



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 March 2024

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/23/3330314

Rosedene Cottage, Woldingham Road, Woldingham, Surrey CR3 7LA

- 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 Janette Knight against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2023/348, dated 17 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 6 July 2023.
 - The proposed development is for demolition of existing conservatory. Construction of new upper floor with extended pitched roof and two front dormer windows plus Velux rooflights and new two-storey extension to rear. New/amended openings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

- whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
- 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 existing dwelling and surrounding 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

3. Rosedene Cottage is a detached bungalow with off-street parking on the driveway to the front. The appeal site borders a garden centre to the north and another dwelling to the east. The wider area is comprised of fields and woodland within the Green Belt.
 4. The Framework states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. This is subject to certain exceptions, which include at paragraph 154 (c) 'the extension or
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alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.'

5. Policies DP10 and DP13 of the Tandridge District Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies 2014-2029 (adopted 2014) (LPP2) are of relevance. Policy DP13, in the case of an extension or alteration to an existing dwelling, considers the 'original building' to be the dwelling as it existed on 31 December 1968 or, if constructed after 1968, as it was built originally.
6. The Framework defines the date of an 'original building' as 1 July 1948, or as originally built if constructed after that date. Nevertheless, the LPP2 policies are broadly consistent with the Framework.
7. The Framework does not define what constitutes a disproportionate addition. Policy DP13 states that the Council will adopt a pragmatic approach in determining what constitutes a disproportionate addition and that each proposal will be judged on its individual merits, taking into account the size of the original building, the bulk, height, mass and prominence of the extension and its impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
8. The Council states that mathematically and as a guide, proposals resulting in a 40% volume increase above that of the original building are likely to be supported subject to a visual assessment. However, this figure is not present in any of the policies before me. I therefore consider that the mathematical percentage increase alone should not be the overriding factor in determining whether the proposal represents a disproportionate addition.
9. The existing residence is diminutive in nature, consisting of two hipped roof structures joined by low level flat roof that is hidden from public view. It has previously been extended and the Council calculates that the proposed scheme would result in the volume of the dwelling being extended over and above the 'original building' by about 109%. This figure is not disputed by the appellants. I note that the volume increase to the existing cottage is in the region of 29-31%, however I am required to assess the proposals on the basis of the 'original building'.
10. The proposed addition would be sited above a large proportion of the current dwelling. It would dominate the property, amalgamating the roof into one solid mass, and with the new ridge line being significantly taller than existing. Whilst retaining a pitched roof design, it would nonetheless add considerable bulk and to the existing property, particularly at first floor level.
11. Given its extensive scale and height relative to the bungalow, the proposal would have a much greater visual impact and be particularly apparent when viewed externally from Woldingham Road and Long Hill, failing to sit comfortably within the constraints of the site.
12. Judging the scheme in accordance with Policy DP13, I consider that the proposed extension, together with the previous additions to the dwelling, would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. This would represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would not benefit from the exception in paragraph 154 (c) of the Framework. Consequently, there would be conflict with Policy DP10 and DP13 of the LLP2.

Openness

13. As noted above, the proposal would be seen from open land surrounding the site and from public viewpoints, notwithstanding the presence of some existing planting around the site. The scale and extent of the scheme would be significantly greater than the existing property, creating built form at a higher level where previously there was none. Overall, I find there would be considerable harm to openness.

Character and appearance

14. At present the bungalow has simple hipped and flat roof forms. These would be replaced with a much larger development containing numerous roof lights, two dormer windows to the elevation facing Woldingham Road and a rear two-storey addition clad with timber.
15. The existing modest property would consequently be overwhelmed by a conspicuous and discordant scheme, with extensive clutter at roof level. Being set flush with the elevation below, the rear dormer feature would not appear subservient, and its overall design would be boxy and lacking in architectural subtlety. Whilst I acknowledge that this section would not be prominently located in relation to the street scene, this does not obviate the obligation to ensure that it would be well designed and is not so large that it dominates and competes with the original building.
16. On this basis I am drawn to conclude that the scheme would result in harm to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounding area. It would be inconsistent with Policy CP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008 and Policies DP7 and DP8 of the LPP2, which expect new development to be of a high-quality design that reflects and respects the existing character, setting and local context.

Other considerations

17. I recognise that the local area comprises a garden centre and an eclectic mixture of dwellings, varying in size, age, design and external finish. I also appreciate that the development would be constructed in matching materials, would not result in significant harm to the amenities of the surrounding properties, it would result in an improved layout within the family home, parking would be provided on site in accordance with the Council's Parking Standards and there are no highway safety concerns. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm identified above.

Green Belt Balance

18. According to paragraphs 152 and 153 of the Framework, inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances. These will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, are clearly outweighed by other considerations.
19. I am required by the Framework to give substantial weight to the harm the development would cause to the Green Belt by virtue of its inappropriateness and to openness. Individually or cumulatively, the weights I have attached to other considerations do not clearly outweigh this harm. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.

Conclusion

20. Having regard to all matters raised and based on my reasoning above, the appeal is dismissed.

C Hall

INSPECTOR