



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 July 2022

by A Price BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/D/21/3288106

Svetlanas, St Anns Hill Road, Chertsey KT16 9NN

- 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 Antony Braganza against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref RU.21/1462, dated 10 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 13 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'an outdoor pool conversion & bedroom extension'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Notwithstanding the description of development set out above, which is taken from the application form, it is clear from the plans and accompanying details that the proposed development comprises the enclosure of the existing external swimming pool and the erection of a part single part two storey rear extension. The Council dealt with the proposal on this basis and so shall I.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - if the development is inappropriate development, the effect of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development

4. The appeal site comprises a large garden plot occupied by a detached property with outdoor swimming pool and outbuildings. The site is in the Green Belt.
5. The proposed development would comprise a predominantly glazed structure which would link the main house to the existing outdoor swimming pool, which would become covered. In addition, a bedroom extension is proposed as part of the main property.

6. Policy EE14 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (LP, adopted 2020) broadly conforms to the general thrust of Green Belt policy within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), setting out that inappropriate development in the Green Belt will normally be refused whilst supporting the extension of buildings which do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Paragraph 147 of the Framework sets out that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved 'except in very special circumstances'. One exception to that position 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 building¹.
7. The Framework does not provide a definition of 'disproportionate additions'. However, LP Policy EE14 sets out that new development should not materially increase the prominence of the development, and should take into account any previous extensions or enlargements, existing and proposed built footprint and changes in mass, bulk and height of buildings.
8. It is clear from the Council's officer report that planning permission for a series of extensions was granted over a period of several years. Whilst I do not have substantive evidence before me to categorically conclude that all of those permissions were implemented, it is evident that various alterations and extensions have taken place and I have no substantive basis to consider otherwise.
9. Irrespective of what is original, the proposed development would increase the overall volume and massing of the property substantially, particularly in respect of the swimming pool enclosure. Notwithstanding that the majority of the proposed development would be over existing areas of hardstanding, the increased volume and massing would amount to a significant further addition to the property, and one which I find to be disproportionate to both the existing dwelling and its likely original size.
10. For these reasons, the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful. It would therefore conflict with the relevant provisions of LP Policy EE14, which in summary seeks to prevent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the associated policies of the Framework.

Openness

11. The Framework indicates that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt and a fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open.
12. The openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect. Openness can be harmed even when development is not readily visible from the public realm.
13. Whilst I accept that the proposed extension has been designed with sensitivity to the host building in respect of building forms, materials and detailing, and it would be positioned to the rear of the property, it would nonetheless result in an increase in volume and massing where this does not currently exist. This would inevitably lead to a physical loss of openness, albeit relatively limited.

¹ Paragraph 149 (c)

Accordingly, the proposed development would cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt. This factor weighs somewhat against the proposal.

Other Considerations

14. I accept that the proposed development would enhance the living conditions of the occupiers of the property, providing them with further accommodation and the ability to use the swimming pool throughout the year. However, the increased use of the pool is essentially a private rather than public benefit which therefore affords only limited weight.
15. Similarly, although I note that no trees would be lost as part of the proposed development, that there would be no impact on heritage assets and that it would not unduly affect the living conditions of neighbours (for which no objections were received), these factors are essentially neutral. These matters therefore attract minimal weight.

Conclusion

16. The proposed development would be inappropriate development in the terms set out by the Framework and would result in harm, albeit limited, to the openness to the Green Belt. The Framework nonetheless requires that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
17. The harm identified would not be outweighed by the other considerations and, therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposed development do not exist. Consequently, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Price

INSPECTOR