



Appeal Decision

The Planning Inspectorate
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site visit conducted on 15 May 2000

By Gyllian D Grindey

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the

DoP	ED	DP	DC	BC	SS
Rec'd. 24 MAY 2000 MSc MRTPI					File
Comments: Secretary of State for the PLANNING DEPARTMENT DBC					Date

23 MAY 2000

Appeal ref: T/APP/A1910/A/00/1039292/P5

- 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 brought by Mr W J Hughes against Dacorum Borough Council.
- The site is located at High Ridges, Shothanger Way, Bovington.
- The application (ref:4/02157/99/FHA), dated 13 December 1999, was refused on 17 February 2000.
- The development proposed is an extension in the recess to the front of existing dwelling.

Decision: The appeal is dismissed.

The development plan

1. The appeal site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, as described in the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review of 1998 and referred to in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan of 1995. Policy 20 of the Local Plan deals with extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt and seeks to ensure that the extension is compact and well related to the existing building; not visually intrusive in the countryside and is limited in size. The criterion of size will be judged by the amount that the building has already been extended. In particular, the enlargement of the original dwelling must not amount to the creation of a new dwelling on the site. This has been carried through, in broadly similar form into the emerging Deposit Draft Review of the Local Plan, where an addition of 30% of the original dwelling is considered appropriate.

The main issue

2. Having seen the site and its surroundings and having read the representations, I consider the main issues in this appeal are whether the proposal would be an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, and if not whether there are any very special circumstances which would override the general presumption against inappropriate development in the green belt.

Inspector's reasons

3. *Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) no 2 -- Green Belts* indicates that the extension or alteration of dwellings is not inappropriate in green belts provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. It does not define such additions but indicates that Local Planning Authorities should make clear their approach in development plans. In this case, the approach is set out in the adopted local plan and with a specified figure in the emerging local plan. Only limited weight can be afforded this figure however, as the Local Plan Inquiry is still being held and the text of the policy may change.

APPEAL DECISION

4. It is not disputed that the proposal is small of itself. The Council's concern is that, when considered cumulatively with the extensions that have already taken place, it would amount to a disproportionate extension. Various figures have been quoted to me concerning the total for extensions carried out here, and different methods of calculation used. Given that the fundamental attribute of the Green Belt is its openness, it cannot be right to simply look at the footprint of a dwelling, because that does not take into account the bulk, mass or volume and possible extensions. The Council's figures are therefore more pertinent to this case and they calculate that this scheme would represent an increase (in addition to the other works carried out) of about 94% in total over the original size of the dwelling. Like the Council, I consider that such a large increase, cumulatively, cannot be anything other than disproportionate. Consequently, the proposal would not accord with national policy as expressed in *PPG 2*, paragraph 3.6 and hence represents inappropriate development in the green belt. Similarly, it cannot be thought of as limited in size or small scale when compared to the original dwelling and the scheme is therefore in breach of Local Plan policy 20.
5. However, that is not the end of the matter, as I now need to consider whether there are any very special circumstances which might otherwise justify the scheme. This is a balancing exercise in which any harm caused to the Green Belt must be weighed against the merits of the proposal.
6. It is contended that the dwelling is well screened and that the extension is no more than filling in the recess between the two projecting, forward facing wings of the existing house. While it is true that the proposal would not eat substantially into the openness of the plot or erode undeveloped land, I think it does represent rather more than a little infill scheme. The proposal includes a substantial roof extension, to create the volume for a further bedroom at first floor level, as well as a bulky family room extension and front covered area, beneath the roof supported by pillars. I find the overall mass and bulk would be increased and although it is true that views of the property are limited, (mostly to the footpath where it crosses the driveway), there would still be some harm to the Green Belt. This would result from this increased bulk, which must reduce the overall openness of the landscape and hence the Green Belt to a degree.
7. Reference is made in the grounds of appeal to a previous Inspector's comment, concerning another appeal here in 1998. He said that he did not consider that '...cumulative development in these circumstances even if repeated elsewhere would significantly reduce the openness of the Green Belt'. The appellant applies that phrase to this appeal, but I think that the previous Inspector was referring to elsewhere in the green belt, not to this site, as he would have undoubtedly have considered the wider impact. The phrase does not therefore, seem to me to have much bearing on the current appeal. In any event, as paragraph 3.2 of *PPG 2* states, 'very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations'. In other words, lack of harm is not enough, by itself, to justify approval, there must be some positive attribute. I can find no positive attribute, such as an essential need for this new accommodation. It does not, for example, appear to relate to the additional of basic necessities or facilities to a dwelling otherwise uninhabitable.

Conclusions

8. Having given careful consideration to the arguments submitted, I conclude that they are outweighed by the very strong Green Belt policy objections and the circumstances and arguments advanced do not amount to very special circumstances of such weight as to justify allowing the appeal. The protection of the Green Belt is an important objective of national and local policy. To allow this proposal would undermine those policies and put the future maintenance of the Green Belt locally at risk. The Green Belt here appears to me to be quite vulnerable because the appeal property is amidst various other substantial properties. Significantly more built development here would change the semi-rural appearance to a more suburban one, by reducing the openness.
9. I have taken account of all other matters raised in the representations, but nothing is sufficient to outweigh the planning considerations which have led me to my decision. I have noted the planning permission for 2 dwellings on an adjacent site, but it appears that the planning history and circumstances are rather different there. I have dealt with this case on its own merits.

Formal decision

10. For the reasons given above and in exercise of the powers transferred to me, I hereby dismiss this appeal.

Clytha Darden

Inspector

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TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPLICATION - 4/02157/99/FHA

HIGH RIDGES, SHOTHANGER WAY, BOVINGDON, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD,
HERTFORDSHIRE, HP3 0DW
EXTENSION IN RECESS TO FRONT OF EXISTING DWELLING

Your application for full planning permission (householder) dated 13 December 1999 and received on 20 December 1999 has been **REFUSED**, for the reasons set out overleaf.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Barnard'.

Director of Planning

Date of Decision: 17 February 2000

REASONS FOR REFUSAL APPLICABLE TO APPLICATION: 4/02157/99/FHA

Date of Decision: 17 February 2000

1. The application site is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt wherein there is strict control over the extension and alteration of existing dwellinghouses. The proposed extension (taking account of previous additions) would amount to a disproportionate addition over the size of the original dwellinghouse constituting inappropriate development in a Green Belt area. For the above reasons, the proposal is contrary to national government advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2, Policy 20 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan and Policy 23 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 Deposit Draft.