

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 May 2022 by A Coombes

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/D/21/3282668

2 Rushymead Cottages, Beaconsfield Road, Coleshill, Amersham HP7 0JZ

- 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 and Mrs U Agrawal against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/21/1316/FA, dated 31 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is a part single and part two storey side/rear extension to the property.
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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 Issue

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and Development Plan Policy;
 - the effect of the proposal on openness and the purpose of including the land in the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwelling and surrounding area; and
 - if found to be inappropriate development, whether the harm by reasons 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 for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site is a two-storey semi-detached property located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The surrounding area is rural with Rushymead Farm being the only dwelling other than the semi-detached pair located in the

isolated enclave off of Amersham Road. The application seeks permission for a part two storey, part single storey side and rear extension.

Inappropriate Development

5. Policy GB 13 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Written Statement, adopted 1997¹(DP), sets out that extensions within the Green Belt should be subordinate to the original dwelling. The supporting text defines subordination as the proportion of increase in the size of the dwelling resulting from the extension being modest and not significantly and materially altering the character of the dwelling in terms of its size, proportions, design, and appearance. Paragraph 147 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) notes that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
6. The proposed development would add a significant projection to the side and rear of the appeal site and, when considered cumulatively with the other existing extensions it would be disproportionate to the original dwelling. The proposed increase of the footprint and floorspace would amount to an overall increase of 113%, a figure that both parties largely agree on. Therefore, the development would be inappropriate, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and would not comply with Policies GB2 and GB13 (DP) or the Framework, which together seek to resist inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness

7. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt, with spatial and visual impact being parts of the concept of openness. The proposed development would increase the width of the dwelling at two-storey height, into the gap that currently exists to the side of the appeal site. An increase in footprint would introduce built form into an area of the Green Belt where it does not currently exist. The footprint and massing of the extension would materially alter the spatial openness, and the height of the development would exacerbate the visual impact.
8. Notwithstanding the fact that there are limited vantage points from the public domain at the front of the appeal site, the proposed extension would, as a consequence of its position and height, be noticeable from parts of the surrounding countryside, particularly to the rear. Therefore, the proposal would detract from the openness of the Green Belt and would be inconsistent with the Framework, which seeks to resist development that does not preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Character and Appearance

9. The proposed extension would significantly increase the width of the existing property, encroaching on the intervening gap with the boundary. It would significantly project rearwards at a depth greater than the existing flank elevation and, due to its scale, would fail to appear subordinate to the host dwelling. A setback from the principal elevation has been proposed as well as a lower ridge height and matching materials. However, these features would not materially reduce the large scale of the proposed development. When

¹ (including alterations adopted 2001, consolidated in 2007 and 2011).

considered cumulatively with previous extensions, the proposed development would be excessive in depth and scale and would cause demonstrable harm to the architectural character and appearance of the original dwelling.

10. The appeal dwelling is semi-detached. Whilst both properties within the pair have undergone alterations they are similarly scaled and, particularly when viewed from the front, maintain balance. Although the gap between the boundary is larger at the appeal site than at the neighbouring property, the development would add significant bulk as well as an additional rear projection that would introduce another pitched roof to the shared rear roofscape. This would not only challenge the dominance of the existing dwelling, but also appear incongruous and obtrusive when seen within the context of the adjoining property and would lead to a clear imbalance between the pair.
11. For the reasons given above, the development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area, including the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CAONB). It would therefore not comply with Policies GC1, LSQ1 and H15 (DP) and Policies CS20 and CS22 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (CS), adopted 2011, which together seek to resist development that is not of a high-quality design and does not respect the surrounding area, with Policy LSQ1 (DP) and Policy CS22 (CS), specifically seeking to conserve and enhance the CAONB.
12. The development would also conflict with Policies GB13 and H16 (DP), which when read in conjunction, seek to resist development within the Green Belt that is not subordinate to the original dwelling or that is intrusive in the landscape. The Council have cited Policy GB2 (DP) in their reason for refusal, however this Policy relates to inappropriate development within the Green Belt, rather than specifically dealing with character and appearance considerations.

Other Considerations

13. It is acknowledged that the appellants have expanding family accommodation needs and are well settled in the village with active roles in the community, and do not wish to relocate. However, the evidence is not clear that the desire for additional accommodation could not be met through a different scheme or accommodated elsewhere. Therefore, this matter is given very limited weight.
14. A fallback position has been identified with a Certificate of Lawfulness for a Proposed Use or Development (CLPUD) for an outbuilding, which includes a swimming pool. The appellant has indicated that, in the event of this appeal being dismissed, they would seek to implement a scheme within the parameters of the CLPUD with alterations to the internal plans and so this appears to be a likely outcome. The built form of the outbuilding would be larger than the proposed extension, but it would be single-storey and therefore comparatively lower in height. The proposed extension would have a moderately greater impact on visual openness due to its height.
15. The appeal site is quite secluded and both proposed schemes would have limited vantage points from the public domain. However, due to its siting, alongside the principal elevation, and height, the extension would be more visible than the outbuilding, which would be clearly separate from the main dwelling. Therefore, the impact of the proposed extension to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area would be moderately greater than the impact of the outbuilding.

16. The development would be a disproportionate addition to a dwelling within the Green Belt, which by definition is harmful. Furthermore, the development would cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt as well as the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area. Cumulatively, these matters would mean that the impact of the proposed development would be worse than the fallback position of constructing the outbuilding. I have taken into account the arguments put forward by the appellant, however, these factors do not clearly outweigh the harm by inappropriateness and to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, very special circumstances do not exist.

Conclusion and Recommendation

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

A Coombes

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

K Taylor

INSPECTOR