



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2024

by B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/D/23/3330362

19 Common Road, Hanham, Bristol BS15 3LL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Paul Howell against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref is P23/01693/HH.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 2no. front and 1no. rear dormers to facilitate loft conversion. Erection of a single storey rear extension to form additional living accommodation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Government published in December 2023 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). I am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by making reference to the Framework in this decision.

Main Issues

3. The appeal site is located within an area of Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues are:
 - whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling; and
 - if the development would be inappropriate, whether the harm to the Green Belt by way 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

4. Policy PSP7 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan, Policies, Sites and Places Plan (2017) (PSP) requires the Green Belt to be protected from inappropriate development. Paragraph 154 of the Framework establishes that the

construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless they fall within the list of exceptions set out in this paragraph. Part c) of this paragraph lists 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, as one such exception.

5. Although the Framework does not define what constitutes a disproportionate addition, PSP Policy PSP7 sets out the local interpretation of proportionality stating that as a general guide, *'Additions that exceed 30% volume increase will be carefully assessed, with particular regard to whether the proposal would appear out of scale and proportion to the existing building.'*
6. The appellant sets out that the proposed extensions add up to a cumulative increase in floorspace of some 31%, however, the submitted Planning Statement sets out that this figure includes a rear extension as original. Discounting this as original would raise the volume calculation to some 43%.
7. Whilst this would remain below the 50% volume increase that PSP Policy PSP7 suggests *'would most likely be considered a disproportionate addition and be refused as inappropriate development'*, as set out above, proportionality is not only measured by floorspace and volume calculations, and it is also necessary to consider the form, bulk, height and overall scale of the enlarged building. The Supplementary Planning Document Development in the Green Belt (2007) further advises that *'it is important to note that the size of the addition will not be the only consideration when an application is being assessed'*, with considerations of whether the size and design complements the existing character of the property and the original building also referred to.
8. The existing property is a small bungalow, which, despite the existing rear additions, retains a simple form, and its modest original proportions and character remain evident.
9. The rear extension is considerably greater in depth than the main house. When viewed from either side, the more than doubling of the depth of the main property would amount to an incongruous and substantial increase which would overwhelm the existing modest form of the bungalow, and harm its original character. Therefore, whilst single storey, limited in width and set below the existing eaves, due to this excessive depth the extension is not therefore subordinate to the main property, and it would appear out of scale.
10. In light of the above I conclude that the proposed extension would comprise a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and would result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as set out in PSP Policy PSP7 and paragraph 154 of the Framework.

Openness

11. The Framework makes it clear that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt.
12. The proposal would increase the footprint of the dwelling and would, given the dormers and depth of the proposed extension, increase the massing and built form of the property when viewed from the sides. Whilst there is no public view from the rear, the front dormer would be visible from the highway and the rear development would be visible from the neighbouring property and car park of the adjoining business. There would be therefore a visual impact upon

openness in addition to the spatial impact that would result, and openness would be reduced. Modest harm to openness would therefore occur.

Character and Appearance

13. As set out above, the proposed rear extension, by virtue of its significant depth, would not appear visually subservient to the host building. I recognise the appellant's intention to create a clear distinctiveness to the evolution of the dwelling. However, the scale of the flat roofed extension would be out of keeping with the traditional and modest proportions and design of the existing dwelling. It would therefore appear as a dominant and obtrusive form of development that harms the existing character of the dwelling.
14. Whilst conforming with several criteria set out in the Supplementary Planning Document Householder Design Guide (2021) (SPD), the proposal would therefore conflict with the requirement for extensions to remain visually subservient to the host building in terms of scale and character.
15. As such, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling. There would therefore be conflict with Policy CS1 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy (2013) (LP) which, along with the SPD, requires high quality design which reflects the character of the existing property. This policy is in broad conformity with the Framework.

Other Considerations

16. The appellant refers to an application for prior approval¹ submitted for a rear extension at 8m depth. Limited detail is provided of this proposal, and notwithstanding whether the application is accepted by the Council, the appeal statement suggest that the prior approval extension would be nearly 5m shorter in depth compared to the scheme before me. As such, in terms of the depth, visual impact and proportionality of the extension when viewed from either side, the two developments are not directly comparable.
17. I also note reference to a permitted development rear dormer, however limited details of this are also provided, which prevents clear comparison.
18. Consequently, even if I found that there was a real prospect of the fall-back being implemented, it would not be demonstrably more harmful both visually and to the Green Belt than the proposal before me. For these reasons, I have given the fall-back position only limited weight in favour of the proposal.
19. As set out above, considerations of proportionality are restricted to the original property, and the scale of neighbouring dwellings and buildings are of little relevance in this regard. Similarly, the scale of the garden and neighbouring buildings is not determinative to the policy requirement to respect the character and appearance of the existing property.
20. The appellant references the lack of site visit by the Case Officer. I have considered the proposal before me on the submitted documents and what I observed on my site visit. The location of the property close to the edge of the designated Green Belt and suburban housing does not alter the policy context.
21. I note the benefits that the extension would bring in regards to matters such as obscuring the neighbouring car park from the view of the occupants of the

¹ Application reference P23/02610/PNH

appeal property and mitigating the effects of its use, in addition to improving standard of accommodation, however such private benefits carry limited weight in favour of the proposal.

- 22. It has not been demonstrated that any benefit in relation to the materials used for the existing house or its general condition is reliant on the proposed development. As such, this carries little weight in favour of the proposal.
- 23. The lack of harm identified to matters such as the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and buildings, in addition to the design of the proposed dormers, are neutral factors, not in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

- 24. Paragraph 152 of the Framework says inappropriate development is harmful by definition and paragraph 153 identifies that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
- 25. The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would reduce openness in this location. Additional harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, in conflict with LP Policy CS1. The other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm in this case. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposal is therefore contrary to PSP Policy PSP7, the development plan as a whole and the guidance contained in the Framework relating to Green Belts.
- 26. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

B Phillips

INSPECTOR