



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2025

by V Simpson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31st March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/D/24/3349534

The Glade, Spring Woods, Virginia Water, Surrey GU25 4PW

- 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 Mark Redman against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is RU.24/0867.
 - The development proposed is the extension of existing garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The main parties have been given the opportunity to comment on the amended National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which was published in December 2024.

Main Issues

3. The appeal site is within the Green Belt. Therefore, the main issues are;
 - whether the scheme would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to any relevant development plan policies and the Framework;
 - the effect of the development on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - 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 necessary to justify it.

Reasons

4. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 153 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 then states that development in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of a number of stated exceptions apply. In certain circumstances, Framework paragraph 155 identifies other types of development which should also not be regarded as inappropriate.
5. Policy EE14 of the Runnymede Borough Council - Runnymede 2030 Local Plan – Adopted 16th July 2020 (the Local Plan) relates to development in the Green Belt. It indicates that the extension of a building in such an area is not inappropriate provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. It also seeks to ensure that development proposals

maintain the openness of the Green Belt and do not materially increase the prominence of development at the site. As such, and in respect of the Green Belt, policy EE14 broadly conforms with the provisions of the Framework.

6. An exception at paragraph 154. c) of the Framework, is the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. What is disproportionate in the context of extensions to buildings in the Green Belt is not defined within the Framework or Local Plan policy EE14. Therefore, the assessment of whether the proposal would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building is a matter of planning judgement.
7. Amongst other things, the appeal site contains a large house and an associated detached garage building. The garage is a single-storey, flat-roofed, and fairly low building. The development would result in the enlargement of the garage. The above-ground enlargements would include the addition of a dual-pitched roof over most of the existing building. This addition would greatly increase the height of the building. Other proposed enlargements include a rear extension with an internal stairwell. A basement is also proposed, the floorspace of which would be approximately double that of the existing garage. The roof extensions, the basement, and the other enlargements to the building would also substantially increase its overall depth, width, volume, and floorspace. When taken together, the enlargements would represent disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
8. Even if I were to conclude that the existing garage forms an extension to the nearby house on the appeal site, I do not doubt that the house has been significantly enlarged over the last few decades. Consequently, the appeal scheme when considered in combination with the previous additions, would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of that building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if it was constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was originally built.
9. The appeal site is within an area mainly comprising residential houses in large plots. As such, and although the density of development is low, the site may nonetheless be regarded as being within a built-up area. That being the case, the exception at 154. g) of the Framework does not apply.
10. It has not been demonstrated that the scheme would meet any of the other exceptions at paragraphs 154 or 155 of the Framework. As such, and for the reasons given above, the scheme would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and policy EE14 of the Local Plan.

Effect on openness

11. Within the appeal site, and to the front of the house and the garage is a large area of hardstanding. During my site visit several cars were parked on it. However, except a narrow strip of hardstanding adjacent to the rear of the garage, most of the rest of the land that the development would extend onto is grassed. Even if this area is occasionally used for the parking of vehicles, from the evidence I cannot establish that it is regularly used for this purpose.
12. Those parts of the development that would be lower than the surrounding ground level would not lead to any material reduction in the openness of the Green Belt.

Although the site is generally well-screened by mature planting and hedgerows, the upward extensions to the roof of the garage would be clearly visible above the gates at the main site entrance. Moreover, and even if the upper sections of the basement and the rooflight would only be visible in very localised views within the appeal site, these and other additions would extend further into undeveloped parts of the garden than the existing house and garage.

13. Those parts of the development that would be lower than the surrounding ground level would not lead to any material reduction in the openness of the Green Belt. However, for the reasons given above, the scheme as a whole would lead to a small and highly localised reduction to its openness.

Other Considerations

14. The development would increase the amount of covered car parking provision within the site. However, there is no compelling evidence that there is an elevated risk of theft or damage to vehicles that are not so stored in the local area. Nevertheless, the development would undoubtedly help to reduce the fear of crime. It would also provide additional storage and leisure spaces, and it would include measures to enhance biodiversity and reduce surface water run-off rates. However, given the small scale of the scheme, very little weight can be attributed to each of these benefits.
15. The development would harmonise with and be subservient to the house on the appeal site, and it would not cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties. These are neutral considerations.

Conclusion

16. The appeal scheme would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would also lead to a small loss of openness within it. For these reasons, it would cause harm to the Green Belt. In accordance with paragraph 153 of the Framework, substantial weight is attributed to this harm.
17. The other considerations in this case do not clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. As such, the development would conflict with policy EE14 of the Local Plan.
18. 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. I therefore conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

V Simpson

INSPECTOR