



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2024

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 July 2024.

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/D/23/3333507

The Garden Flat, Ridgewood House Ridgemean Road, Englefield Green, Surrey TW20 0YD

- 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 Gerardus Koomen against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is RU.23/0769.
 - The development proposed is first floor rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for first floor rear extension at The Garden Flat, Ridgewood House, Ridgemean Road, Englefield Green, Surrey TW20 0YD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref RU.23/0769, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2304-TGF-001-Rev A; 2304-TGF-002-Rev A; 2304-TGF-003-Rev A; 2304-TGF-004-Rev A; 2304-TGF-005-Rev A; 2304-TGF-006-Rev A; 2304-TGF-007-Rev A; 2304-TGF-008-Rev A; 2304-TGF-009-Rev A; 2304-TGF-010-Rev A.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 19 December 2023, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal have not been significantly amended. As a result, I have not sought further submissions. I will refer to the updated paragraph numbers where necessary in this appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issue in this appeal is whether the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to any relevant development plan policies and the Framework;

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. Policy EE14 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (2020) (Local Plan) deals specifically with extensions and alterations and replacement of buildings in the Green Belt. It states that the extension of a building is not inappropriate development provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. This approach is broadly consistent with the Framework. Policy EE14 also lists several considerations that will be taken into account when assessing a development scheme.
5. There is a dispute between the Council and the appellant as to what should be considered the original building in terms of assessing whether the proposed extension would result in a disproportionate addition. The Council calculate an increase in the Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the original building of approximately 63%, whereas the appellant calculates an increase of around 36%. From the evidence before me and my observations on site, I am of the view that the increase in GFA would be somewhere between those calculated by the main parties. Nonetheless, Policy EE14 of the Local Plan does not set out what percentage increase in GFA the Council would consider to constitute a disproportionate addition.
6. In terms of the considerations set out in Policy EE14 of the Local Plan, in this case, the use of the appeal property would not change. The proposed extension would be at first floor level and would not extend beyond the ground floor rear elevation of the appeal property, its flank elevations, or the ridge of its main roof. It would therefore not increase the footprint of the existing building or its site coverage. Neither would it reduce the distance between the appeal property and the appeal site boundaries.
7. Although the proposed extension would be appreciable and would increase the overall bulk of the existing building, visually, it would not be a bulky addition. Rather it would appear well-integrated with and harmonious to the appeal property. Furthermore, both sides of the appeal property are bounded by tall trees with dense foliage, which in my view are highly likely to remain in a similar form for aesthetics, privacy, and consistency with local character. Given this, views of the rear of the property, where the proposed extension would be located, are limited largely to the appeal site, with only glimpse views from the neighbouring property to the north.
8. Accordingly, even if the proposed extension was considered to result in an increase in the GFA of the original building of 63%, based on the considerations set out in Policy EE14 of the Local Plan, the evidence before me and my observations on site, it would not be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling. It would therefore not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would accord with Policy EE14 of the Local Plan and the associated provisions of the Framework, which seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
9. Given the proposed extension would not be inappropriate development, in this case, there is no need for me to consider its impact on openness.

Other Matters

10. The appeal site is located close to Grade II listed buildings, including Ridgemean House and features of its formal garden to the southwest of the house, as well as North Lodge, West Lodge, East Lodge and attached walls. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to give special regard to preserving the buildings or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.
11. The intervisibility between the appeal site and the listed buildings is limited by the existing tall boundary landscape. However, the official listing for the group of gatehouses refers to the driveway running between the walls attached to east and west lodge. This driveway serves Ridgemean House and runs adjacent to the appeal site. It has a historic function and connection with the listed buildings and, as such, in my view, forms part of their setting. Ridgewood House and the appeal property already provide part of the backdrop to the driveway, which has a spacious and verdant character. In its current form and surroundings, the driveway makes a positive contribution to the significance of the listed buildings.
12. While the proposed extension would be visible from the driveway, for the reasons set out above, it would be a compatible addition, which would appear as a unified part of the appeal property. Given this, despite an increase in the overall bulk of the appeal property, it would not affect the spacious and verdant backdrop to the driveway. Accordingly, there would be no harm to the setting of the listed buildings or their significance as designated heritage assets.

Conditions

13. In addition to the statutory time limit condition, a condition specifying the plans that are approved and that the development shall be undertaken in accordance with them is required in the interests of certainty.
14. Although the submitted plans show that the external surfaces of the proposed outbuilding would be similar to those used in the existing dwelling, they do not specify the materials that would be used. Therefore, also in the interests of certainty, a condition is necessary to ensure that the external materials of the proposed extension match those of the existing building.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons above, having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed, subject to the conditions set out above.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR