
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 May 2025

by **C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/25/3363341

Three Trees Cottage, 24 Dome Hill Peak, Caterham CR3 6EH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr A Rotchell against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application ref. is TA/2024/1215.
 - The development proposed is for a pitched roof to previously approved side extension plus extended terrace and minor changes to elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a pitched roof to previously approved side extension plus extended terrace and minor changes to elevations at Three Trees Cottage, 24 Dome Hill Peak, Caterham CR3 6EH in accordance with the terms of the application ref. TA/2024/1215, subject to the following conditions:

1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.

2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2053-01 P02, 2053-20 P01, 2053-21 P01, 2053-22 P01, 2053-23 P01, 2053-24 P01, 2053-25 P01, 2053-26 P01.

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..

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

- whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
- the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
- 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 comprises a detached bungalow with off-street parking on the driveway to the front. It is situated on a residential road in the south-western peripherals of Caterham surrounded by dense, mature woodland.

4. The Framework states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. This is subject to certain exceptions, which include at paragraph 154 (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.'
5. Policies DP10 and DP13 of the Tandridge District Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies 2014-2029 (adopted 2014) (LPP2) are of relevance. Policy DP13, in the case of an extension or alteration to an existing dwelling, considers the 'original building' to be the dwelling as it existed on 31 December 1968 or, if constructed after 1968, as it was built originally.
6. The Framework defines the date of an 'original building' as 1 July 1948, or as originally built if constructed after that date. Nevertheless, the LPP2 policies are broadly consistent with the Framework.
7. The Framework does not define what constitutes a disproportionate addition. Policy DP13 states that the Council will adopt a pragmatic approach in determining what constitutes a disproportionate addition and that each proposal will be judged on its individual merits, taking into account the size of the original building, the bulk, height, mass and prominence of the extension and its impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
8. The Council puts forward a range of 58-76% uplift for the cumulative external volume increase of previous works to the original home when one adds the appeal scheme. This figure is not disputed by the appellant.
9. Judging the proposal in accordance with Policy DP13, I consider that the proposed extensions, together with the previous additions to the dwelling, would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. This would represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would not benefit from the exception in paragraph 154 (c) of the Framework. Consequently, there would be conflict with Policy DP10 and DP13 of the LPP2.

Openness

10. The Framework makes it clear that an essential characteristic of Green Belts is their openness, which can be perceived spatially and visually. The new development would provide a quantum of built form that does not currently exist on site, and involve the addition of extra bulk at roof level. By occupying areas that are currently undeveloped, the proposal would inevitably reduce the spatial openness of the site.
11. Visually, the proposal would have a greater effect than currently experienced, appearing of greater size and scale at roof level. Overall, I find the scheme would have a modest, but nonetheless clearly discernible effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

Other considerations

12. The appellant has identified that a fall-back position exists relating to the current permitted development (PD) tolerances. A certificate of lawfulness has been issued and I observed at my visit that construction on this has begun.
13. The PD scheme as illustrated would have the same footprint and external wall area to the proposal before me. The main difference between the plans is that the roof form of the PD would be an expanse of flat roof, whilst the appeal proposal would be pitched and add, on the basis of the Council's calculations, an increase in volume of some 20m³ above and over the size of the PD.
14. Whilst I acknowledge neither scheme would have a significant wider impact in terms of the character or appearance of the area, to my mind the current proposal would be neater and have a more satisfactory design, in keeping with the main ridge line and pitch of the host

property. I am also cognisant that there would be no increase in floorspace within the dwelling and the scale of the extension would be relatively minor. In addition, moderate weight can be accrued by virtue of the use of skylights and associated energy savings, together with the reduction in future maintenance costs arising from the use of a pitched roof over a flat roof.

15. The Council does not appear to object to the extended terrace and minor changes to the elevations and I have no reason to disagree.

Conditions

16. I have considered the imposition of conditions in light of advice in Planning Policy Guidance and the Framework. In addition to the standard implementation condition, the approved plans are listed for certainty. A condition requiring external materials to match those used on the existing building would provide for a satisfactory appearance.

Green Belt Balance/Conclusion

17. The proposal would be inappropriate development, which by definition is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. There would be a detrimental impact upon openness. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
18. I consider that the other considerations do clearly outweigh the harm, and the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do exist. I conclude that the proposal would accord with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that indicate that I should take a decision other than in accordance with this.
19. Having regard to the above and all other issues advanced, the appeal is allowed.

C Hall

INSPECTOR