



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2023

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/D/22/3296046

6 Singles Cross Cottages, Randles Lane, Knockholt TN14 7NG

- 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 Terry Reeves against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03986/HOUSE, dated 2 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is a ground floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

- Whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
- The effect upon the openness of the Green Belt;
- If the proposal would be inappropriate development, whether or not the 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 necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (the Framework) specifies that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt shall be regarded as inappropriate development unless one of several stated exceptions apply. These exceptions include 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.
4. In the context of dwellinghouse development, Policy GB1 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan (February 2015) (the ADMP) offers a clear indication of what disproportionate additions would entail. Amongst other criteria, it sets out a requirement for clear evidence to be provided that the total floorspace of the proposal, together with any previous extensions, alterations and outbuildings, would not result in an increase of more than 50%

above the floorspace of the “original” dwelling (measured externally) including outbuildings within 5 metres of the existing dwelling.

5. At this site, a two-storey extension to the rear of the appeal property (as well as to the rear of the neighbouring dwelling to which it is attached) has previously been constructed. Moreover, in accordance with the Council’s calculations, the 50% threshold endorsed by Policy GB1 has already been exceeded as a consequence of previous works. The appellant has not sought to suggest otherwise. On this basis, even though the proposed extension would, when considered in isolation, be of small size, it would represent a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling.
6. For the above reasons, the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and conflicts with Policy GB1 of the ADMP and the Framework in so far as these policies affirm that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness

7. The proposed extension would be of limited height and footprint and be discreetly positioned to the side of the appeal property alongside an existing porch feature and behind an established boundary hedgerow. In this context, I do not consider that the proposal would cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt. As such, without prejudice to my findings upon the first Main Issue, the proposal accords with the Framework in so far as its policies confirm that openness is an essential characteristic of Green Belts.

Whether very special circumstances apply

8. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Framework also indicates that substantial weight should be given to any harm identified to the Green Belt.
9. The appellant has suggested that, under normal circumstances, the extension would be permitted development but that, because of its location, it is not. In this context, it has not been demonstrated that permitted development rights offer a comparable and implementable fallback position. Further, whilst external-facing materials are intended to match those of the existing building, this would be in the interests of avoiding harm to the character and appearance of the area as opposed to providing a tangible scheme benefit.
10. The extension would provide enhanced/enlarged living arrangements for existing and future occupiers. However, given the modest extent of new floorspace to be provided, this benefit attracts minor weight insufficient to outweigh the substantial harm identified to the Green Belt or to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal. The scheme conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

11. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR