



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 September 2024

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/24/3343273

Waverley Cottage, Crooksbury Road, Tilford, Farnham GU10 2AZ

- 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 Mrs Emily Aitken against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is WA/2023/02427.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of extensions and alterations following demolition of existing detached garage'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Main Issues

2. The Council's Decision Notice cited three reasons for refusal. The third related to the effect of the proposal on protected species, namely bats. As part of the appeal process, the appellant submitted a Bat Emergence Survey Report¹ (Bat Report). The Council and interested parties were given the opportunity to comment on the Bat Report as part of the appeal proceedings and therefore no party would be prejudiced by my consideration of it as part of the appeal.
3. The Council considers the Bat Report to provide sufficient information to assess the likely impact of the proposal on biodiversity. Subject to any permission being conditioned in accordance with the recommendations of the Bat Report, it is satisfied that the appeal proposal would give rise to no harm to the protected species. Given this, the Council no longer maintains this reason for refusal. From the evidence before me and my observations on site, I am of the same view. I am satisfied that the appeal proposal would not result in any harm to bats.
4. In this context, 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 National Planning Policy Framework (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

¹ Emergence Survey Report – Bats, Waverley Cottage, Crooksbury Road, Farnham, GU10 2AZ, Document Ref: CE4339-01, Date of survey: 3 May 2024, 26 May 2024, 26 June 2024, and 4 July 2024, prepared by Garry Smith – Senior Ecologist of Chase Ecological Consultancy.

- on the basis that the proposal would be inappropriate development, 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

5. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 152 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to a closed list of exceptions. Policy RE2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (Part 1) (2018) (Local Plan Part 1) is broadly consistent with this approach, permitting proposals where they do not conflict with the exceptions listed in national planning policy.
6. Paragraph 154 (c) of the Framework establishes that the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Policy DM14 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2023) (Local Plan Part 2) builds on this and Policy RE2 of the Local Plan Part 1. It explains that for development outside of defined settlement boundaries, extensions or alterations which would increase floorspace by 40% or more over that of the original building will normally be considered to be disproportionate.
7. The appeal property is located outside of any defined settlement boundary. It is not entirely clear from the evidence before me exactly when the appeal property was first built. However, it would have been prior to 31 December 1968. Since this date, permission has been granted for a two-storey extension and a conservatory. Both these additions have been constructed and the Council has calculated that the floorspace of the original building has already been increased by 54% as a result.
8. I note the appellant's view that the proposed extension would only represent, at most, a 40% increase in the floorspace of the existing house. However, the floorspace of the existing house already includes a large increase in floorspace over that of the original dwelling. The proposed extension, together with the previous extensions, would result in an 145% increase in the floorspace of the original dwelling.
9. The appellant contends that, despite the extensions, the current footprint of the cottage is small and not fit for modern standards or a suitable family home. Nonetheless, there is no substantive evidence before me that demonstrates the current amount of internal space within the appeal property to be inadequate or that the current occupants are overcrowded. Neither does this justify including the previous two-storey extension as part of the original building for the purposes of Policy DM14 of the Local Plan Part 2 and paragraph 154 (c) of the Framework.

10. It may be that the appeal property after the proposed extension would still be relatively modest in size when compared to its generous plot and other nearby properties. Nevertheless, the proposed extension, despite being smaller than the previously refused scheme², would be a significant 2-storey addition to the appeal property. Given it would be the same height as the appeal property and would extend flush with its front elevation, it would not appear as a subservient addition. When assessed cumulatively with the previous extensions, the increase in mass and form over and above that of the original cottage would be substantial and disproportionate to the very modest size of the original building.
11. The removal of the garage, in terms of its impact on the assessment of proportionality, is neutral in this case. This is because it has not been included in either the floorspace of the original dwelling or as a previous extension for the purposes of Policy DM14 of the Local Plan Part 2 and paragraph 154 (c) of the Framework.
12. Accordingly, the proposed extension would conflict with Policy DM14 of the Local Plan Part 2. The proposal would therefore be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt as defined by Paragraph 154 of the Framework.

