



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2018

by **R W Allen B.Sc PGDip MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st February 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/17/3191052

The Coach House, Todds Green, Stevenage SG1 2JE

- 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 David Huggins against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 17/01954/1HH, dated 31 July 2017, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2017.
 - The development proposed is a garage side extension and new raised roof to facilitate room in attic.
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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 for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan policy, and the effect on openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area; and
 - If the development is inappropriate, 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 necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development and effect on openness

3. The Framework identifies the protection of the Green Belt as a core planning principle. It says one of the fundamental aims of the Green Belt is to keep land permanently open, and openness and permanence are its essential characteristics. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Substantial weight must be given to any harm to the Green Belt, and very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

4. Paragraph 89 of the Framework sets out those categories of development which may be regarded as not inappropriate. The extension or alteration of a building is one such exemption, providing that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Saved policy 2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2007 broadly aligns with the Framework's approach to inappropriate development, albeit that it takes a somewhat more stringent line to those developments which are not inappropriate.
5. As acknowledged by the appellant, the original garage has already been significantly extended in recent years. The proposed development would result in a building almost double the size of the original garage. While I understand the appellant's assertion that any increase in size of the building would register as a large addition owing to the original garage being relatively small in the first place, it does not detract from the fact that the proposed development would result the garage being significantly larger, both in footprint and in height than its original state. I find that it cannot be considered anything but a disproportionate addition to the original building.
6. Although within a residential curtilage, I find that the fact that the appeal site is washed over by the Green Belt is conclusive evidence that it must contribute to openness. Regardless of its limited public viewpoints, the proposed development would undoubtedly erode openness of the Green Belt.
7. I therefore find that the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would erode its openness. The proposed development would not accord with Local Plan policy 2 or with the Framework. I attach considerable weight to the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness and harm to openness.

Character and appearance

8. The appeal site comprises the host dwelling, the garage the subject of this appeal and an outbuilding in the rear garden, none of which are consistent in design or appearance. While I find the proposed development would not accord with Green Belt policies, I find nothing offending about its proposed size or appearance in design terms, and I am satisfied it would relate well with the host property and the character of the area as a whole. The proposed development would in this regard accord with the relevant parts of the Framework.

Other circumstances

9. The appellant states that should harm by inappropriateness be found, other considerations such as the limited public viewpoints the proposed development would be visible from, its proportion of site coverage and the absence of harm to the living conditions of occupiers of surrounding properties should be taken into consideration, which I have done.
10. However, they do not collectively amount to sufficient reasons necessary to clearly outweigh the substantial weight that I must attach to Green Belt harm. I note references to other decisions by the Council, but in the absence of specific details or relevance to the appeal before me I attach little weight to them in my decision.

Conclusion

11. The proposed development would be inappropriate development and would erode openness of the Green Belt. I have attached considerable weight to this harm. It would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host property or the wider locality. The other circumstances advanced by the appellant do not clearly outweigh the substantial weight attached to Green Belt harm by reason of inappropriateness and erosion of openness that I have identified. Subsequently, they do not amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.
12. Therefore for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Allen

INSPECTOR