
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2017

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 24 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/16/3163594

Mill Lodge, Mill Road, South Holmwood, RH5 4NS

- 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 Nicholas Blomeley against the decision Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2016/1147/PLAH, dated 15 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is to join the outbuilding to the house by adding walls either side of the roof that currently exists between the two buildings and joins the properties.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of infill extension between existing outbuilding and house at Mill Lodge, Mill Road, South Holmwood, RH5 4NS, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref MO/2016/1147/PLAH, dated 15 July 2016, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1:1250 location plan, 1:500 block plan, existing and proposed floor plans and elevations (not numbered).
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing building.

Procedural matter

2. The proposal was described on the application form as *to join the outbuilding to the house by adding walls either side of the roof that currently exists between the two buildings and joins the properties*. It was described on the Council's decision notice as *the erection of infill extension between existing outbuilding and house*. I consider that the latter is a more precise and concise description which still accurately describes the appellant's proposal and I have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main issues

3. I consider that the main issues in this case are a) whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, b) its effect on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the area,

and c) if it 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 necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Inappropriate development

4. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out several categories of new buildings which are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It allows for the extension or alteration of an existing building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
5. Saved policy RUD7 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2000 (the local plan) allows for extensions to dwellings in the countryside within and beyond the Green Belt in accordance with a similar criterion. The supporting text states that the policy should not be undermined by successive additions over time and that any extension will be judged together with such additions to determine whether it would result in a disproportionate addition of floor space. Consequently, even small extensions could fail to meet the policy in some circumstances. The original dwelling is that which stood at the end of 1968 when policies controlling proposals for dwellings in the Green Belt were introduced.
6. Mill Lodge is located in a rural area in the Green Belt. It is a one and a half storey house rendered and painted white, with distinctive features including steeply pitched roofs and gables and ornamental barge boards and glazing bars. I understand that it has previously been extended by approximately half in terms of floor area. This later extension reflects the original style of the house and is well integrated with it. There is a garage building to the side, which was a replacement of an earlier one and also reflects the style of the main house. This has been converted to provide a similar area of habitable floor space to that of the extension. The Council calculates that the total increase in floor space over the original house is approximately 93%.
7. The proposal is for a small single storey infill between the main house and the converted garage to provide a secure link between the two parts of the dwelling. It would run from the front wall of the converted garage between the side wall of the latter and the side wall of the house, filling a space approximately 2m wide and providing a floor area of approximately 13sqm. The two buildings are already linked by a gate and a covered walkway with a pitched roof.
8. The Framework does not provide any direction as to what may be regarded as a disproportionate addition, nor does it indicate how this should be measured, for example, by floor space or volume. Policy RUD7 refers to the size of dwellings but the supporting text relies on floor space. The Council refers to a 50% increase as its guideline figure, although I can find no policy or guidance document in the information before me that supports this figure. In my opinion, relying solely on floor space as a means by which to judge whether an addition is disproportionate has limitations in that it takes no account of height, volume or bulk.

9. I consider that the proposed extension would be very modest in size, not only in terms of its floor space, but also insofar as it would fill an already partially covered and enclosed paved space between two existing walls and would project a short distance into a courtyard at the rear. The previous extension to the main building added not only floor space but also volume. The garage, on the other hand, used floor space in an existing building to provide additional habitable space, but did not add volume.
10. In my opinion, this modest extension would not result in a disproportionate addition in terms of its size. Although there would be a cumulative increase in floor space, there would be little significant increase in volume and the proposal would be small in scale and integrate well into the existing layout and form of the property.
11. I conclude that the proposal would not be inappropriate development and that it is consistent with the Framework and local plan policy RUD7.

Openness

12. The Framework states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. The appeal property is one of a small number of dwellings grouped around Mill House in a rural, wooded area to the east of the village of South Holmwood.
13. I consider that the proposed extension would not have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt as it would be a relatively small addition to a secluded part of a building which forms part of an established small group of dwellings. It would not erode the openness of the Green Belt either spatially, because of its modest size or visually, as it is not visible from public viewpoints. It would not compromise any of the purposes for which the Green Belt is designated including that of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Character and appearance

14. The proposal would be constructed in materials to match the existing house and the design would be in keeping with its style. I conclude that it would not harm the character and appearance of the building itself or the rural area and that it would be consistent with local plan policy RUD7.
15. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

Conditions

16. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council, having regard to the tests set out in the Framework. A condition detailing the plans is necessary to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and for the avoidance of doubt. A condition relating to the materials is necessary in order to ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR