



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 October 2025

by **C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/T2215/D/25/3373318

Rowhill Lodge, Rowhill Road, Wilmington, Kent DA2 7QH

- 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 Karen Postlethwaite against the decision of Dartford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. is DA/25/00383/FUL.
 - The development proposed is a rear extension to parts of the ground and first floor. For the ground floor, half of the property's rear will be extended to include a new bathroom, sun-lounge and utility room. On the upper storey, the rear will be extended to include a new master bedroom suite, and increase the area of two existing bedrooms
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

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. Rowhill Lodge is a detached, two-storey dwelling accessed by a driveway from the B258 in the northern peripherals of the village of Hextable. The wider area comprises of fields and woodland in the Metropolitan Green Belt.
 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. Policy M12 of The Dartford Plan April 2024 (DP) sets out the Council's approach to the assessment of proposals in the Green Belt. This states that, amongst other things, extensions will be permitted where they are proportionate and subservient in appearance, bulk, massing and scale of the original building, and is broadly consistent with the Framework.
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6. The Framework defines the date of an 'original building' as 1 July 1948, or as originally built if constructed after that date, but does not outline what constitutes a disproportionate addition. Therefore it is for the decision-maker to judge a proposal on its individual merits, taking into account for example the size of the original building, the height and prominence of the extension and its impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
7. The Council indicates that Rowhill Lodge has been previously been extended, and calculates that the proposed scheme would result in the volume of the dwelling being extended over and above the 'original building' by about 97%. To my mind this is substantial, almost doubling the size of the property as it existed originally. Although the appellant has presented a number of other considerations - which I shall examine below - the figure in itself does not appear to be disputed insofar as it relates to the dwelling.
8. Judging the scheme in accordance with Policy M12, I consider that the proposed extension, together with the previous additions to the property, 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.

Openness

9. The Framework makes it clear that an essential characteristic of Green Belts is their openness, which has spatial and visual aspects. Openness is evident around Rowhill Lodge and in the wider area as a result of spaces between dwellings and the surrounding undeveloped fields and woodland. Open can mean the absence of development irrespective of the degree of visibility of the site from public vantage points; development which would harm openness could be acceptable visually. In other words, there is a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect and the absence of visual intrusion, as may be the case in this instance, does not in itself mean that there is no impact on the openness of the Green Belt as a result of development.
10. The scale and extent of the scheme would be substantially greater than the existing property, including the creation of built form at first floor and roof level where previously there was none. The combined extent of the proposed extensions and alterations would result in a noticeably larger dwelling, that would result in moderate harm the openness of the Green Belt in spatial terms. The Framework makes clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, and the erosion of openness therefore weighs heavily against the proposals.

Other considerations

11. I have considered the matters advanced in the the grounds of appeal. I appreciate that the scheme would increase the volume of the existing dwelling by nearly 16%, however I am required to make an analysis on the 'disproportionate additions' test over and above the original dwelling, and I am satisfied that it is reasonable to adopt a cumulative approach. The building would grow in a number of directions.
12. I also acknowledge that the proposal would have limited public impacts and no objections have been raised on the grounds of character, appearance or design. However, such matters do not counterbalance the harm by inappropriateness and to openness I have set out previously.
13. I note the other appeal decisions submitted by the appellant. All are from other Authorities elsewhere in the country and I consider that they are not comparable to the appeal scheme before me given that the development plans are different, and thus those appeals have to be considered under different policies with different requirements. Furthermore I have not been provided with full details of each proposal, so cannot ascertain the scale and context relative to the original dwelling.

14. Such issues notwithstanding, I note that for 28 Chapel Road, Letty Green, the Inspector states that “The main element of the proposal, the front porch, would be located within an enclosed space between the dwelling and garage, where it would result in a modest change to the overall form and scale of the dwelling.” The appeal scheme before me would not be in an enclosed space, rather project outwards and upwards into areas that are currently undeveloped.
15. At Knowle Green, Birtley Road, Bramley, it would appear that the 40% guideline to Policy RD2 does not apply to properties within settlements, and as such the Inspector was able to justify the increase of 122%. Furthermore, he argued that “the works would not significantly increase the spread of built form on the site beyond the single-storey extensions to the front and rear which I note have recently been granted planning permission under a separate proposal”, which is not the case for the appeal scheme before me.
16. For Sandalwood, Binton Lane, Seale, the proposal obtained a certificate of lawfulness for a single storey addition, which the Inspector deemed to be represent a fallback position of material weight. Moreover, the project involved the demolition of a side extension, which the Inspector concluded would improve the perception of openness around the property and especially in the wider gap to the southern side boundary. This is a different set of circumstances to the proposal at Rowhill Lodge.
17. I recognise that the site once contained outbuildings within the garden area. However, these no longer exist and therefore the weight I attribute to their historical presence is minimal. Moreover, as the appellant concedes, “Given the lack of historic detail of these structures, it is recognised as challenging to accurately apply volumetric calculations.”
18. Finally, the applications granted in 2008 have expired; the redevelopment has not been implemented and was considered under an earlier Local Plan. Such issues do not add weight in favour of the appeal proposals.
19. In summary, the other considerations outlined in support of the scheme consequently represent only neutral factors, which do not weigh in favour of the development. In the round, no very special circumstances, as are necessary to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt’s openness and by reason of inappropriateness, have been demonstrated.

Green Belt Balance

20. According to paragraphs 153 of the Framework, inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances. These will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, are clearly outweighed by other considerations.
21. I am required by the Framework to give substantial weight to the harm the development would cause to the Green Belt by virtue of its inappropriateness and to openness. Individually or cumulatively, the weights I have attached to other considerations do not clearly outweigh this harm. As such, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.

Conclusion

22. Having regard to all factors raised and for the reasons given above, the appeal fails.

C Hall

INSPECTOR