



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 May 2024

by H Miles BA (hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 MAY 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/23/3328924

Oakleigh Woodhouse Lane, Holmbury St Mary, Surrey RH5 6NN

- 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 Lord & Lady Harris against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/P/00400.
 - The development proposed is car port and gardeners store extensions to existing garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For the avoidance of doubt, the fact that development has occurred has not altered my decision.

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 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 proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
 - 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 sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; and the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The Framework goes on to state that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt. The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, and thus should be approved only if very special circumstances exist, unless they come within one of the categories in the closed list of exceptions in paragraphs 154 and 155 of the Framework. This is

broadly echoed by policy P2 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: strategy and sites (2019) (LP).

5. Of relevance to this appeal, paragraph 154c) provides an exception 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. Policy P2 of the LP states that the original building shall mean the building as it existed on 1 July 1948, or if no building existed on 1 July 1948, then the first building as it was originally built after this date.
6. The main parties agree that prior to 1973 there were 7 buildings across the site with a combined floor area of around 35sqm. Planning permission was then granted for their demolition and replacement with a garage with around 31sqm floor area. This garage was removed by 2006. A triple garage was built in around 2009 with a floor area of around 62sqm. A covered, open sided carport has been added on one side which is annotated to be around 35sqm and up to 3.4m high. As well as an enclosed building for a gardeners' store which is around 20sqm and a similar height on the other side. The additions have flat roofs with false pitches to the front elevation. The main parties agree that, in the circumstances of this case, the original building is the outbuildings.
7. The appeal scheme results in around a 230% increase in floor area from the original building. In addition, whilst the car port is open sided, nevertheless its roof and structure clearly result in the presence of built development in this area. Although the garage sits within a large plot and the appeal scheme does not increase the height above the ridge of the existing garage, the proposed development is visible from the road and still results in a structure with a substantially larger footprint, as well as a larger mass and bulk than the original building. This results in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
8. I am directed to an appeal at Little Lodge, Woodhouse Lane¹, where an increase of around 100% was allowed. However, in this case there were specific circumstances including a fallback position and particular topography which are not before me in this current appeal. As such this does not alter my conclusions. Although it is put to me that other permissions for 121-223% have been approved I have no detail of these applications before me and as such I am not satisfied that the circumstances are similar to those before me now.
9. Consequently, for the reasons described above, the appeal scheme is inappropriate development in the Green Belt both in the terms of the Framework and Policy P2 of the LP.

Openness

10. Openness has both spatial and visual dimensions. The proposed development results in a significant increase of built form to this site and introduces development into areas which previously were open. Although the floor area is more condensed than the 7 buildings that were previously on this site, nevertheless the size and scale proposed has a greater impact on spatial openness than these much smaller buildings. As such there is harm to spatial openness. The building is visible above the boundary hedge from Woodhouse

¹ APP/Y3615/D/18/3217994

Lane and therefore this harm is experienced. As such there is also harm to visual openness.

11. Consequently, for the reasons above, the proposed development is harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, it is contrary to the Framework in this regard.

Character and appearance

12. Woodhouse Lane is generally characterised by large houses set in generous grounds. Many of these properties have garages, and some are highly visible from the road. However, they are mainly of a scale and location that they are subservient to the main dwellings. This results in a pleasant, spacious character. The appeal site is separated from the house at Oakleigh by the road and has a secondary relationship with the main plot.
13. The car port and gardeners store have flat roofs with a false pitch. This roof form does not complement the pitched roof of the triple garage, albeit that this part of the building is mainly screened from public views. Moreover, the development results in a very large outbuilding on this plot of land. The scale of the resultant building undermines the secondary relationship with the host dwelling. It creates a dominant building which harmfully undermines the spaciousness of the area. Furthermore, whilst its overall height is similar to other outbuildings due to its siting, the roof in particular is visible from the road and therefore the harm identified above would be experienced.
14. The Council have not identified harm to the National Landscape. However, the lack of harm in this regard is a neutral factor that does not weigh in favour of the appeal scheme.
15. As such, it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, in this respect it would be contrary to Policy D1 of the LP and policy D4 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Development Management Policies (2023) (DMP). Together these seek high quality design that reflects the distinctive local character and sets criteria as to how this should be achieved, amongst other things. As well as to the advice in the Residential Extensions and Alterations SPD 2018 and Guildford Landscape Character Assessment 2007 which provides further guidance to achieve high quality design in this area including with regard to garages.
16. Policy H4 of the DMP relates to housing in the urban areas of Guildford, Ash and Tongham. Therefore, the policies set out above are more relevant to this main issue.

Other Considerations

17. The extensions are required to house the gardening equipment needed for the large grounds and for additional covered parking. However, a triple garage is already on the site as well as extensive space for external parking. I am not persuaded that this is anything other than a private benefit and as such I afford this limited weight.

Green Belt Balance

18. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to

the Green Belt. I have found harm to the Green Belt by reason of the proposed development's inappropriateness. There is also harm to the Green Belt due to the proposed development's effect on openness. The considerations advanced by the appellant, even when considered together, do not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm.

19. The very special circumstances necessary to justify the development therefore do not exist. Therefore, the proposed development conflicts with paragraph 153 of the Framework and Policy P2 of the LP, the aims of which are set out above.

Conclusion

20. The proposal does not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR