



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2022 by Thomas Courtney BA(Hons) MA

Decision by Martin Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/21/3279223

Greystones, Hogs Back, Seale, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 1JX

- 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 Daniel Talbot against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/P/00686, dated 23 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 21 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is the removal of existing conservatory/W.C & replacement rebuild at ground floor level & porch. Proposed first floor (attic style) extension with dormer/skylight windows.
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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.

Procedural Matter

3. The Council referred to the now superseded National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) and, in particular, the provisions of paragraph 145 of the NPPF 2019. The main thrust of the provisions outlined in paragraph 145 of the superseded version are comparable to the provisions now outlined within paragraph 149 of the more recent iteration of the NPPF (2021). I am satisfied therefore that the issues at hand in this appeal are not affected by the policy change and that neither party would be prejudiced by my reference to the more recent NPPF (2021).

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the NPPF and development plan policy;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area;
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- 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

5. The appeal property comprises a vacant detached bungalow located on the north-western side of Hogs Back within a small grouping of dispersed residential dwellings in the Green Belt. The property is set back from the road and is accessed via a gravelled driveway. It features a hipped roof and a small conservatory. On my site visit I observed that land levels within the plot rise sharply along the north-western, northern and north-eastern boundaries of the site.
6. Paragraph 149 of the NPPF states that new development is inappropriate in the Green Belt unless it falls within the given list of exceptions. Policy P2 of the *Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2019* (LPSS) is consistent with this in that it gives a list of forms of development that are not inappropriate. 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. Having regard to extensions to buildings, Policy P2 of the Local Plan states that the "original building" shall mean the building as it existed on 1 July 1948.
7. Whilst the Council states that the proposed extensions would represent an 82.8% increase in floorspace over the original building, the appellant contends the total uplift in floorspace would only represent 34.3%. In having regard to the appellant's calculations, I note that the Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the existing attic space had been included in the total existing GFA by the appellant, despite there being no evidence that the area amounted to usable or readily accessible and habitable floorspace. This consideration would explain the discrepancy between the two figures quoted above. I have therefore found the Council's calculations to be a more accurate reflection of the increase in floorspace, and have utilised these in my decision-making.
8. Whilst the development plan does not refer to a defined way of assessing and measuring proportionality, national guidance does give some guidance on measuring 'proportionality'. The NPPF refers to 'size' which can, in my view, refer to volume, height, external dimensions, footprint, floorspace or visual perception.
9. The proposed uplift in floorspace would be significant with the resultant GFA being almost double that of the existing. An increase in floorspace of this scale would not be considered to be proportionate. In any case, the increase in built form at first floor level of the dwelling would result in greater visual bulk. Although the appellant considers that the extensions would be proportionate, the considerable alterations to the roof structure and expansion of roofscape would be excessive. I acknowledge the footprint of the dwelling would not expand and the ridge height of the roof would not be raised however the resultant building would nevertheless still appear significantly larger in volume. Therefore, I find that the scale of the extensions would subsume the original dwelling and would therefore appear to be disproportionate.

10. 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 149(c) of the NPPF, as detailed above, and Policy P2 of the LPSS which seeks to resist inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness

11. Openness is identified in the NPPF as one of the Green Belt's essential characteristics. The additional bulk and mass as a result of the extensions would materially impact on openness in a spatial aspect resulting in limited harm to the Green Belt. Furthermore, the significant increase in the volume of roofscape means the proposal would also have a greater visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt although this would be limited as there is thick vegetation affording good screening along much of the site's boundaries. The southern approach to the house from the front gate remains open however, and the resultant dwelling would be easily visible from Hogs Back.
12. For these reasons, the proposed development would result in an adverse impact on the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

13. The surrounding area is characterised by large two-storey properties set within spacious and verdant plots. The appeal property appears to be fairly innocuous given its simple design and low-lying roof profile. Whilst I recognise that the proposed design has attempted to draw inspiration from neighbouring properties such as Downhill Lodge to the south-east of the site by including a hip to gable roof extension and dormer windows, I am not satisfied the resultant roof profile ties in with the character of the host dwelling and surrounding area. Indeed, the roof alterations would be considerable and would result in a clumsy and top-heavy building. I concur with the Council in that the combination of a hip to gable alteration, a large pitched roof extension, and the erection of three dormers, would be excessive and would dominate the host dwelling and appear contrived in respect of the resultant design.
14. Furthermore, whilst the new front porch would have an attractive traditional design and would match the design of two of the dormers, it would not match the design of the dormer as proposed within the northern elevation. This would accentuate the disordered appearance of the proposed dwelling.
15. The appearance of the resultant property would be readily visible to surrounding occupiers as well as from Hogs Back. The extensions would be read as disproportionate and would constitute incongruous additions that would have an adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of the area as well as that of the host dwelling.
16. It would conflict with Policy D1 of the LPSS, Saved Policies H8 and G5 of the Guildford Local Plan (2003), the NPPF and the 'Residential Extensions and Alterations' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which together seek to ensure proposals are well designed and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the surrounding area in which they lie.

Other considerations

17. The NPPF highlights that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances, with substantial weight given to any harm to the Green Belt. 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.
18. In this regard, the appellant states that the proposal would allow for a derelict property to be brought back into use as an attractive family home and would thus also result in visual improvement to the streetscene. Whilst I recognise that bringing a vacant property back into use and the improvements to the street scene must attract some limited weight in support of the proposed development, there is no evidence before me that the appeal proposals in their current form are either a necessity or the sole feasible form of development in order to achieve these objectives.
19. I sympathise with the appellant with regards to delays and communication issues with the Council however this has not had a bearing on the planning merits of my decision.

Planning Balance and Overall Conclusion

20. I consider that the development causes harm to the Green Belt by way of its inappropriateness and to its openness, and substantial weight must be given cumulatively to this harm. There would also be an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and the host dwelling. The weight attributed to the other consideration in this case is limited and does not outweigh the substantial harm I have identified. I conclude therefore there are no very special circumstances to justify the development.

Recommendation

21. 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

22. 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