimal weight in favour of the scheme and do not outweigh the harm I have identified.
13. Accordingly, there are no very special circumstances to justify the proposal and the appeal is dismissed.

R. Jones

INSPECTOR