



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 May 2022 by M Long

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/22/3291307

89 Woodlands Road, Bookham KT23 4HL

- 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 P Morgan against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2021/1671/PLAH, dated 3 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 3 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is to add a second storey to the existing single storey property, to construct a single storey extension to the rear of the property and to construct a small single storey extension to the front of the property.
-

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 Issues

3. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and therefore the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) and any other relevant development plan documents;
 - the effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect on the character and appearance of the area;
 - the effect on the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers at Nos 87 and 91 Woodlands Road, regarding whether there would be an overpowering or overshadowing effect; and,
 - if the development is inappropriate, whether any 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 proposal.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site is a detached bungalow with a large rear garden on the eastern side of Woodlands Road. It has a garage and covered patio area positioned alongside the tall, shared boundary with No 87. The surrounding vicinity, on

the eastern side of Woodlands Road, is predominantly characterised by a number of modestly-sized bungalows which have low overall heights with some spacing between them. No 91, to the immediate south, has been altered and has a larger scale in this group of dwellings. On the opposite side of the road, there are large two-storey dwellings.

5. The proposal includes the infill of the existing front porch area to create a new entrance hall with a front door that would be in line with the front elevation of the main dwelling. There would be a large rear extension including a single-storey addition with a pitched roof and hipped end that would replace the existing covered area and extend a substantial distance along the shared boundary with No 87. The proposal would also incorporate an additional first floor level with a hipped roof; this would mostly sit above the existing ground floor of the main dwelling as well as the proposed front porch area and some of the proposed rear extension.

Whether there would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

6. Paragraph 147 of the Framework establishes that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 outlines that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate, save for a number of exceptions. One of these 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.
7. The existing dwelling has already been previously extended, and the Officer's Report indicates that the original bungalow had a floor area that was approximately 67.5 metres squared. The proposal, including the previous additions to the property, would result in a total floor area of approximately 339 metres squared. This would represent a greatly disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building with the resulting building having around five times the amount of floor area as the original bungalow.
8. As such, the proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would therefore conflict with Policy CS1 of The Mole Valley Local Development Framework: Core Strategy, adopted October 2009, which, within Green Belts, seeks to apply principles within national planning policy. For the above reasons, there would be conflict with the Framework.

Openness

9. Paragraph 137 of the Framework sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
10. The proposed additional bulk at the ground, first floor and roof level would transform the modest bungalow into a large, two-storey dwelling. By substantially increasing the footprint and massing of the building, the proposal would reduce openness to some extent. It would feature prominently in the public realm, and it would be visible from the rears of neighbouring properties.
11. While the appeal site benefits from soft landscaping, and the appellant has expressed a willingness to accept a condition that requires the provision of a

landscape scheme, such measures would not sufficiently mitigate the harm to openness that would arise from the considerable scale of the proposal.

12. As such, I conclude that the proposal would detract from the openness of the Green Belt, albeit the effect would be limited by the residential character of the surrounding area, which includes dwellings of various sizes, and the domestic appearance of the proposed development.

Character and Appearance

13. The proposed additional bulk at first floor level would significantly alter the shape of the appeal dwelling and result in the loss of its existing low-profile bungalow form. When combined with the front porch infill extension, the proposed bulk would create an overly dominant, uninterrupted front elevation. The use of uPVC cladding across its full width at first floor level would further exacerbate its scale and appear unsympathetic. Overall, the proposed massing would be harmful to the appearance of the appeal dwelling.
14. While there are a variety of housing styles in the wider area, the appeal site is largely viewed within the surrounding group of low-profile bungalows. The scale and height of the proposal would appear incongruous in this context and feature as a harmful addition to the Woodlands Road streetscene. Moreover, the large size of the proposed additional bulk at ground and first floor level would erode the spacious character of this immediate area. No 91 has a noticeably larger scale. However, when viewed from the streetscene, the additions to this property relate more closely to the surrounding bungalows than the proposed appeal scheme.
15. Overall, the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the wider area. As such, there would be conflict with the Mole Valley Local Plan, adopted October 2000, specifically Policy ENV32 which seeks to ensure house extensions retain the character and style of the existing property. There would be further conflict with Policy ENV22 which seeks development that respects the character and appearance of the locality, Policy ENV23 which seeks to ensure that development has a scale and character that respects its setting and Policy ENV24 which seeks to protect the appearance of the general space around buildings in the locality. The proposal would also be contrary to Policy BKEN2 of the Bookham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2026, adopted October 2015, which seeks to ensure new development respects the scale and character of surrounding buildings as well as Policy CS14 of The Mole Valley Local Development Framework: Core Strategy which seeks to resist development of a poor quality of design.

Living Conditions

16. The rear single-storey element would project a significant distance along the shared boundary with No 87. However, given the existing tall boundary treatments and low eaves height, the proposal would not have a harmful overpowering effect when viewed from the rear of the neighbouring property. The low overall height of the single-storey addition would not give rise to an undue overshadowing effect.
17. Given the considerable spacing between the appeal property and No 91, the additional bulk at first floor level would not have a harmful overpowering effect from the windows of the neighbouring property. Due to their north-facing

orientation and distance from the appeal site, the windows at No 91 would not suffer from a harmful overshadowing effect.

18. For these reasons, the proposal would not result in harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring properties regarding whether there would be an overpowering or overshadowing effect. In this regard, the proposal would accord with the Mole Valley Local Plan, specifically Policy ENV22 which seeks to ensure development does not significantly harm the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties by reason of an overshadowing or an overpowering effect. It would also accord with Policy ENV32 which seeks to ensure house extensions are not unduly prominent from neighbouring properties. Although the Council mention conflict with Policy ENV23, it does not appear to be directly related to matters concerning the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

Other Considerations

19. The proposal would provide additional accommodation that would be suited to the current and future needs of the appellant's family, including the provision of bedroom and office space. While very special circumstances do not need to be rare or unusual, it has not been demonstrated that these needs could not be met in a more modest manner or through a scheme that would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. I therefore can only give these matters modest weight.
20. There are numerous housing styles in the wider Woodlands Road area, including a variety of extension designs. The details of these schemes are not before me, however, in any event each appeal must be determined on its individual planning circumstances. I have considered the appeal scheme with regard to its effect on the host dwelling and the surrounding group of properties. I do not consider there to be a sufficient precedent for the scale of the proposal in this context and so I give this matter limited weight.
21. While the appeal scheme may not directly offend the purposes of the Green Belt, as outlined in the Framework, the impact upon the purposes of the Green Belt is not determinative as to whether the development is considered inappropriate in the Green Belt. I therefore give this matter limited weight.

Other Matters

22. The appellant has raised concerns with the Council's lack of communication during the application process. Nevertheless, this issue is not related to the specific planning merits of the appeal scheme which must be the focus of this recommendation. It is suggested the Council may not have undertaken a site visit; however, a visit has been undertaken in association with this appeal and has informed this recommendation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

23. The proposal comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. The harm to openness and to the character and appearance of the area are also added to this harm. The lack of harm identified in respect of the living conditions of the neighbouring properties is a neutral matter that does not carry any positive weight. Paragraph 148 of the Framework specifies that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

When considered together, the other considerations do not carry significant positive weight and so do not clearly outweigh the harm identified. As such, the very special circumstances that would be needed to justify the proposal do not exist.

24. The proposed development would not accord with the development plan, when considered as a whole. Based on the above, and having regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Long

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

25. 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