

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2016

by P W Clark MA MRTPI MCMI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 15 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/16/3160653

2 Holly Cottages, Wood Street Green, Wood Street Village GU3 3DX

- 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 Mrs Jenna Mason against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/P/01580, dated 26 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is to demolish garage and erect single storey side/rear extension and extend existing dormer to one side.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted to demolish garage and erect single storey side/rear extension and extend existing dormer to one side at 2 Holly Cottages, Wood Street Green, Wood Street Village GU3 3DX in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/P/01580, dated 26 July 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: MT/16/05A and 06A.
 - 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in the materials indicated in section 10 of the application form.

Main Issues

2. The site of the proposal is within the Wood Street Village Conservation Area. There is no suggestion, and I have no reason to disagree, that the proposal would do anything other than preserve the character and appearance of this Conservation Area. The main issues in this appeal are;
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
 - The effect of the proposal on
 - The openness of the Green Belt
 - The character and appearance of the dwelling.
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3. Whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations and, if so, whether this would amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

4. The proposal would be within the Green Belt which here washes over Wood Street Village. Paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions include 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. There are various ways of judging whether a proposal would represent a disproportionate addition. One is to assess its footprint. Information submitted suggests that the original footprint of the building was about 41 sq m. Like its originally identical (but handed) neighbour at number 1, the house has been altered and extended in the past and currently has a footprint of about 52 sq m with an attached garage of 26 sq m, totalling 78 sq m. The proposal would give rise to a footprint of about 87.2 sq m, an increase of about 112% over the original. This would be a substantial increase but, to give a sense of proportion, the existing situation represents an increase of 90% and extensions which exist, apparently authorised, at number 1 represent an increase in footprint of about 127.68%.
6. Another way of assessing the proportionality of an addition is by examining its floorspace. Information submitted suggests that the original floorspace was about 75 sq m and is currently about 127.6 sq m, including the garage (the council's report says 120 sq m). The proposal would result in a floorspace of 140.4 sq m, according to the Council, an 87.2 % increase over the original. By way of comparison, the floorspace resulting from apparently approved extensions at number 1 is reported to be 153 sq m, an increase of 104% over the original.
7. In the light of this comparison with what has apparently been found to be an acceptably proportionate extension at number 1 Holly Cottages, the other half of the semi-detached pair which includes the appeal site, I conclude that this appeal proposal would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. It is therefore not inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would comply with policy RE2 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan adopted in January 2003 which, like the NPPF, finds limited extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt not inappropriate.

Openness

8. A proposal may be not inappropriate development in the Green Belt yet may still affect its openness. However, the courts have held¹ that where development is found to be not inappropriate in the Green Belt, it should not be regarded as harmful to its openness; the question of impact on openness is no longer an issue.

¹

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, R (on the application of) v Epping Forest District Council & Anor (Rev 1) [2016] EWCA Civ 404

Character and appearance

9. Holly Cottages are a pair of semi-detached, gable-ended, two storey cottages built of orange brick. Both have been extended to their rear with two-storey flat roofed extensions originally with a rear elevation in the form of a steeply pitched slope down to ground floor level but now enclosing large flat-roofed tile hung box-dormer extensions, differently sized on each house. Number 1 has been further enlarged with a single storey pitched roof rear extension and a further conservatory. Number 2 has an attached garage at its side under a corrugated roof pitched to front and rear. Because the adjoining property (Runnymede) is set well back the whole of the flank of 2 Holly Cottages is exposed to view from the south, together with the front part of the garage.
10. For the same reason, the flank of the proposal would also be exposed to view. But the appearance would be little changed. The rear box-dormer would be widened slightly so that it would be slightly closer to view from the south but the difference would be scarcely perceptible. The garage would be replaced by a side extension which would be about 1m greater in depth at both front and rear. It would be predominantly flat-roofed but its front few metres would have a roof pitched to front and rear so that the overall appearance would be similar to that of the existing garage, albeit slightly more prominent. The transition to the flat roof at the rear of the garage would be just about visible from some positions but, since a similar transition occurs at present on the main house at first floor level, it would not be out of character.
11. I conclude that if carried out in matching materials, which can be required by a condition as suggested by the Council, the proposal would be entirely in character with the existing character and appearance of the building. It would therefore comply with local Plan policy H9 which, amongst other matters, allows extensions to dwellings outside urban areas if there is no unacceptable effect on the scale and character of the existing building.

Other considerations

12. Because I have concluded that the proposal would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would be in character with the existing property, there would be no harm needing to be outweighed by other considerations. The appeal is therefore allowed.

P. W. Clark

Inspector