



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 May 2022 by Thomas Courtney BA(Hons) MA

Decision by Hollie Nicholls FdA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/21/3285029

North Lodge, Crutchfield Lane, Hookwood, RH6 0HT

- 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 G Moorcraft against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01363/HHOLD, dated 10 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2021.
 - The development is a proposed raised front gable ridge heights with new first floor over existing central flat roof to provide bedroom, en-suites and ancillary accommodation.
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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 The Council referred to the now superseded National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) and in particular the provisions of paragraph 145 of the NPPF 2019. The main thrust of the provisions outlined in paragraph 145 of the superseded version are comparable to the provisions now outlined within paragraph 149 of the more recently adopted NPPF (2021).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 version of the NPPF.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and development plan policy;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal 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 detached dwelling located on the southern side of Crutchfield Lane in a rural area which lies within the Green Belt. The property features a pitched roof and two distinctive front projecting pitched gables. The appeal dwelling is relatively prominent in the streetscene given the open frontage and its position near the road. It is also situated in close proximity to the neighbouring property to the east, known as Wrays Cottage.
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. 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. Policy NHE5 of the *Reigate & Banstead Local Plan 2019* (the 'Local Plan') is consistent with this in that it states that extensions to buildings in the Green Belt will be permitted where the extensions, in combination with any other additions, would not be disproportionate compared to the original building.
7. The proposed extension would have a total approximate floor area of 47 sqm, but when taken in conjunction with previous extensions would represent a considerable increase in floor area over that of the original building. Whilst the development plan does not refer to a defined way of assessing and measuring proportionality, it states that proposals will be assessed based on additional footprint and floor area created, the massing and bulk of the resultant building, and the visual prominence of the proposed additions. The NPPF refers to 'size' in the context of this, which can reasonably be interpreted as a reference to volume, height, external dimensions, footprint, floorspace or visual perception.
8. In this case, the overall increase in floor area and built form at first floor level of the dwelling would quite clearly result in a substantially greater visual bulk to the resultant dwelling. Whilst the appellant highlights the fact that much of the new floorspace would occupy space already existing in the two gabled projections, the increase in resultant volume of development to the front of the property would be very apparent and excessive. I find that the scale of the extensions would subsume the size and form of the original dwelling and would therefore represent a disproportionate form of development.
9. 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 NHE5 of the Local Plan which seeks to resist inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness

10. Openness is identified in the NPPF as one of the Green Belt's essential characteristics. The additional built form and volume as a result of the extensions would materially impact on openness in a spatial aspect.

Furthermore, the increased height of the central area between the front gables, plus the prominent position of the building, would mean the proposal would also have a greater visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt when seen from Crutchfield Lane. The spatial and visual impact on openness would result in limited harm to the Green Belt.

Character & appearance

11. The proposed development would noticeably alter the front aspect of the appeal dwelling which is characterised by the two distinctive front pitched roof gables. The flat-roofed element proposed between the front gables would appear bulky and would detract from the form and character of the host dwelling. Indeed, I find that the resultant front elevation would appear disjointed due to the extent of flat roof at first floor level. Despite the use of sympathetic materials, the central flat-roofed element would dominate the front aspect of the house and reduce the attractiveness of the projecting gables.
12. Whilst the appellant opines that the area between the two gables would be screened by the gables themselves, I find that the addition would still appear prominently when viewed by passing vehicles and pedestrians on Crutchfield Lane given the plot's open frontage and lack of mature vegetation offering screening. In light of the fact that this section of Crutchfield Lane is characterised by buildings featuring pitched roofs, the resultant dwelling would jar with the surrounding built fabric as the central two-storey flat-roofed element would be incongruous in this context and would be read as a disproportionate addition.
13. The proposal would therefore adversely impact on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. It would conflict with Policy DES1 of the Local Plan and the NPPF which together seek to ensure proposals are well designed and harmonise well with the character and appearance of the areas in which they lie. I have also had regard to the Householder Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Guidance, and Local Distinctiveness Guide which seek the same.

Other considerations

14. The NPPF states that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances, and that 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. In this regard, the appellant has not put forward any very special circumstances.

Planning Balance and Overall Conclusion

15. I consider that the development would cause harm to the Green Belt by way of its inappropriateness and to its openness, and substantial weight should be given to these harms. It also would adversely impact the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the streetscene. There are no other considerations in this case that outweigh the substantial harm I have identified. I conclude therefore there are no very special circumstances to justify the development.

Recommendation

16. 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

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

Hollie Nicholls

INSPECTOR