



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: 18 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/D/24/3356794

19 Westwynds, Laleham Reach, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 8RT.

- 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 Heather Dennett against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council
 - The application Ref is RU.24/1105
 - The development proposed is extension of first floor and roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any other relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupants of Casa Dor with particular regard to privacy, 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 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 the extension or alteration of a building providing that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Policy

EE14 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (Adopted 16 July 2020) (LP), is broadly consistent with the Framework insofar as it seeks to apply national Green Belt policy to protect the openness and character of the Green Belt. Extensions to buildings are not inappropriate provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The considerations to be taken into account when assessing whether a proposal is a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling, include amongst other things footprint, volume, height, mass, proposed floor space including space under roofs and change to distances to boundaries, the planning history, including any previous extensions or enlargements and previous works carried out under permitted development.

4. From the evidence I see that the original building as of May 1986 had a floor area of 190 square metres. It has subsequently been extended such that its current floor area is, as agreed between the parties 300 square metres with a volume of 626 cubic metres. As extended the floor area would be enlarged to 368 square metres with a volume of 772 cubic metres.
5. The proposed development while not reducing separation distances to the site boundaries would nevertheless add further to the overall mass of the first floor and profile of the roof.
6. For these reasons, I conclude that the dwelling would be substantially larger than the original building. As a result, 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 and LP Policy EE14.
7. The development would amount to 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.

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

8. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt that has spatial as well as visual aspects. The appeal property is located on the banks of the river Thames. Notwithstanding the residential development upon which the appeal site is situated, the openness of the Green Belt is evident in its wider context.
9. The appeal proposal would increase the volume and mass of the existing building resulting in a development that would have a greater spatial and visual presence. Given the scale and location of the proposal on the edge of the surrounding development, the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited. Nevertheless, this factor weighs against the proposal.
10. As a result, I find that the increased volume and mass of the building would reduce the openness of the site and have a greater impact on openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

Living conditions

11. The Council are concerned that the casement windows in the proposed three dormers in the north elevation would result in overlooking leading to a loss of privacy for the occupiers of Casa Dor. From my observations on site, and notwithstanding the trees located on the boundary between Westwynds and Casa Dor I concur with the Council's finding in this respect.

12. The window to the proposed bedroom at the north-eastern end of the property could be obscure glazed non-openable as the bedroom has a large window facing north-east. The window to the ensuite bathroom could similarly be obscure glazed and non-openable as it serves a non-habitable room. However, the window serving Bedroom 3 is the only window to that room, and therefore if this window were to be obscure glazed and non-openable to protect the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers it would not provide appropriate living conditions in terms of outlook and ventilation to the occupiers of the proposed bedroom.
13. I therefore conclude in respect of the third main issue that the proposed development would result in unacceptable living conditions for the occupants of Casa Dor with particular regard to privacy. As such, it is contrary to the objectives of LP Policy EE1, Runnymede Borough Council's Runnymede Design SPD July 2021 (Adopted 15 July 2021) and the Framework, as they relate to, amongst other things the need to ensure no adverse impact on the amenities of occupiers of the development proposed or to neighbouring property or users.

Other considerations

14. 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.
15. The appellant has suggested a fallback position in the form of the construction of an additional storey over the footprint of the existing chalet bungalow. A scheme proposal has been prepared to illustrate this proposal.
16. From the evidence I note that the volume of the proposed first floor would be around 390 cubic meters, being therefore about 59 cubic meters larger than the appeal proposal at some 831 cubic metres. I agree with the appellant that the fallback scheme would be less architecturally attractive than the appeal proposal and visually more bulky. However, and while some information has been submitted demonstrating how the fallback scheme would meet the provisions of permitted development, Prior Approval would be required in this case. In the absence of a grant of Prior Approval I am not persuaded that there is a greater than theoretical possibility that the development might take place as illustrated. Accordingly, in this case, I give the existence of the fallback scheme only very limited weight.

Conclusions

17. The proposal represents inappropriate development with a harmful loss of openness to the Green Belt. The Framework requires that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. This weighs heavily against the proposal.
18. In this context, very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harms are clearly outweighed by other considerations. I have given vet limited weight to the other considerations and find in this case that other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the scheme do not therefore exist.
19. In addition, the proposed development would result in unacceptable overlooking and loss of privacy for the occupants of Casa Dor.

20. Overall, for the reasons given above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that would outweigh the conflict. Therefore, the appeal dismissed.

Philip Willmer

INSPECTOR