



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 May 2024

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/24/3337427

**Ridge View, Shootacre Lane, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire
HP27 9EH**

- 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 Spittles against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/05552/FUL.
 - The development proposed is detached two bay oak framed garage to front of property within driveway.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 22 November 2023, all areas in England and Wales designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) were retitled National Landscapes. There has been no change to the legal designation and policy status of these areas. For the avoidance of doubt, I have used the term AONB, which remains in the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - whether the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to any relevant development plan policies and the Framework;
 - 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 area, and whether it would conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns AONB; and
 - whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to very special circumstances required to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. Policy CP8 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (2019) (Local Plan) seeks to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development. Policy DM42 of the

Local Plan regards development in the Green Belt as inappropriate. Exceptions to this include the extension of dwellings, provided they accord with Policy DM43 of the Local Plan. It goes on to explain that inappropriate development will be refused unless there are very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will exist when the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. This approach is broadly consistent with the Framework.

5. Policy DM43 of the Local Plan deals with the erection of residential outbuildings, as well as extensions to dwellings. Outside of a built-up village identified on the Policies Map or where there is no relevant Neighbourhood Plan policy, it considers outbuildings not to be inappropriate where they would meet a series of conditions.
6. The Council in its Officer Report state that, as a result of the appeal proposal, the combined volume of outbuildings at the appeal site would be greater than 25% of the volume of the original property. This is not disputed by the appellant. Given this, the appeal proposal would not meet all the conditions set out in Policy DM43 and would therefore conflict with the policy.
7. Accordingly, it would be an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt, which, by definition, is harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness

8. The proposed garage would be moderate in size. It would take up space to the front of the appeal property, which is currently open. This would result in some harm to the spatial openness of the Green Belt.
9. In terms of visual harm, given the appeal property is positioned slightly above the highway, most of the proposed garage would be screened by the existing front boundary hedge. In my view this hedge is highly likely to remain in a similar form for aesthetics and consistency with local character. Given this, views of the proposed garage from public vantage points would therefore be limited. Nonetheless, the proposed garage would be visible from the upper floors of neighbouring properties. Given this, the proposal would result in some limited and localised harm to the visual openness of the Green Belt.
10. Accordingly, the proposal would result in spatial and visual harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Thus, it would not preserve its openness contrary to the fundamental aim of the Framework.

Character and Appearance

11. The appeal property is located within the Chiltern's AONB. It forms part of a ribbon of development one side of Shootacre Lane, with open countryside opposite. The houses along Shootacre Lane are predominately detached and semi-detached. They are set back a similar distance from the highway with frontages comprising hardstanding for parking cars, which are typically softened by front boundary hedging, areas of lawn and other landscaping. On my visit I did not see any existing outbuildings within these frontages. The houses along the section of Shootacre Lane where the appeal property is located are set behind deep grass verges. On the other side of Shootacre Lane is a dense roadside hedge with open fields beyond. This, together with the verges, frontage planting and soft boundary treatments give the rural area a very green and open character.

12. The proposed garage, while relatively large for an outbuilding, would be a subservient addition to the appeal property. Nonetheless, being located to the front of the appeal property, it would not follow the existing pattern of development along Shootacre Lane.
13. Notwithstanding this, given the front boundary hedge, views of the proposed garage would be restricted to its upper roof, which would appear modest given its catslide profile. The frontage of the appeal property is generous, and the proposed garage would have sufficient space around it not to appear cramped. In line with the advice set out at Appendix D of the Bedlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan (2017) (NDP) and the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide, it would not dominate the front of the appeal property. While it would be positioned in front of it, much of the principal elevation of the appeal property is already screened by the front hedge. Given this, the proposed garage would sit discreetly in the landscape in accordance with Policy 6 of the NDP.
14. Overall, the proposed garage would have a limited effect on the appearance of the appeal property from the street scene, which would not amount to any appreciable harm. This would also be the case with regards to its effect on the wider green and open character and appearance of the area and the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. Therefore, although the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide advises against locating garages forward of the main dwelling and the Council's Householder Planning and Design SPD states that a detached garage in the front garden of a dwelling will not usually be acceptable, in this case, for the reasons above, it would be. I appreciate that the advice in the SPD would be for the proposed garage to use materials that match the appeal property. However, the 'cart shed' design and natural materials of the proposed garage, which take into account the advice set out in Appendix D of the NDP and the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide, would reflect the countryside setting and thus would be in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the wider area and AONB.
15. For the reasons above, the proposed garage would accord with Policies CP9, DM30, DM35 of the Local Plan and Policy 6 of the NDP. These seek to ensure that development achieves a high-quality design and conserves, and where possible enhances, the natural environment, including the Chiltern's AONB. It would also accord with the associated provisions of the Framework.
16. I am mindful that Section 85(A1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) places a statutory duty upon me to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Chiltern's AONB. I have found the proposal would not harm the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and thus would conserve its natural beauty. In terms of enhancing the AONB, had I been allowing the appeal, I would have sought the views of the Council and appellant on proportionate measures to achieve this. Nonetheless, given I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons I have not considered this further.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

17. Paragraph 152 of the Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 explains that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

18. The proposal would be an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt and would also result in harm to its openness. Paragraph 153 of the Framework affords substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt.
19. Accordingly, the modest benefits associated with the construction of the proposed garage and the provision of additional covered parking spaces and storage serving the appeal property, would not clearly outweigh the harm I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposed garage have not been demonstrated and the proposal would conflict with Policies DM42 and CP8 of the Local Plan.
20. I have found that the proposed garage would not harm the character and appearance of the appeal property and wider area. Also, that it would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns AONB. Nonetheless, an absence of harm in these regards would neither outweigh nor justify the harm I have identified to the Green Belt.
21. Accordingly, with regards to the above, I find the proposal would conflict with the development plan read as a whole. It has not been demonstrated that there are any material considerations to indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR