
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 December 2021

by Mr S Rennie BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/D/21/3276025

Little Shantock, Flaunden Lane, Flaunden, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HP3 0PQ

- 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 & Mrs F Banks against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00016/FHA, dated 8 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is for a raised roof with front and rear dormers. Single storey part side and rear extension. New porch and altered levels to side and rear garden with new hard standing to front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposed extension, together with previous extensions added to the property, would constitute 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt;
 - If so, whether there are other considerations which clearly outweigh the harm caused by being inappropriate development so as to amount to very special circumstances.

Reasons

Whether the development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt

3. The site contains a house within a large plot within the village. The site is within the Green Belt. The proposal is for extensions to the existing house, including a raised roof and dormers, together with a rear extension. This property has been extended previously.
4. Local Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy states that within the Green Belt, small-scale development will be permitted in certain circumstances, including limited extensions to existing buildings. This policy is broadly consistent with paragraph 149 (c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which sets out that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is 'inappropriate development' unless it is an extension or alteration to a building that does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

5. The proposal is for extensions to the existing house, which when considered with previous completed extensions, would result in a considerably greater sized dwelling than was the original. The original dwelling was a bungalow, but the proposal would result in a two storey house with an increased height ridge and dormers, with further extensions to the rear. This is on top of the previous extensions to convert what was a bungalow to a two storey house, for example.
6. The extensions as proposed with this scheme are not extensive, but they would add to the existing extensions on what used to be a bungalow. Considering the number of total extensions proposed to the existing house, resulting in considerable increases in both floor area and volume, I would regard the total additions (existing extensions and those now proposed) over the original dwelling to be disproportionate. The overall additions could not be considered as 'limited'.
7. It may be that the proposed extensions with this appeal are sympathetically designed and would result in a house of similar scale to others in the area, but nonetheless, when considering that this property was a bungalow the further extensions as now proposed would result in a disproportionately extended dwelling.
8. I acknowledge that the 'footprint' of the dwelling is similar to the original bungalow, but there is a considerable amount of both additional volume and floorspace if this proposal was implemented. The Framework refers to the overall size of the resultant building over the original, whilst policy CS5 refers to 'limited extensions'. Neither policy states this should be a calculation based primarily on 'footprint'.
9. There is extensive landscaping to the front boundary, but from what I saw on site the house is not completely screened from view. I also acknowledge that this is a large plot which would remain verdant, but a key purpose of the Green Belt is to safeguard openness. The policies of the Framework and Core Strategy do not consider larger extensions in the Green Belt against plot size, with the Framework clearly setting out that the test of whether extensions would be disproportionate relates back to the original dwelling size.
10. There may have been other properties within the village which have been extended, but I do not have full details of these and why the Council concluded such proposals were in accordance with their planning policies. I have therefore considered this proposal on its merits and against adopted planning policy.
11. As such, I conclude that the proposals would be inappropriate development which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It would also fail to accord with policy CS5 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy 2006-2031 (adopted September 2013) which relates to Green Belt development.

Effect of the development on the openness of the Green Belt

12. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The proposed extensions would both increase the size and height of the house, which would be visible at least partially from the local roads, for example. There would therefore be a small loss of openness to this part of the Green Belt, though this is additional to the openness already lost with previous extensions.

Planning and Green Belt Balance

13. I have found that the proposed development would be inappropriate development. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 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, as set out in paragraph 148 of the Framework.
14. I note that the Council has not objected to the proposal based on the design or impact to the character of the area or neighbour amenities. It would also provide the occupants with an enlarged house, using sustainable construction techniques to achieve this. Whilst noting the positive aspects of the scheme, the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt due to the cumulative volume of extensions that would be added to this house.
15. Overall, the proposal is in conflict with the Development Plan and there are no other considerations which clearly outweigh the harm I have identified. Consequently, whilst the appellant has set out positive features of the development proposed, such as the architectural design, these do not amount to very special circumstances. As such, there is not the necessary justification for the proposal as a form of inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Mr S Rennie

INSPECTOR