



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 April 2023

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 MAY 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/22/3307883

Parsonage Farm, The Wendy House, Haslemere Road, Witley, Godalming, Surrey GU8 5PT

- 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 Mrs Allen against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2022/01131, dated 4 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing outbuilding and erection of side extension incorporating three front facing dormer windows and one rear facing dormer window and open porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the proposal 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 very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Inappropriate Development

3. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. 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. Policy RE2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (Part 1) (2018) (2018 Local Plan) follows this approach, permitting proposals where they do not conflict with the exceptions listed in national planning policy.
4. Paragraph 149 of the Framework establishes that the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Saved Policy RD2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (2002) (2002 Local Plan)

builds on this, explaining that in assessing whether a proposed extension is disproportionate, account will be taken of the relative increase in floorspace together with the form, bulk, and height of the proposal in comparison to the original dwelling. The supporting text provides further guidance on this assessment, advising that, as a guideline, a proposal which individually or cumulatively increases the floorspace of the original dwelling by more than 40% will be unlikely not to result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling. However, in assessing whether an extension is disproportionate regard will also be had to the effect of the proposal on the rural character of the area in general and of the overall scale of the development on the site.

5. The original dwelling has previously been extended by more than 40%. Given this, whether the floorspace of the proposed extension would be 30.5 sqm or 35.3 sqm, it would result in a cumulative increase to the floorspace of the original dwelling of more than 90%. This is significantly more than the 40% advised in the supporting text of saved Policy RD2 of the 2002 Local Plan. While the proposal would include the removal of an existing outbuilding, it is a modest size and the cumulative increase in floorspace when taking account of its removal would still be significantly more than the 40% advised.
6. The Council consider that the proposal would be of an appropriate design and scale in relation to the surrounding dwellings and would not detract from the character and beauty of the surrounding landscape. From the evidence before me and my observations on site, I am of the same view. The proposed extension would be of a consistent height and depth to the existing dwelling and would use the same materials. Thus, would appear as a fully integrated part of it and would therefore not be overly prominent.
7. Nevertheless, the proposal would not be an insignificant or subordinate addition. Given this, and that the resulting cumulative increase to the floorspace of the original dwelling would be significantly more than the 40% advised, it would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
8. For this reason, the proposal would conflict with saved Policy RD2 of the 2002 Local Plan. Accordingly, it would be an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt, which, by definition, is harmful to the Green Belt.

Impact on openness

9. The footprint of the proposed side extension is not modest in comparison to the existing dwelling. Despite replacing the existing outbuilding, it would be significantly taller than it, which would inevitably take up more space, thus harming the spatial openness of the Green Belt. The proposed dormer windows, although modest, would also take up space that previously was open, adding further to this harm.
10. There are limited views of the appeal property from public vantage points, and it cannot be seen from Haslemere Road. However, the proposal would be visible from the parking area to the front of the property, access drive and neighbouring property, Parsonage Farm, as well as the fields to the south, albeit partly screened in some of these views by trees and hedging. While the existing outbuilding would be removed as part of the proposal, it would be replaced by the proposed extension, which is much larger and would therefore

have a greater impact on the visual openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore, the proposed dormer windows, although modest in scale, would be a noticeable addition, as would the porch. Given this, the proposal would erode the visual openness of the Green Belt and would therefore result in harm, albeit this harm would be relatively localised.

11. For the reasons above, the proposal would result in spatial and visual harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Thus, it would not preserve its openness contrary to the fundamental aim of the Framework.

Other Matters

12. The appellant considers that very special circumstances exist in the form of an established fallback position. There is a Certificate of Lawfulness relating to the appeal property for the erection of a single storey rear extension (referred to hereon as the permitted rear extension). Together the permitted rear extension and the existing outbuilding, which would only be removed as part of the proposal, would provide a similar amount of floorspace to the proposal.
13. In terms of benefits both the proposal and the permitted rear extension would result in modest economic and social benefits arising from their construction and the improved space within the house.
14. It has been put to me by the appellant that the proposal would offer significant improvements in design and form when compared to the permitted rear extension. However, while the proposal would be a more compact and integrated form of development, it would increase the overall scale and bulk of the dwelling, whereas the existing outbuilding is a humble subordinate addition, as would be the permitted rear extension given its modest size and single storey profile. Moreover, given the position of the permitted rear extension, it would only be visible from the south and would be partly screened by trees and hedges. Whereas the proposal, particularly the proposed extension to the roof space, although also partly screened by trees and hedges, would be visible from the parking area to the front of the dwelling, access drive and neighbouring property. Given this, the fallback position is a neutral consideration in my determination of the appeal.
15. The appellant refers to paragraph 134 of the Framework in support of the proposal. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate the proposal would be an outstanding or innovative design which would promote high levels of sustainability or would help raise the standard of design more generally in the area.

Green Belt Balance

16. I have found that the proposal would conflict with saved Policy RD2 of the 2002 Local Plan and would constitute an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt. It would also not preserve the openness of the Green Belt. The Framework indicates that harm by reason of inappropriateness should be given substantial weight and that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
17. I have given modest weight to the economic and social benefits arising from the construction of the development and the improved space within the house. However, this does not clearly outweigh the substantial harm by reason of inappropriateness and the harm I have identified to the openness of the Green

Belt. Thus, there are not the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy RE2 of the 2018 Local Plan and the aims of the Framework with regards to the Green Belt.

Conclusion

18. Accordingly, for the reasons above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR