



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 August 2022

by A J Sutton BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/D/22/3294183

112 Church Road, Wick BS30 5PD

- 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 Roberts against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P21/08025/F, dated 16 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies.
 - The effect on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of area.
 - Whether any 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

3. The Framework states the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It requires, when considering any planning application, that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Policy PSP7 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Policies, Sites and Places Plan (Local Plan 2017) generally reflects the Framework regarding Green Belt matters.

Whether Inappropriate Development

4. The construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt. However, paragraphs 149 and 150 of the Framework identifies exceptions to this, which include, at paragraph 149 c) 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.

5. 'Disproportionate additions' is not defined in the Framework. However, Policy PSP7 of the Local Plan 2017 states that as a general guide, an addition resulting in a volume increase up to 30% of the original building would be likely to be proportionate. Additions that exceed 30% volume increase will be carefully assessed, with particular regard to whether the proposal would appear out of scale and proportion to the existing building. It also sets out that the larger a building becomes in excess of 30% over and above its original size, the less likely it is that the new extension(s) will be considered proportionate, and that additions resulting in a volume increase of 50% or more of the original building would most likely be considered a disproportionate addition and be refused as inappropriate development.
6. There is dispute between the main parties regarding the volumetric increase to the original building resulting from existing and proposed extensions. The title deed shows two projections to the rear of the dwelling that appear to extend into part of the area that is now covered by two existing extensions. Whilst finding nothing before me which contradicts this, there is also little confirming the volume of these original projections. This aside, even if I were to accept the appellant's calculations on this matter, this proposal, combined with the existing extensions, would result in a volume increase of considerably more than 50% over and above the size of the original building
7. The existing extensions have already altered the original 'two-up/two-down' style dwelling to form a reasonably sized, four-bedroom, family home. The proposed single storey extension would be confined to the rear of the dwelling. However, it would extend along most of the width of the detached dwelling, with the pitch of the roof set close to the first-floor windows of the dwelling. It would as such be a sizeable addition to the already much extended and changed existing dwelling.
8. It has been put to me that the cumulative additions would still represent a proportion of the original dwelling, and the wording of Policy PSP7 on this matter allows flexibility. Be that as it may, I find that in this case the proposal would result in a further significant extension to an already substantially extended original building, and it would be a disproportionate addition for this reason.
9. The proposal would therefore not satisfy the requirements as an exception to development in the Green Belt for the purposes of paragraph 149 c) of the Framework and would conflict with Policy PSP7 of the Local Plan 2017 in this respect. Consequently, it would be inappropriate development which by definition would be harmful to the Green Belt to which I attach substantial weight in this appeal.

Openness

10. Paragraph 137 of the Framework establishes 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.
11. The dwelling is in a ribbon of residential development fronting the busy Church Road. Dwellings in the area are a mix of detached and semi-detached properties, some of which have been altered and have single and two-storey extensions. The appeal property is flanked by dwellings which all have good

size rear gardens, some with outbuildings, that are screened by fences and mature vegetation at their rear boundaries from the undeveloped countryside beyond.

12. The proposal would significantly increase the footprint of the dwelling. Although its footings would be set slightly lower than the rear garden space, the wide single storey mass would fill a space currently comprising a patio area that I observed was devoid of structures. This sizeable addition would also protrude noticeably beyond the existing varied building line of the immediate neighbouring dwellings. Consequently, there would be a spatial and visual change at this aspect of the property, and it would appear less open as a result.
13. The loss of openness would be limited and only apparent from limited vantage points, which include the immediate neighbouring properties and glimpsed views from the rear and side of the row of properties. It would however have a greater impact on the openness of Green Belt than the existing development, in that the footprint and mass of the dwelling would be slightly increased and there would be a small loss of openness at this part of the property. In coming to this view, I have taken into account the position and scale of the proposed extension, the site's topography, the presence of soft landscaping and outbuildings and the existing built form in the locality.
14. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in a loss of openness to the Green Belt. Whilst the effect would be limited and localised, harm to the openness of the Green Belt would nevertheless occur; and, as per Framework paragraph 148, any harm to the Green Belt attracts substantial weight.

Character and Appearance

15. The proposed extension would be a simple form with a lean-to roof, and this would reflect the traditional architectural style of the much-extended dwelling. The existing two storey gable forms that now dominate the rear of the property, have already considerably expanded the profile of the original dwelling. The proposal would extend the depth of the dwelling further, but as a single storey structure, stepped in a small amount from the sides of the existing rear elevation, it would appear subservient to the existing dwelling.
16. Whilst it would introduce an expanse of glazing at the ground floor this would not disrupt any distinct balance or pattern of fenestration at the rear of the property. Moreover, the proposed roof tiles and rendered walls would match the existing property. For these reasons the proposal would be respectful of the character of the appeal property and would not harm its appearance.
17. In light of the above, the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. In this regard it would not conflict with Policy CS1 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy, Policy PSP38 of the Local Plan 2017 and guidance of the Householder Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. Collectively these seek a high quality of design and, amongst other matters, requires development to respect the building line, form, scale, proportions, window and door shape and reveals, alignment of openings, architectural style/detailing and external materials and boundary treatments, and hard and soft landscaping of the street and surrounding area.

Other Considerations

18. Although I have found that there would be no harm in respect to character and appearance, the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the reasons set out above and would also harm openness. 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. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
19. Whilst plain in features, I saw that the existing rear elevation was not at odds with the surrounding character of the area. I have found the design of the proposed development would also be in keeping with this character and the appearance of the dwelling. However, good design should be an expectation of all development. It is also expected that development would not harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents. Therefore, these are neutral factors in this appeal.
20. Quality of materials and energy efficiency gains would be a limited benefit given the scale of the development. The extension would improve the living space for the existing and future occupants of the dwelling. However, I see nothing before me to suggest that the existing dwelling is particularly deficient in this regard. I therefore attach limited weight to these matters.
21. There are limited details of decisions allowing additions at other properties. But I note the decisions permitting additions at No 80 and Brook Cottage predate the Local Plan 2017, and therefore these were determined in a different policy context than applicable in this case. The more recent permission, at Laurel Cottage, has a similar locational context to this proposal, in so much as there is undeveloped countryside to the rear of that property. However, the extension at Laurel Cottage resulted in a significantly smaller increase in the volume of the original building than would result from this proposal, and that example is not directly comparable for this reason.
22. The addition at Ley Hay is comparable in terms of percentage increase. Again, I have been provided with limited details about this decision but note that the property in that case is enclosed by existing built form. With the exception of some outbuildings this is not so with regards the appeal property which backs on to countryside. The locational context at Lay Hey is distinctly different to that applicable in this case for this reason and I give this matter limited weight accordingly.
23. I have found that this proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would lead to a loss of openness to the Green Belt. These are matters that I attach substantial weight to. Balanced against these are the other considerations discussed above, which at most carry limited weight.
24. Even when taken together, these considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. As a result, the very special circumstances that are necessary to justify the proposal do not exist. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to Policy PSP7 of the Local Plan 2017 and the Framework regarding this matter.

Conclusion

25. For the reasons stated above and having regard to the development plan as a whole, and all relevant material considerations, including the Framework, the appeal is dismissed.

A J Sutton

INSPECTOR