
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2021

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/D/21/3270125

Pinewood Cottage, Stable Lane to Keepers Cottage BDW250, Bexley, DA5 2AW

- 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 Robert Pruden against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 20/02782/FUL, dated 29 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is single storey side extension with pitched roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. I consider that the main issues in this case are a) whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, b) its effect on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the area, and c) if it is inappropriate development, 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

Inappropriate development

3. The recently published National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) sets out in paragraph 149 several categories of new buildings which are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. These have not changed from paragraph 145 in the previous version of the Framework. Policy 7.16 of the London Plan 2016 (the London Plan), Core Policy CS17 of the Bexley Core Strategy 2012 (the Core Strategy) and saved policies ENV4 and ENV22 of the London Borough of Bexley UDP 2004 (the UDP) all seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
4. The categories in the Framework include the extension or alteration of an existing building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

5. The appeal site is a single storey house located on Stable Lane, a private road and public bridleway. It has a large detached garage at the front southeast corner of the site, a sizeable garden room/outbuilding along the southern boundary and a number of smaller outbuildings and other structures elsewhere in the curtilage. It is south of the main built up area of Bexley and separated from it and a ribbon of development along the A223 by an open field. The wider surroundings are a mix of open fields, woodland and developed sites including a plant nursery which now appears to be closed, riding stables and a National Grid site. The site is washed over by the North Cray Metropolitan Green Belt and is within the North Cray Heritage Land.
6. The immediate surroundings have a semi rural character partly because of the prevalence of woodland which screens the different developed sites. Beyond the northwest boundary of the site is an access/haul road which runs across the field between Stable Lane and the A223. This road is associated with works for the National Grid and has temporary permission with an end date in 2026. A high bund has been constructed along its route adjacent to Pinewood Cottage to provide privacy for the occupiers and to mitigate noise. Although this has clearly had an impact on the character of the surroundings, it is for a temporary period at the end of which there is a requirement that the land be reinstated.
7. The proposed extension would project approximately 3.6m to the side from the north end of the existing building along the full depth from front to back of approximately 7.8m under a pitched roof which would reflect the low-pitched hipped roof over the northern end of the house. This is relatively modest in itself. However, it is evident from the planning history that the property has been extended in the past.
8. Neither the Framework nor the Council's policies specify what constitutes disproportionate additions, but it is clear that it is the accumulation of additions to the original building which is important, rather than individual ones. The appellant suggests that the proposal would amount to less than a 10% increase in the footprint of the building. However, this appears to be based on the footprint of the building as it stands at present and does not take account of earlier extensions. It is also important to take account of the increase in volume. I consider that the cumulative increase in the size of the proposal and previous extensions would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Such development is, by definition, harmful and is contrary to the guidance in the Framework and policies 7.16 of the London Plan, CS17 of the Core Strategy and ENV4 and ENV22 of the UDP. The resultant harm should be given substantial weight in determining the appeal.

Openness

10. The Framework states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. The appeal site is in a semi rural area with a variety of scattered development. The existing house and the detached garage fill much of the width of the plot and the proposal would extend close to the boundary to the north. The proposed increase in footprint and volume, albeit limited to a single storey, would result in some loss of spatial openness. The extension would be at least partially visible from public viewpoints. The

proposal would conflict with the fundamental aim of keeping land permanently open.

11. I conclude that the proposal would cause limited harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 148 of the Framework 2021 states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. It would be contrary to policies 7.16 of the London Plan, CS17 of the Core Strategy and ENV4 and ENV22 of the UDP.

Character and appearance

12. The proposed extension would be in keeping with the design and materials of the existing house. Although it would appear bulkier than other elements of the house and would fill the gap between the existing house and the site boundary, it would be of an acceptable scale with a roofline which would reflect that of the existing house. I consider that it would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. In this respect it is consistent with policies H9 of the UDP and 7.6 of the London Plan which require new extensions to be compatible with the character of the existing building and of an appropriate scale and proportion, among other things.

Conclusions

13. The harm caused by the inappropriateness of the development as a whole carries substantial weight, as does the harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
14. Although I have found that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area, this does not add weight in favour of the development, it merely reduces the amount of 'other harm' against it.
15. Paragraph 147 of the Framework 2021 states that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances. These 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.
16. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that there are no considerations sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. There are, therefore, no very special circumstances to justify the development. It conflicts with policies 7.16 of the London Plan, CS17 of the Core Strategy and ENV4 and ENV22 of the UDP and the Framework and the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR