



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2022 by C Glaister BSc (Hons)

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/21/3285236

Collingwood, New Road, Wormley, Godalming GU8 5SU

- 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 Mark Pearce against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2021/01316, dated 26 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as a "single storey side and part garage conversion".
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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 Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (the Framework);
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - if the proposal would be inappropriate development, whether the 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 it.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Inappropriate Development

4. Paragraph 147 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, with the exception of, among other things, 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. The Framework defines the 'original building' as the building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after this date, as it was built originally.

5. Policy RE2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites (February 2018) (the Local Plan Part 1) is consistent with the Green Belt policy in the Framework. Policy RD2 of the Waverley Borough Council Local Plan 2002 (the Local Plan 2002) suggests a cumulative increase in floorspace of more than 40% is likely to be disproportionate. Policy RD2 also states that extensions will be permitted provided that the extension does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling, with 'original dwelling' referring to the dwelling as it existed on 31st December 1968, or as it was constructed if this was at a date after December 1968.
6. The property is a two-storey detached house with an attached garage. It is located on a residential street, and the dwellings on the southern side vary in size and form, with some much smaller than the appeal property. The planning history provided in the officer report indicates that the property has been previously extended by a two-storey extension and the attached garage. The proposal would subsume part of the attached garage. The side element would almost meet the front elevation of the main building, and would connect with a rear element at the back. The Council have suggested that the previous extension, excluding the garage, amounted to a 48% increase in floor space. They state that the proposal, excluding the garage, would result in a cumulative increase in floorspace of 69.6%. The appellant disputes this, and instead suggests the total percentage increase would amount to 26.8%.
7. The Council have provided figures for the increase in floorspace following the addition of the existing two-storey extension, and cumulative figures after adding the proposal. The existing garage is not original and would in part be incorporated into the proposal, and it would not therefore be appropriate to include it in the calculations again at this stage. It is not clear whether the Council included an original attached garage in their calculations, but there is also insufficient evidence provided by the appellant to suggest there was originally an attached garage on the property or its size. The appellant has not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that their figures are correct, and there are inconsistencies in how the original house is shown to have been in the documents submitted by the appellant. Given the evidence, a figure closer to the one provided by the Council appears more accurate.
8. The proposal, along with the previous extensions, would therefore represent a significant cumulative increase and result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
9. Accordingly, the development would result in harm to the Green Belt. Paragraph 148 of The Framework instructs 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 by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Openness

10. Wormley is a rural settlement and much of the area is open and forested. The site itself is between and among other detached dwellings, most of which have spacious gardens. Although the proposal in combination with the previous extensions would be proportionally significant to the original building, its effect on openness would be limited, due to its overall size.

11. Although the harm would be limited, the proposal would nevertheless be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt.

Other Considerations

12. A lack of harm to the character and appearance of the area is a neutral matter. Whether the existing garage could be converted to habitable accommodation has no bearing, in itself, on whether the development amounts to inappropriate development or affects openness.

Conclusion and Recommendation

13. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would be detrimental to openness. It would therefore conflict with the Framework, and the aims of Policy RE2 of the Local Plan Part 1 and Policy RD2 of the Local Plan 2002. The other considerations do not clearly outweigh these harms, and the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not therefore exist. Based on the above, and having regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Glaister

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. 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