Openness

13. The proposed extension is large and would unavoidably take up a significant amount of space, which is currently open. This would result in significant harm to the spatial openness of the Green Belt. It may be that the footprint of the proposed extension would be located mostly on the footprint of the existing conservatory and patio rather than green garden space. Nevertheless, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open.
14. Any visual harm to the openness of the wider Green Belt would be limited by the mature vegetation that contains the appeal site. This landscaping, in my view, is likely to remain in a similar state for reasons of privacy, amenity, and local character. It would restrict views of the proposed extension from the public realm and the neighbouring properties.
15. Notwithstanding this, some of the upper storey of the proposed extension and its roof would be visible over the existing landscaping from the access road serving Waverley Cottages, which I saw on site is a public bridleway. The additional built form, by virtue of its size, would also be apparent from within the appeal site. This would result in some moderate and localised harm to the visual openness of the Green Belt.
16. Accordingly, the proposed extension would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt contrary to the fundamental aim of the Framework.

Character and Appearance

17. The proposed extension would have a simple form in keeping with the host dwelling. It would use high quality materials and have a pattern of fenestration that would match the existing cottage. Nonetheless, it would not appear as a subservient addition to the host dwelling. Contrary to the advice set out at 9.10 of the Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2010), the proposed side extension would not be set down from

² WA/2023/01086

the ridge of the existing house nor would it be set back from the front elevation. Therefore, by virtue of its size and design, the proposal would result in moderate harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling. Given that the appeal property and proposed extension would be largely screened by the mature vegetation that contains the site, this harm would be localised.

18. I note that the appellant would be happy to amend the flat roof profile of the proposed single storey rear extension to a pitched roof. However, while this would be more in keeping with the host dwelling, it would further increase the bulk and mass of the proposal and would not address the harm arising from the size and design of the proposal as a whole.
19. Accordingly, for the reasons above, the proposal would conflict with Policy TD1 of the Local Plan Part 1 and Policy DM4 of the Local Plan Part 2. These policies seek to ensure that new development is of a high quality that responds effectively to its surroundings, including the local context and historic character, as well as the distinctive local character of the area.

Other Considerations

20. In terms of benefits, the proposal would provide additional and improved living space to the appellant, as well as future occupants. It would also have some modest economic benefits arising from the spending associated with its construction.
21. The appeal proposal includes the removal of the existing double garage. While this may be neutral in the assessment of proportionality, it is a material consideration that should be taken into account. The existing garage is not small. Nonetheless, given its positioning, single storey profile, simple design and inconspicuous materials, it appears as a subordinate outbuilding to the appeal property. The proposed extension would be much larger than the garage and would inevitably take up more space, even when discounting the space taken up by the existing conservatory. The removal of the garage would therefore not justify, nor would it fully address, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt resulting from the proposal.
22. The appellant considers that the replacement of the existing conservatory with the appeal proposal would be an aesthetic improvement to the appeal property. The existing conservatory is a modest, simple, and subordinate addition, which, in my view, does not detract from the appeal property to any appreciable degree. Therefore, its removal would neither outweigh nor address the harm I have identified to the Green Belt.
23. It has also been put to me by the appellant that the removal of the double garage and conservatory would be a material improvement on the landscape character of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). However, these modest and simple structures are well screened from the public realm and wider AONB. Given this, they have a limited impact on its distinctive landscape character. Thus, any benefit arising from their removal in this regard would be very limited.
24. The appellant has provided examples of houses nearby that have been extended. These examples share some similarities with the appeal proposal. However, while I do not have the full details of these schemes before me, the size of the original buildings, the way in which they have been extended over

time, and how this has impacted on their Green Belt location, is likely to be different. Each scheme needs to be considered on its own merits, and none of the examples have led me to allowing the appeal, given the harm I have found. The examples provided of newly built houses are not comparable to the appeal proposal and therefore I afford them limited weight in my decision.

Green Belt Balance

25. 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.
26. The proposal would be an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt and would also harm its openness. In line with Paragraph 153 of the Framework, I afford substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt. I have also found that the proposal would result in moderate, localised harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling.
27. I appreciate the appellant's desire to create a more modern family home and the support for the proposal by those living nearby. Nevertheless, the modest benefits associated with the improved living space and the construction of the extension, would not clearly outweigh the harm I have identified to the Green Belt. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposed extension have not been demonstrated and the proposal would conflict with saved Policy RE2 of the Local Plan Part 1 and the associated provisions of the Framework.

Conclusion

28. 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