



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 May 2023

by M Ollerenshaw BSc (Hons) MTPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/D/22/3305803

The Bungalow, Green Hill, Downe, Orpington BR6 7LB

- 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 West Kent Golf Club against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/22/02353/FULL6, dated 9 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is 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 development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework);
- the effect on the openness of the Green Belt; and
- if it is 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 the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The appeal site relates to a detached bungalow on the southern side of Green Hill within the Green Belt. The property is set back from the road and includes a driveway to the eastern side and gardens to the front, the western side and the rear. The property is set within the West Kent Golf Course and the surrounding area is rural in character.
4. Paragraph 149 of the Framework and Policy 49 of the Bromley Local Plan (2019) (the Local Plan) set out that the construction of new buildings will be considered inappropriate in the Green Belt. There are exceptions, however, including 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. Policy 51 of the Local Plan also sets out that extensions to dwellings in

the Green Belt will only be permitted where, amongst other things, the net increase in floor area over that of the original dwelling is no more than 10%.

5. The original bungalow has been extended previously with flat roofed extensions to the northern, eastern and southern sides. The Council says that the existing extensions have increased its floor area by around 72m² which represents an increase of about 141% on the original building. The proposed extension would add a further 21m² in floor area which would be a relatively modest addition. However, with the existing extensions the proposal would amount to a cumulative increase of around 182% on the original bungalow. I have no reason to doubt these figures, which the appellant has not contested. Such an extension would significantly exceed the 10% increase permitted by Local Plan Policy 51 and would be cumulatively disproportionate to the original building.
6. For these reasons I consider that the extension, taken together with the previous extensions, would be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling and so would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Such development is, by definition, harmful and is contrary to the guidance in the Framework and Policies 49 and 51 of the Local Plan. The resultant harm should be given substantial weight in determining the appeal.

Openness

7. The Framework states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. The development would occupy part of the garden to the rear of the property and introduce additional built form in a location that is currently open. I have had regard to the appellant's Visual Impact Assessment which does not identify any harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposal would not be prominently located due to its position at the rear, the proposed increase in footprint and volume of the property, albeit modest, would result in some loss of spatial openness and would conflict with the fundamental aim of keeping land permanently open.
8. The proposal would result in limited harm to the openness of the Green Belt. However, paragraph 148 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.

Other considerations

9. The Framework is clear 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.
10. I have had regard to the appeal decision at 12 Layhams Road¹. However, I have not been provided with any specific details of that scheme. From the evidence I have before me, it would appear that the approved scheme was for an extension which would increase the floor area of the dwelling by about 45% and therefore significantly less, as a proportion of the original building, than the cumulative increase proposed in this case. Each case must be considered on its own merits, taking into account the individual circumstances of each case. I therefore give this consideration limited weight.

¹ Appeal ref APP/G5180/D/15/3004813

11. The appeal property is occupied by the Green Keeper. The accommodation being on site is of high importance to the operation of the Golf Club in terms of management and security. The proposal would provide enlarged accommodation to cater for the needs of the current occupants. However, the harm I have identified would remain after these personal reasons have ceased to be material. I therefore attach limited weight to this factor.
12. Although there is ample space on the plot to accommodate a further extension, this would be at the expense of the openness of the Green Belt. Additions to larger properties in the Green Belt may be likely to have a greater impact than the appeal proposal, but in the absence of any details these do not justify the scheme and this is a matter that carries limited weight.
13. The appellant states that the proposal would provide an enhancement to the appearance of the dwelling in its setting. However, I do not consider that the existing building significantly detracts from the character and appearance of the area and I therefore give only limited weight to this consideration.
14. The creation of employment opportunities during the construction phase would benefit the local economy. Given the scale of the development, I give this matter limited weight in its favour.
15. The Council has raised concerns about overdevelopment of the site and the effects of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. As the appeal is to be dismissed for the reasons referred to in this decision, it has not been necessary for me to consider these matters further. However, even if I were to conclude that the proposal would not be harmful in these respects, the absence of harm would effectively be neutral rather than weighing positively in favour of the scheme.

Conclusion

16. I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would also harm the openness of the Green Belt. I have given only limited weight to the other considerations in favour of the proposal, and conclude that, taken together, they do not clearly outweigh the harm that the proposal would cause. Consequently, the very special circumstances do not exist to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. For the above reasons, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Ollerenshaw

INSPECTOR