



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 June 2025

by **Philip Willmer BSc Dip Arch RIBA**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/25/3363932

Pinegrove Lodge, Guildford Road, Effingham, Surrey KT24 5SA.

- 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 Simon and Mrs Jackie Porter against the decision of Guildford Borough Council
 - The application Ref is 25/P/00064
 - The development proposed is: Demolition of rear conservatory. Erection of rear ground floor extension with alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (the Framework) and any other relevant policies;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - if the development is inappropriate, 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 the development.

Reasons

Whether the extension constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt

3. The appeal property is situated in the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Framework indicates that the fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to state that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Framework further establishes that development in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate subject to a number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 154. One such exception being an 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. Policy P2 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan (Adopted 25 April 2019) (LP) states Green Belt policy will be applied in line with the Framework.
5. The Council's Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (November 2023) (SPD) provides, amongst other things further guidance on how the exceptions listed in paragraph 154 of the Framework will be interpreted in relation to whether or not a proposal can be considered to constitute inappropriate development.
6. The SPD clarifies that, with respect to extensions to a building, the LP does not define a particular floorspace or volume percentage above which disproportionate additions would occur. Instead, various factors - pertaining to such matters as mass, bulk, external dimensions, footprint, height, property scale relative to plot size, and visual perception-should be considered in the round.
7. Pine Grove Lodge is a replacement dwelling for that which originally existed on the site. The definition of original building as set out in both the Framework and Policy P2 is as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after that date, as it was first constructed. Therefore, in this case the later replacement building on the site today does not represent the baseline against which considerations should be based.
8. The Council have calculated that the proposed extension, when taken together with the increased allowed when the current replacement dwelling was permitted would be an increase of approximately 296% in size over the original building. Whilst it is unclear under what terms this approximate increase has been calculated (for example floorspace or volume) and I have no original plans before me to assist with corroboration, it is my understanding that a bungalow constituted the original building on site. It is therefore reasonable to anticipate a large uplift in size, and it has not been suitably substantiated otherwise.
9. I acknowledge that the existing rear conservatory to be demolished accrued planning permission (Ref: 01/P/01280) in 2021, such that spare capacity for development was identified at that time. However, that permission was granted in the context of a different development plan and prior to the publication of the original iteration of the Framework. Further, the proposed extension comfortably exceeds the size of the conservatory. It is therefore a decision of little relevance to my considerations.
10. Thus, notwithstanding the intended demolition of the conservatory, the existence of hardstanding to the rear, and the sizeable expanse of the individual plot in question from the information before me, I find that the appeal scheme combined with the earlier increase as a consequence of dwelling replacement would represent a disproportionate addition to the original dwelling.
11. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would amount to a disproportionate addition to the dwelling and therefore would not accord with the exception set out in paragraph 154 c) of the Framework. It would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, and I attach substantial weight to the harm it would cause. It would also fail to conform with LP Policy 2 which sets out the Council's approach to development in the Green Belt.

The effects of the development on the openness of the Green Belt

12. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt that has spatial as well as visual aspects. The appeal property is located in a semi-rural setting surrounded by woodland and fields.
13. The proposed extension would be a relatively modest addition in relation to the size of the current dwelling on the site and would be discreetly positioned to the rear. Given the scale and location of the proposal, I do not consider that the proposal in itself would cause material harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, without prejudice to my findings upon the first Main Issue, the proposal satisfactorily accords with the Framework in so far as it identifies openness as being an essential characteristic of the Green Belt.

Other considerations

14. My attention has been drawn to a previous local Green Belt appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/23/3321625. However, that appeal relates to an extension to an original dwelling and not a later enlarged replacement dwelling as here and therefore it is not directly comparable. The appellants have also referred to a large complex at Hillside Manor Farm. Whatever the background to that case, it is not justification for permitting the development here, which I have considered on its own planning merits. I therefore find the existence of these local developments elsewhere to be of limited relevance.
15. The appellants have referred to the section in the Framework in respect of infilling. However, this relates to infilling in villages and is not relevant to the determination of this appeal.
16. The Framework makes it clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
17. The appellants argue that the proposed extension is small and would not, due to its scale, location along with the demolition of the existing conservatory detract from the character and setting of the host property or the character of the surrounding area. This is supported by the Council's view that the extension would not harm the character of the existing property or the character of the surrounding area including the distinctive character of the AGLV. Whilst this may be the case an absence of harm in this respect does render the scheme acceptable.
18. I acknowledge, that the Council have found that the development would not have any adverse impact on highways, the living conditions of any neighbouring residents, trees or ecology. There is no reason for me to take a different view. I also note that there have been no third-party objections to the proposed development. However, the absence of harm is a neutral factor in my considerations.
19. The provision of additional living accommodation, as proposed here, would provide a minor improvement to the local housing stock. However, such an improvement would principally cater for the requirements of the appellants on a private basis. I therefore attach limited weight to this benefit.

20. I appreciate that even a small development such as this would have some general economic benefit. Nevertheless, given its scale I attach little weight to this consideration.
21. Consequently, the proposal's benefits would be modest and would not outweigh the substantial harm identified to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the scheme. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons set out above the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Philip Willmer

INSPECTOR