



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 March 2024

by L Francis BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/23/3325864

8 Wayside Cottages, Horsham Road, Holmbury St Mary, Surrey RH5 6NH

- 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 M Loates-Taylor, Taylor Made Space against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/P/00347.
 - The development proposed is the removal of existing conservatory. Proposal for two additions. One to replace the existing plastic conservatory with a new single storey extension of increased area, using a timber frame on a brick base, with a pitched clay tiled roof with a roof light. The other to provide a new main entrance hall with shower, WC and utility area within a new brick built single storey extension with a pitched clay tiled roof with a roof light.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated in December 2023, during the consideration of this appeal. Insofar as is directly relevant to the appeal, there are no substantive changes. Neither main party were asked for their views and no parties have been prejudiced as a result.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and any relevant development plan policies.
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - If there is any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would it be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. 8 Wayside Cottages is a semi-detached two storey house with a modern conservatory addition, set in a generous plot with gardens to the front, rear and side. The land slopes steeply away from Horsham Road, such that the ground floor of the appeal site and its immediate neighbour are largely

- screened from public view. The view from the pavement and highway is largely of the first floor and pitched roofs of the appeal property and adjoining house.
5. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt, but there are a series of exceptions to this. Paragraph 154c allows for 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.
 6. Policy P2 of the Guildford borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2019 (Guildford LP) confirms that Green Belt policy will be applied in line with the Framework, and sets out various definitions in relation to extensions, replacement buildings and infilling. It is consistent with the provisions of the Framework.
 7. Policy P2 does not set out any definition of the term disproportionate or set any benchmark in terms of limits on floorspace uplift. Expanding on this, the Council's Residential Extensions and Alterations 2018 Supplementary Planning Document confirms that considering whether an extension is disproportionate, is not simply a calculation of the increase in footprint and/or volume. It states that each application will be considered on its own merits to form a judgement as to whether the proposal would represent a disproportionate addition which constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
 8. The proposed single storey extension to the front of the building would be on an existing area of hardstanding and would partially square off the existing L shaped footprint of the ground floor. The proposed single storey extension replacing the conservatory would extend beyond the existing conservatory footprint into the rear garden. It would also be higher than the current conservatory due to the proposed pitched roof form, which would add additional bulk and mass.
 9. I note from the planning history listed in evidence that planning permission has been granted for previous extensions including a first-floor extension and the rear conservatory. The parties agree that the proposals would result in a significant 75% increase in floorspace compared to the original building.
 10. When considered in their entirety and in addition to the extensions already added to the original building, the effect of the proposal would be to effectively engulf the original building. The cumulative bulk, mass and scale of the proposed extensions, together with that already added to the property, along with the consequent significant uplift in floorspace leads me to conclude that the proposal would be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. This would run contrary to the provisions of paragraph 154c of the Framework and Policy P2 of the Guildford LP.

Openness

11. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt; it can be perceived both spatially and visually. The proposed extensions would result in the intensification of built form over a greater footprint within the site.
12. Whilst I acknowledge that there would be limited views of the extensions from Horsham Road, the pitched roof of the rear extension would be more visible than the existing conservatory due to its height and bulk. Given the amount of

screening to the site, and the domestic scale of the proposal, the spatial and visual harm to the openness of the Green Belt would be limited.

Other considerations

13. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It advises that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
14. I acknowledge the family circumstances of the appellant and their need for the extension. I attach some, albeit limited, weight to these circumstances. Similarly, I recognise that the proposal would upgrade the property and potentially diversify the housing mix within Holmbury St Mary.
15. The appeal site is located within the Holmbury St Mary Conservation Area. The statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
16. The CA is of a linear form, encompassing village development along and around Horsham Road, including the village green and area around Pitland Street to the south. The village has a wooded valley setting and scenic views up and down the valley, to low lying fields and houses set in the hills. In terms of built form, characteristic features include brick and stone, largely two storey buildings with steeply pitched roofs and prominent chimney stacks. Boundary hedges and deep verges are also a common feature. I consider the significance of the CA is largely derived from the hillside setting, scenic views into and out from the village, and the pattern and form of development around the village green and into the hillside.
17. The proposed extensions would be subservient to the existing dwelling, and constructed from brick, timber and clay roof tiles to match existing. With the exception of the new pitched roofs, the extensions would be screened from public vantage points due to the boundary hedge and topography. As such, the proposals would preserve the character and appearance of the CA. The absence of harm in this respect is a neutral factor which does not weigh for or against the proposal.
18. Given their scale and position relative to the adjoining dwelling, the proposed extensions would not result in any undue effect upon the privacy, light or outlook for occupiers of the neighbouring property. Again, the absence of harm in this respect is a neutral factor.
19. I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, a matter to which the Framework requires me to attach substantial weight. There would also be a modest loss of openness. The limited benefits that would arise from the proposal, along with the personal circumstances of the appellant, are not matters that clearly outweigh the harm arising from inappropriateness and loss of openness. The proposal therefore conflicts with the Green Belt protection aims of the Framework and with Policy P2 of the Guildford LP. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist.

Other Matters

20. The appeal site is in the Surrey Hills National Landscape (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). National Landscapes are designated for the purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, and Section 85(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty upon me to consider these purposes in this decision. The Council did not object to the appeal scheme in this regard and I agree that due to the modest scale of the proposal and lack of significant visual impact, the special qualities of the National Landscape would not be adversely affected.

Conclusion

21. The appeal proposal conflicts with policy set out in the Framework and the development plan to protect the Green Belt. There are no other considerations that outweigh that conflict and for this reason the appeal is dismissed.

L Francis

INSPECTOR