



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2023

by C Rose BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/W/23/3315145

16 Grove Heath North, Ripley, Surrey GU23 6EN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Williams against Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/P/00945, is dated 30 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is part demolition of the existing ground floor extension, demolition of existing conservatory and garage. New first floor over original bungalow, ground floor rear extension and alterations to the fenestration.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission for part demolition of the existing ground floor extension, demolition of existing conservatory and garage. New first floor over original bungalow, ground floor rear extension and alterations to the fenestration is refused.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal follows the Council's failure to determine the planning application within the prescribed period. During the course of the appeal the Council confirmed that they would have refused planning permission as the proposal would result in a disproportionate addition to the original building constituting inappropriate development harmful to the Green Belt with no very special circumstances outweighing the harm, and due to the scale, mass and bulk of the proposal harming the character of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area and streetscene. The appellant had an opportunity to respond to this in their final comments.

Main Issues

3. In light of the above, the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal 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 on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and wider area; and
 - 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

Whether inappropriate development

4. Paragraph 147 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be permitted except in very special circumstances. The Framework further establishes that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 149. One such exception being 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. Policy P2 of the Guildford borough Local Plan: strategy and sites 2015-2034 (April 2019) (LP) broadly conforms to the general thrust of National Green Belt policy. For extensions and alterations within the Green Belt, LP Policy P2 clarifies that the "original building" shall mean either the building as it existed on 1 July 1948, or, if no building existed on 1 July 1948, then the first building as it was originally built after this date.
6. The appellant has provided calculations of the original footprint of the dwelling, original floor area and original volume. The calculation of the original floorspace is very similar to that stated by the Council.
7. The Framework does not provide a definition of 'disproportionate additions' and therefore an assessment of whether a proposal would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building is a matter of planning judgement.
8. The appeal proposal would see the existing single storey bungalow altered to provide a part-two storey property. To facilitate this, the front elevation would be built up and a new roof erected with a higher ridge line to accommodate the additional storey with the garage removed and rear extensions remodelled. Using the appellants calculations, the volume, footprint and floor area would increase considerably from that of the original dwelling. Taken together, these increases would amount to substantial and disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
9. Consequently, I find that by reason of the resultant disproportionate additions, the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful. It would therefore conflict with LP Policy P2, and Paragraph 149(c) of the Framework.

Openness

10. Paragraph 137 of the Framework states that the essential characteristic of Green Belts is their openness.
11. The appellant states that the existing building has a greater footprint and volume than the proposed development. As a result, they argue that by virtue of the reduced footprint and volume, the proposal would cause less harm to the Green Belt.
12. In light of the partial replacement of the ground floor footprint with the first-floor extension, it is no surprise that the proposal would result in a decrease in the built footprint of development. However, the resultant provision of the first

floor with associated increase in eaves and ridge heights, alongside the greater overall floor area more than the existing, results in a development that would have a greater spatial and visual presence.

13. The first floor would be visible from Grove Heath North and fill the open gap and enclose the space above the existing bungalow between the two adjacent two-storey dwellings when viewed from outside the site. I acknowledge that the two-storey element of the built form would follow the existing building line but nonetheless, by reason of the first-floor extension, it would have a visual effect on openness.
14. As a result, I find that despite being of a smaller volume, the increased height would reduce the openness of the site and have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

Character and appearance

15. Grove Heath North is characterised by a mix of detached two-storey houses and bungalows on sizable plots finished in brick and render under tiled roofs. The appeal property is visible within the streetscene with an open frontage.
16. The appeal site and the adjacent dwellings are of different designs and proportions. The proposal would result in the provision of an upper floor to the existing bungalow and large rear extension that would not be subservient to the existing dwelling and that would significantly alter its appearance. Nonetheless, the proposal would be of a design that would complement the adjoining and surrounding dwellings in terms of its height, proportions, and materials. The rear extensions would not be highly visible and would be of a suitable scale and appearance in themselves.
17. In light of the complementary design, and as the altered appearance to the existing dwelling would not be harmful to the existing dwelling or surrounding area and streetscene, the proposal would be of an appropriate design and bulk.
18. On this basis, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the existing dwelling or wider area. Accordingly, it would comply with Policy D1 of the LP, saved Policy G5 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 and the Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document 2018. Amongst other things, these seek to achieve a high quality design that respects distinctive local character and the surrounding environment and streetscene.

Other considerations

19. I recognise that other dwellings in the street may have benefitted from similar or larger scale extensions. However, I do not have the details of their circumstances and have a duty to consider the appeal proposal on its merits. As a result, I give this little weight.
20. I have considered the lack of harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and the use of matching materials, but these matters are neutral in my consideration.

Conclusion

21. The proposal results in a harmful loss of openness to the Green Belt. As a result, the proposal would be inappropriate development in terms set out by

the Framework. The Framework requires that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. This weighs heavily against the proposal.

22. In this context, very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm are clearly outweighed by other considerations. I have given little weight to the other considerations cited in favour of the development. I find that the other considerations in this case do not clearly outweigh the harm that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the scheme do not therefore exist.
23. Overall, for the reasons given above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

C Rose

INSPECTOR