



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 December 2023

by A Hickey MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/23/3327595

Coach House, Maple Manor, 32 Woodhatch Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 5JH

- 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 Tom Kiss against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02506/HHOLD, dated 9 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is rear extensions to the existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The address in the banner heading above has been taken from the appeal form, as this accurately reflects the site location.

Main Issues

3. 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, including the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, 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. The Framework confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, subject to a number of exceptions, including 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. Annex 2 of the Framework defines the original building as being as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.

5. Policy CS3 of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances clearly outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt. It is consistent with the Framework in this regard.
6. Policy NHE5 of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan Development Management Plan (LP) is also relevant and sets out a series of criteria which must be met for the extension, alteration or replacement of a building in the Green Belt to be acceptable. As such, Policy NHE5 is broadly consistent with the Framework.
7. The appeal site falls within land defined as Metropolitan Green Belt. It comprises an elongated two-storey rectangular building converted into a dwelling, accessed off a private road and positioned between fields with some additional dispersed built form including other dwellings and buildings. Beyond the field to the north are a small number of dwellings located on Dunlin Close.
8. 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. In determining proposals in the Green Belt Policy NHE5, takes account of matters such as the building's footprint, floor area, massing, bulk, height, location, positioning and prominence of the proposal.
9. The property has been altered and extended previously. The Council and the appellant have arrived at different figures with regard to the increase in floor space. Nonetheless, the main parties agree that the resulting development would see a 41% increase in volume and a 47% increase in footprint from the original building. The finished development would infill ground floor gaps and see a two-storey rear extension with a ridge height similar to the host property. It would also have a greater projection than the two existing gable balconies. Taken together, these increases, and the resultant built form would amount to a substantial addition to the property, and one which I find to be disproportionate over and above the size of the original building.
10. Consequently, 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 Policy CS3 of the LPCS, Policy NHE5 of the LP and Paragraph 149 of the Framework.

Openness of the Green Belt

11. The Framework states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. An assessment of openness requires consideration of both spatial and visual aspects.
12. As set out above, there would be an increase in the volume and footprint of the building. The existing building has two modest projecting gables with balconies at the rear. The proposed extension would, as identified above, project significantly past these and, given its width and length, increase the mass and scale of the building at the rear. This would be exacerbated by the height of the extension matching the ridge of the host dwelling, increasing its prominence.
13. The appeal property is largely screened from the south as a result of land level changes and built form. There are presently limited views from the road and

public vantage points as a result of mature planting and trees. In visual terms, the effect on openness would be limited. However, the this no cogent evidence that the planting and trees are protected, and although it is not currently proposed to remove them, they are not a permanent feature in the landscape. Should the hedge or trees die or be removed, then the dwelling would be much more prominent, particularly from the rear of properties on Dunlin Close. This harm would be moderate, given that other development is readily visible within the Green Belt. Nonetheless, it would cause harm both in spatial and visual terms to the openness of the Green Belt and in accordance with the Framework, I must give substantial weight to this harm.

Other Considerations

14. No objection has been raised by the Council to the design of the development in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, and I have no reason to disagree. However, the absence of harm in such terms is a neutral factor in my assessment, carrying neither positive nor negative weight.
15. The Council found that the proposal would not harm the occupiers of neighbouring properties, trees or be harmful to nearby heritage assets. I have no reason to disagree. However, this matter is neutral in my consideration.
16. In terms of benefits, it has been put to me by the appellant that the extension would provide additional space for the appellant. However, personal circumstances will seldom outweigh more general planning concerns. As such, I afford this consideration only limited weight within the decision.
17. There would be economic benefits during the construction of the proposed development. I attach limited weight to the economic benefits given the small scale and temporary nature of these benefits.

Other Matters

18. The proposed scheme was subject to pre-application engagement with the Council. However, I have assessed the proposal on its own merits and found it would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Conclusion

19. I have found that the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would be harmful to its openness. Paragraph 148 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to these. I have attached limited weight to the economic benefits for the reasons given above. I find that the other considerations in this case do not therefore clearly outweigh the harm. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
20. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the approach of the Framework, of sufficient weight to indicate the decision should be taken otherwise. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

A Hickey

INSPECTOR