



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 August 2022 by C Glaister BSc (Hons)

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/21/3284983

8 Castle Rise, Wheathampstead AL4 8HX

- 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 S Darnell and Ms L Edgeworth against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref 5/21/1788, dated 2 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 11 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as "Part attic conversion and erection of first floor extension to create new first floor bedroom with en-suite, along with 4 no. new roof lights and internal alterations".
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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 'original building' as the building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after this date, as it was built originally. Policy 1 of the City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review (November 1994) (the Local Plan) adds that new development within the Green Belt shall integrate with the existing landscape, and that siting, design and external appearance are particularly important.

5. Policy 13 of the Local Plan states that extensions to houses in the Green Belt may be permitted unless the scale or visual impact upon the original building would create a building of significantly larger or different character. The Supplementary Planning Guidance Residential Extensions and Replacement Dwellings in the Green Belt (May 2004) (the SPG) suggests, among other things, that side and rear extensions should not generally exceed 180m³ or a 40% increase in floorspace (so long as it does not result in a cubic content above 300m³).
6. The property is a semi-detached bungalow. It has been previously altered, including by extensions to the rear and the conversion of a garage at the side. The Council state that the proposal would result in a cumulative increase in the floorspace from the original building of 92%, and a total volume increase of roughly 309m³. In a separate section of the officer report, the Council claim the existing footprint of the dwelling is already over double the size of the original property. The appellant addresses this claim, and instead suggests the size increase from the original property is 50%. Even if this figure were correct, a 10% increase over and above the recommended guideline in the SPD is not insignificant. The cumulative appearance of the existing and proposed extensions would add additional bulk including at roof level. This would appear larger and different in character to the original building, and it would be a disproportionate addition.
7. 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

8. The property is centrally located within a residential settlement, beyond which there are wooded areas and open fields. Given the immediate surroundings of the site, and the extent of the proposed development, the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited.
9. Although the harm would be limited, the proposal would nevertheless be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt.

Other Considerations

10. It is understood that the appellant and their family are long-established residents, and the proposed development would provide a number of personal benefits conducive to them remaining in the area. The appellant states that they have made considerable improvements to the home, and that the property is well located for their son to attend school by foot, negating the

need for car travel. They also state that the proposal would allow them to more easily accommodate their elderly parents and allow them to stay for longer periods. Careful consideration is given to the appellant's circumstances; however, these are largely personal benefits which hold limited weight.

11. The proposal could provide some improvements to the energy efficiency of the home and resolve issues relating to leaks and mould. These issues could be resolved by means other than the proposal, and this therefore holds little weight. The proposal would not offer any substantial improvements to the appearance of the property and remaining sympathetic to neighbouring properties is a neutral matter.
12. The exact details of the developments referred to by the appellant at other properties in the area, including whether or not 'very special circumstances' existed in these instances, are not clear. In any case, the appeal is assessed with respect to its own particular circumstances, and the proposal nevertheless constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

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 Policies 1 and 13 of the Local Plan, and the SPG. 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