



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 April 2024

by G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20.05.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/T0355/D/23/3332136

**Honeypots, School Lane, Cookham Dean, Maidenhead, Berkshire
SL6 9PQ**

- 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 Freya Young against the decision of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
 - The application Ref 23/01265, dated 19 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2023.
 - The development proposed is a part single-storey and part two-storey side and rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the application was determined a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2023. This does not alter the national approach to the Green Belt; however, the paragraph numbers have changed. The references within my Decision are to the latest version of the Framework.
3. The appeal site lies within the Cookham Dean Conservation Area (the CA). I have therefore had special regard to s72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) throughout my Decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - if inappropriate development, 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, including whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Cookham Dean Conservation Area (the CA); and
 - if inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the 'very special circumstances' which would be necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Inappropriate development

5. The Framework establishes that development within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of the specified exceptions applies. Exception (c), as set out in paragraph 154 of the Framework, allows for the extension and alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The original building is defined as being as it existed on 1 July 1948, or as originally constructed.
6. The semi-detached property has previously been extended with a two-storey extension to the side, significantly increasing the size of the property. The documentation provided by the appellant relating to that planning application in 1995¹ indicates that the original floor area was 81.5 sqm. It also refers to the extension as 74.7 sqm, equating to a 91.7 per cent increase. There was also a further small extension in 2005, and the proposed extensions are for an additional 26.18 sqm. Whilst the appellant uses slightly different figures in their calculations and the Council has a lower floor area for the original building, the totality of the additions equates to more than a doubling of the size of the property, which is a disproportionate addition. Other factors, including the size of the plot and visibility of the extensions, do not affect this assessment against the size of the original building.
7. I have had regard to the details provided by the appellant relating to other properties in the locality which have been granted planning permission for extensions which create sizeable additions. Nonetheless, each case is to be judged on its own merits, and from the extracts provided these additions generally appear to be as a result of 'very special circumstances'.
8. I therefore conclude the proposed extensions would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary to paragraph 154 of the Framework and Policy QP5 of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Local Plan 2013-2033 (Borough Local Plan), which reflects the Framework.

Openness

9. The proposed single-storey element would be located on an existing patio area and which due to its siting would be primarily screened from School Lane. There would nevertheless be a spatial increase in the size of the property, and the first-floor element alters its bulk and would be notable. The reduction in openness as a result of the modest extensions would be limited and localised, nonetheless, the development would give rise to some loss of openness which adds to the harm to the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

10. School Lane is narrow and enclosed by vegetation and boundary walls, and the properties, which vary in style, have a limited setback from the road. The appeal property forms part of a pair of semi-detached, two-storey cottages which have a symmetry to their form. The proposed extensions would allow for the reconfiguration of the internal space and the architectural detailing would

¹ Council Planning Application Reference 95/00323/FUL

soften the boxy appearance of the existing extension. Nonetheless, the extension to the front would unbalance the composition.

11. I accept that the existing steeply pitched porch element is different to the neighbour's and its removal is not objectionable. However, by introducing an additional roof plane at the first-floor level, I find the design of the proposed extension somewhat contrived. It would result in a loss of the original cottage form, which despite the existing extensions, is the dominant element to School Lane. The extension would also create a large expanse of blank façade to the front elevation, and the front door relocation removes a direct connection to School Lane. Due to its siting, the first-floor addition would be visually prominent, and whilst the materials and detailing are to match, it would be an unsympathetic addition to the detriment of the appearance of the host property, and the character of the area.

Conservation area

12. The CA covers a wide area with the site located within character zone E, as set out in the Council's Conservation Area Statement – Cookham Dean. Centred around the church, the area comprises lanes with primarily Victorian and Edwardian properties, with the spatial layout and architecture contributing to its significance. The pair of 19th-century cottages (Honeypots and Rose Cottage) make a positive contribution to the CA. The proposed alterations to the appearance of the property would further diminish its original character and relationship with School Lane to the detriment of the significance of the CA.

Conclusion

13. Thus, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area, including the CA, and therefore conflicts with policies QP3 and HE1 of the Borough Local Plan and the Borough Wide Design Guide SPD. Together, these seek high-quality design that respects the local and historic environment, and for extensions to respond positively to the form, scale and style of the original building. There would also be conflict with section 12 of the Framework, which requires high-quality design, and section 16, which protects the historic environment.

Other Considerations

14. While there has previously been planning permission for a small kitchen extension this was not implemented and has since expired, and therefore does not constitute a fallback position.
15. The property sits within a sizeable plot and occupation by a young family would contribute to the vitality of the village and could reduce car travel to the school, which is within easy walking distance. The alterations would improve the functionality of the home and features such as open-plan living and family bathrooms would appear proportionally large compared to the form of the original cottage. However, whilst modest, the existing 3-bedroom property does have both a separate bathroom and ensuite facilities.
16. Reference has also been made to the potential for a large outbuilding to be constructed under permitted development rights which would have a greater impact on openness. There is no specific scheme before me, and the appellant confirms that they have no intention of doing so, therefore this theoretical development is not a matter to which I give weight as a fallback. I nonetheless

acknowledge the general provisions of permitted development rights, and that, as referenced by the appellant there are other properties in the locality which have benefitted from large extensions. Be that as it may, each proposal is to be considered on its own merits.

17. It is apparent that the appellant has sought to engage with others positively. There is support from some neighbours to facilitate a modern home for a local family, and the scheme has been reduced in size from that originally submitted. However, the extensions would remain beyond any individual occupier, and minimal weight can be attached to these circumstances.

Planning Balance

18. In the context of the property's location within a village, with a relatively dense urban grain, and the enclosure of School Lane with high hedges screening parts of the property, the proposed extension would not conflict with any of the Green Belt purposes listed in the Framework. However, as set out above, the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It would also cause some limited harm to openness. In accordance with paragraphs 147 and 148 of the Framework, I place substantial negative weight on this harm. The proposal would also harm the character and appearance of the area, including to the CA. I place significant negative weight on this harm.
19. Other considerations provide little support for the proposal beyond the occupier's requirements. Accordingly, these do not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm and therefore the 'very special circumstances' required to justify the proposal do not exist.
20. The harm to the CA would be less than substantial and as set out in the Framework it should be balanced against the public benefits. The alterations to the property are primarily for the benefit of the occupiers, and whilst there would be some social and economic benefits of the enhanced family accommodation these are limited and would not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

21. 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 is dismissed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR