



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2024

by P D Sedgwick BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06.03.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/D/23/3330741

Orchard House, Cooks Lane, Coalpit Heath, BS36 2UR

- 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 Michael Clapp against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P23/01620/HH, dated 15 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 6 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is erection of two storey front extension and side dormer provide additional accommodation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. In the interests of clarity, in the banner heading above I have referred to the description of the proposal given by the appellant on the appeal form as this gives a clear description of the type of development proposed which reflects that used by the Council in their decision notice.

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 and any relevant development plan policies, and the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the building and area; and,
 - if there would be harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, whether the harm would be clearly outweighed by other considerations to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. The appeal site relates to a 2 storey detached house in a substantial plot in the countryside in an area designated as the Bristol and Bath Green Belt. The house is set back from a lane behind a driveway accessed via double wooden gates. At

the road edge the appeal site boundary comprises high hedges and trees. The property is rectangular and orientated lengthwise parallel to the road, as is the neighbouring house on the corner of Cooks Lane and the Hollow. There is a gable section at one end which is the same height as the main roof which extends to the side of it and has 2 gable dormers to the front and 2 to the rear. A pitched roof porch projects forward from the front gable, facing the driveway and road and defining the front elevation.

5. Policy PSP7 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Policies, Sites and Places Plan (2017) (LP) allows for extensions to buildings in the Green Belt provided they are not disproportionate to the size of the original building. This is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) (the Framework). The policy advises that proposals which would increase the volume of a building by over 30% may be disproportionate if they would appear out of scale and proportion to the existing building. That reflects the guidance set out in the Council's Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (2007) (SPD).
6. According to the appellant the proposed development would increase the volume of the building by 41%. The front porch would be demolished, and the height of the gable section raised so that its ridge would be higher than that of the main roof. It would extend significantly forward of the current building line and closer to the road and cover more than half the length of the building. It would dominate the house, rather than appearing subordinate to it, and would thus appear out of scale and proportion. The proposed development would therefore be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and would be inappropriate development and conflict with Policy PSP7 and Policies CS1 and CS5 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Core Strategy (2013) (CS), the SPD and the Framework insofar as they require development to respect the scale, form and height of the existing building and seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.

Effect on openness

7. The area around the appeal site on Hollow Lane and Cooks Lane comprises a patchwork of houses set in large grounds, surrounded by small fields and a nearby golf course. Field and garden boundaries, and road edges, are lined with mature hedges and trees which create a sense of enclosure, limiting views across the wider landscape. The appeal property is smaller, in terms of both its footprint and height, than neighbouring houses on Cooks Lane. Views of all of them are restricted, generally to their first floors, because of roadside and boundary hedges and trees which also form a backdrop to them. Notwithstanding that the proposal would be disproportionate in size to the existing dwelling, in the context of limited views of it, the enclosed nature of the landscape and the size of other houses nearby, the harm to the openness of the green belt would be limited.

Character and appearance

8. Policy PSP38 of the LP requires extensions to respect the building line, scale and form of the host building and the alignment of its door and window openings. The Council's Householder Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2021) (HDG) further advises that front extensions should not dominate the host building or project beyond the front plane of any existing features.

9. Due to its height and depth the proposed extension would dominate the house. As noted above, it would project substantially forward of the current building line, changing the building's layout from a rectangle to an L shape. Removing the porch and repositioning the front door to the side of the extension would change the elevation parallel to the road, such that it would no longer appear as its front. It would thus appear at odds with the neighbouring house at the junction with the Hollow. The intention may be to reorientate the house to face a new access being constructed at the time of my visit. Nonetheless, despite partial screening from hedges along the road, the character and appearance of the host property and its relationship to its neighbour would be adversely affected. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policy CS1 of the CS, PSP38 of the LP, the HDG and the Framework which require high quality design that respects and enhances the character of the building and area.

Other considerations

10. There would be benefits in terms of improving the existing living space and providing additional accommodation to meet the appellant's family's needs, but these are personal benefits and as such carry little weight. There would also be modest benefits arising from short term employment during the extension's construction.

Other Matter

11. The appellant has raised concerns over the Council not discussing the design to enable negotiations and amendments to overcome objections prior to determining the application. Procedural issues such as this must remain a matter between the main parties, the Council's administration and determination of the application ultimately has no bearing on the planning merits of the proposal before me.

Conclusion

12. The proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. The proposed extension would also harm the character and appearance of the host property. The other considerations put forward do not clearly outweigh the substantial weight that I give to the harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness and effect on openness that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposed extension would not accord with the development plan and there are no other material considerations to outweigh that finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.

P D Sedgwick

INSPECTOR