

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 July 2024

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 November 2024

Appeal Reference: APP/H1515/D/24/3344637

564 Rayleigh Road, Hutton, Essex CM13 1SG

- 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. J. Bahra against the decision of Brentwood Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 24/00140/HHA.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as an “alteration to roof to create additional bedroom”.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary points

2. A Written Ministerial Statement entitled “Building the homes we need” was published on 30 July 2024, together with a consultation on “Proposed reforms to the NPPF and other changes to the planning system”. In this case, however, I am satisfied that they do not materially affect the considerations that have led me to my decision. I am convinced, therefore, that there is no requirement to seek further submissions on these publications and that no party would be disadvantaged by such a course of action.

Main issues

3. The first main issue to be determined in this appeal is whether the proposal is “inappropriate development” having regard to the ‘National Planning Policy Framework’ (the ‘Framework’) and any relevant development plan policies. If so, it is necessary to consider the effect of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt as well as the impact of the proposed development on the character of the host building and its surroundings. It is then necessary to determine whether the 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 that are required to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
4. If the proposed development is to be categorised as “not inappropriate”, it is nonetheless necessary, in this case, to consider the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on the north side of the A129 Rayleigh Road, which connects Brentwood and Billericay. The A129 carries a regular flow of traffic and, although it runs through a predominantly countryside area, it is set with intermittent development along both frontages. A minor side road on the north side of the main road serves a small group of detached houses, including the appeal site at the eastern end of the group. To the east and, in part, to the south of the appeal site there is a restaurant and car park, however, while further residential properties and other development, including a dance school, are located on the opposite side of the road.
6. The area is somewhat suburban in character, many of the buildings being designed in traditional styles and subdued in appearance. Notwithstanding the scale of development in the locality, the appeal site is located within the wider Green Belt.
7. Number 564 Rayleigh Road is a substantial detached house in a chalet bungalow form, with the main eaves at ground floor level and rooms in the roof, which are mainly in gabled forms. Currently, there are three bedrooms on the upper floor, with small dormers lighting bedroom 1.
8. It is now proposed to add a fourth bedroom, by altering and extending the roof, to bring forward the main roof slope and add a new front dormer.
9. The 'Framework' makes it plain, at paragraphs 152-156, that the construction of new buildings is not normally acceptable in the Green Belt and that they should only be permitted in "very special circumstances", subject to certain exceptions. Nevertheless, an extension to an existing building in the Green Belt can be acceptable "provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building".
10. More generally, the 'Framework' also emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, without preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Nevertheless, it is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities, while the aim of achieving good design standards includes providing good standards of accommodation.
11. The 'Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033' was adopted in March 2022 and Strategic Policy MG02 defines the Green Belt in the Borough, including by reference to national planning policy. Other policies focus on broader design issues, noticeably Policy BE14, which identifies the importance of high design standards.

Green Belt considerations

12. The existing house has been altered and extended in the past and is now somewhat larger than the original. In this appeal, it is proposed to further enlarge the building, by adding to the bulk of the roof on the front elevation. The footprint would not be materially increased but a new first floor area would be added above part of the existing ground floor. The main roof would be

extended forward, with a flat roofed section at ridge level. A wide dormer would be constructed on the front roof slope.

13. The new construction would add a significant volume to the existing building, especially in the context of previous extensions, and it would be visually intrusive in the surrounding area. I have no doubt that it ought to be categorised as a disproportionate addition to the building. In consequence, it is to be considered to be "inappropriate" development in the context of Green Belt policy.
14. Moreover, the proposed extension would be substantial and visually intrusive in its own right and it would have a clear effect on the openness of the Green Belt, in both spatial and visual terms. It would have only limited implications in this part of the Essex Green Belt for the five purposes that are served by the Green Belt, as set out in paragraph 143 of the 'Framework'. Even so, it would have a harmful effect on the Green Belt both by reason of its inappropriateness, in planning policy terms, and its effect on openness.
15. In short, the proposed development would amount to "inappropriate development", in the terms of the 'Framework' and the 'Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033', which is harmful by definition and which ought only to be allowed in "very special circumstances".

Design considerations

16. Due to the contrived roof form to the main roof and the clumsy and oversized dormer on the front elevation, the proposed extension would be awkward and ungainly in design and appearance, adding unsatisfactory and uncharacteristic forms to the existing building. In consequence, it would detract from the architectural qualities of the host building and it would harm the suburban character of the area, by introducing an overly intrusive and uncharacteristic design into the streetscene.
17. Thus, the project would fail to satisfy both local and national planning policies that are intended to promote good design and respect local character and, specifically, it would be contrary to Policy BE14 in the 'Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033'.

Conclusions

18. The proposed development would make a useful addition to the existing house. Nevertheless, this would be insufficient to clearly outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt and the design objections to the scheme. Thus, there are no other planning considerations which could amount to the "very special circumstances" that would be needed to justify the inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
19. I therefore conclude that the project would be clearly contrary to Green Belt policy and that the proposed extension would cause real harm to the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with the Development Plan as a whole, as well as with national planning policies, and that the harm to the Green Belt and other harm are plainly not outweighed by other considerations. The appeal must fail, therefore. Although I have considered all the matters

that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR