



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 August 2025

by **G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/D/25/3368605

Hillcrest, Pyle Hill, Woking, GU22 0SR

- 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 J Milligan, Ms D Skeete and Ms M Harrington against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PLAN/2024/0706.
 - The development is the erection of a single-storey rear extension, raising of the ridge height to accommodate a lift to the first-floor accommodation, rear rooflights, solar panels, and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal was submitted with confidential information. There is no provision in the appeal regulations for representations to be treated as confidential. This information has therefore not been accepted and does not form part of my considerations in relation to this appeal.
3. The property is unoccupied, and work has commenced on the extensions and alterations. As such, this is a retrospective proposal, and I have considered it on that basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:-
 - whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - if inappropriate development, the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - if the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the 'very special circumstances' which would be necessary to justify it.

Reasons

5. The Framework establishes that the construction of new development in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of the specified exceptions applies. This includes 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 (paragraph 154C).
6. Policy CS6 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 (CS) requires the approach in the Framework to be applied, and Policy DM13 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DMP) sets out further provisions. It does not include a definition of disproportionate additions, but the supporting text indicates, based on experience, that the expectation is that acceptable proposals would be within the range of 20-40% above the original volume of the building.
7. There are no plans of the original building before me; however, both parties provided calculations for the increases. While there is a slight difference in the figures in terms of the total increase in volume from the original dwelling (Council 211.8% and Appellant 205%), this level of increase cannot be considered anything other than disproportionate. As such, the proposal would not accord with exception C of paragraph 154 of the Framework or DMP policy DM13.
8. The revised Framework in December 2024 introduced grey belt. The Council acknowledge that the site could be considered grey belt land and that there would be compliance with criterion (a) of paragraph 155 in relation to the Green Belt purposes. Having regard to the site comprising a residential property within a road of other properties, I have no reason to disagree. However, compliance is required with all the criteria, and b requires that there is an unmet need for the type of development proposed. The appellant suggests that the Council do not have a 5-year housing supply. The Council disputes this, and in any event, as an extension to an existing property, this proposal would not add to the housing supply. While it would increase the size of the property and provide for the medical requirements of the proposed occupants, there is little compelling evidence that there is an identified unmet need for the type of development proposed. Consequently, the proposal does not accord with this exception.
9. The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, such development is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Openness

10. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt that has spatial as well as visual aspects.
11. Hillcrest is a detached bungalow surrounded by trees. It is located along a private road which has a verdant and semi-rural character, and the other properties are primarily large two-storey houses. The extensions to the rear are set down from the main ridge line and are not visible from the road. They do, however, have a spatial impact, increasing the depth of the bungalow.
12. The ridge line is also increased through an alteration to the angle of the roof. This relates to the full length of the existing property, although the increase in height is

limited, and in the context of the scale and form of other properties along Pyle Hill, it would still be a low-profile property.

13. Therefore, the visual impact of the development would be limited and localised; there would, however, be some harm to openness, which adds to the Green Belt harm.

Other Considerations

14. The appellant advises that the alterations are to facilitate requirements for the occupants relating to health and mobility needs. The proposal is designed to provide accommodation for a carer, as well as including a lift and an exercise room. Such provisions are likely to have specific dimensional requirements. While I agree with the appellant that the nationally described space standards set out minimum requirements, the existing property (prior to the current extensions) with a floor area in excess of 200sqm is not small, and as a bungalow, provides for day-to-day living accommodation (bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and lounge facilities) on a single level. It is, however, noted that the 'existing' plans do show the utilisation of the roof space, and the alterations to the roof have a limited impact on the scale and volume of the property.
15. Reference is made to the supporting text to policy DM13, which indicates that consideration would be given to additions which are absolutely necessary for the functioning of the building, and weighed up in the planning balance. Whilst recognising that alterations to the internal layout and further space may be required for the occupants' mobility and care needs, the lift is referred to as the best solution for access to the first floor, it is not a direct, absolute functional requirement of the building.
16. I sympathise with the personal circumstances and understand the importance to the applicant of creating a property which aligns with the requirements of all the intended occupants and provides a practical and enriching environment, as well as maintaining independence. Whilst personal circumstances can, and in the cases referenced by the appellant, did result in the very special circumstances necessary, each case is to be considered on its own merits. Having regard to the information before me, I can give these matters no more than moderate weight.
17. A fallback is promoted in relation to a single-storey extension in the same position as proposed, with a maximum depth of 7.02m, in relation to which prior notification was submitted (Council reference PLAN/2018/1052). The proposed extension under construction is not as deep, and thereby, this would have a larger spatial impact. However, while it was determined that prior approval was not required, a condition of that consent and the GPDO Class A (g) at the time stipulated that the development must be completed by 30 May 2019. This has not been complied with, and while the provisions of the GPDO still allow for larger extensions, prior approval cannot be sought retrospectively. There is also no indication that this scheme, which the appellant indicates has commenced, accords with the other limitations of that class. I therefore have not given this weight as a genuine fallback.
18. Any confirmation of lawful development, in relation to modifications to the existing extension to achieve compliance with permitted development or otherwise, is outside the scope of this appeal.

19. The plans also show an outbuilding to the side of the bungalow in relation to which a certificate of lawfulness was granted in 2012. There is no direct indication that this would be built if planning permission were to be refused, and with a maximum height of 4m, it would be an ancillary structure. While accepting that some extensions and outbuildings could be added to the property without the need for planning permission, permitted development rights are a national provision, with specific limitations, and there is an associated, accepted effect on the Green Belt.
20. The proposal includes proposed enhancements to the landscaping with planting to promote biodiversity, and solar panels are to be provided with energy efficiency benefits. I acknowledge that the Council have found that the development would not have any adverse impact on the character of the area, the living conditions of any neighbouring residents, parking, trees or flooding. 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.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

21. The development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt, causing some localised but limited harm to its openness. I attach substantial weight to the overall harm that would be caused to the Green Belt.
22. The other considerations advanced in favour of the development, either individually or cumulatively, do not therefore clearly outweigh harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, or therefore demonstrate the existence of the very special circumstances necessary to justify approval.
23. The development is contrary to the Framework and to the development plan, which seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development. The scheme consequently conflicts with CS policy CS6 and DMP policy DM13.
24. Material considerations do not indicate that this proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.
25. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR