



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2025

by **E Catchside BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/24/3347740

Iron Pear Tree Cottage, Tilburstow Hill Road, South Godstone, Surrey RH9 8NA

- 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 Robert Churchill-Coleman against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref is TA/2024/358.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing garage and conservatory. Construction of ground and first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are: a) whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt; its effect on b) the openness of the Green Belt and c) the character and appearance of the host property; and d) whether any 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 required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate other than in a few exceptions, including c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
4. Policies DP10 and DP13 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies 2014-2029 (July 2014) (DP) also seek to restrict inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Whilst the Framework defines 'original building' as the building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally, Policy DP13 of the DP offers an alternative date of 31 December 1968 for dwellings. Nonetheless, the existing extensions to the property were added after 31 December 1968. Therefore, the DP policies are broadly consistent with the Framework insofar as they are relevant to the appeal scheme.
5. The evidence indicates that the original building comprised a small, two-storey cottage with four rooms. On my site visit, I observed the original building had a modest footprint that was broadly rectangular in shape, with its narrow elevation

facing the access track. I also saw the existing extensions and additions that are referred to in the evidence as a single-storey extension, double garage with store, and a conservatory. Collectively, these structures have significantly increased the volume of the original building by elongating its built form along the access road and increasing its depth into the garden area.

6. Whilst the existing double garage and conservatory would be removed as part of the proposal, they would nonetheless be replaced with a greater and substantial amount of built form, which would almost double the overall volume of the original building. The two-storey element, whilst set down from the existing roof ridge, would be unduly dominant due to its width, which would be greater than the narrow form of the original building to which it would be attached. When considered in combination with the single-storey extension, which would fill most of the space between the original building and the side boundary of the site, the proposal overall would be unduly bulky such that it would overwhelm the modest form and proportions of the original building. This leads me to conclude that the proposed additions would be disproportionate in size to the original building.
7. I conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the Framework and Policies DP10 and DP13 of the DP, which seek to resist inappropriate development in the Green Belt, other than in a few exceptions which do not apply to the proposed development.

Openness

8. The Framework states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
9. Openness can be perceived spatially and visually. The existing built form is already elongated across much of the site frontage, owing to the existing side extension, garage, and connecting archway. However, the two-storey proposal would occupy space above the existing property that is currently devoid of buildings. Consequently, there would be a loss of openness in spatial terms.
10. The site is well-screened from the main road by vegetation and intervening built form, and I have not been directed to evidence that it is observable from any footpaths or other notable public vantage points in the surrounding landscape. Therefore, the loss of the upward views towards the sky over parts of the existing building would be limited to the small number of users of the private access track.
11. Overall, there would be minor and localised harm to openness. Nonetheless, this harm carries substantial weight in accordance with the Framework.

Character and appearance

12. The proposed extensions would be set down from the ridge of the host property, and they would be set well back from the elevation that faces the access track. However, owing to the combined effect of their height, width, and mass, the proposed extensions would lack subordination to, and would detract from, the simple form and proportions of the principal cottage building. Therefore, whilst views of the development would be likely to be limited to users of the access track, the proposal would nonetheless fail to accord with the Framework insofar as it expects proposals to be well-designed and visually attractive, as a result of good architecture amongst other things.

13. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host property. It would therefore conflict with Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy (Adopted 15 October 2008) and Policy DP7 of the DP which, taken together, expect developments to reflect a high standard of design that does not result in overdevelopment by reason of scale, form, bulk, height, spacing, density and design.

Other considerations

14. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Therefore, by definition, it would be harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
15. The enlargement of the existing property would meet the personal needs of its current occupants, whilst also replacing the existing garage which the appellant states is in need of modernisation and repair. However, there is limited evidence before me to indicate the development proposed is necessary to secure an adequate standard of accommodation and, therefore, these benefits carry only modest support in favour of the proposal.
16. The site could benefit from a range of permitted development rights, which could significantly increase the size of the original building. However, the evidence indicates that options available under those rights would not meet the needs of the appellant. Therefore, I attach limited weight to the PD rights in this instance. Moreover, it is not in dispute that planning permission is required for the appeal proposal, which I have necessarily considered with regard to the most relevant planning policies.

Green Belt Balance

17. The proposed development would cause harm to the Green Belt by way of its inappropriateness and loss of openness. There would also be harm to the character and appearance of the host property. Whilst there would be some benefits arising from the proposal, these other considerations do not outweigh the harm I have identified. Consequently, there are no very special circumstances before me to indicate this inappropriate development should be approved.
18. The appeal scheme would therefore be contrary to the Framework, and Policies DP10 and DP13 of the DP, which seek to resist inappropriate development in the Green Belt except in very special circumstances.

Conclusion

19. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

E Catchside
INSPECTOR