



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2021

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/21/3275595

22 Becket Wood, Newdigate, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 5AQ

- 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 & Mrs D Cummings against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2020/2364/PLAH, dated 15 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as a part garage conversion and first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a part garage conversion and first floor extension at 22 Becket Wood, Newdigate, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 5AQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref MO/2020/2364/PLAH, dated 15 December 2020 and the plans submitted with it, 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: 20057 01, 20057 10 and 20057 11.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the part garage conversion and extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing dwelling.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - 1) Whether the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (Framework) and development plan policy.
 - 4) If the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - 5) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene.
 - 6) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of 23 Becket Wood (No.23), with particular regard to daylight, sunlight and visual impact.

- 7) If the proposal amounts to inappropriate development, whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, including any public benefits, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the Framework and development plan policy.

3. Paragraphs 147 and 148 of the Framework state that within the Green Belt inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Paragraph 149/149c) of the Framework states that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, other than in various stated exceptions. This includes the extension or alteration of an existing building, provided that any proposal does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
4. Policy RUD7 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2000 (LP), is consistent with this. It states that outside village boundaries extensions to dwellings should not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling.
5. The supporting text to LP Policy RUD7 advises that in assessing whether a proposed extension is a disproportionate addition, account will be taken of the relative increase in floorspace and whether the proposed extension would be out of proportion with the original dwelling in terms of form, bulk or prominence.
6. The Council has stated that the original dwelling has a floor area of 160m². The dwelling has already been extended by 36m² and the appeal proposal would extend the dwelling a further 37.5m². This would equate to a 46% increase over and above the original dwelling. At the same time the footprint of the existing dwelling would not be increased and part of the proposed extension would be accommodated within the roof space of the existing attached garage. The overall increase in ridge height would be less than two metres and would be lower than the main ridge height.
7. For these reasons, as concluded by the Council, I find that the proposed extension, together with the existing extension would not amount to disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling.
8. I conclude on this main issue that the proposal would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would accord with paragraph 149/149c) of the Framework and LP Policy RUD7. This means that the scheme should not be regarded as harmful to the openness of the Green Belt, to the fundamental aim of the Green Belt or to the purposes of including land within it. Accordingly, there is no need to consider Green Belt policy further under main issues b) and d).

Character and appearance

9. The Appeal site is located within a small modern rural housing estate within Parkgate. It comprises an irregular, linear pattern of detached family dwellings which both front and back onto the open countryside. The appeal property is located within a section of Becket Wood where dwellings and their attached/detached garages typically project close to the side boundaries of the plots. These garages have a combination of hipped and gabled pitched roofs of various heights. The gaps between the full two storey elements of the dwellings and their side boundaries vary, with some projecting close to their side boundaries.
10. Together and amongst other things LP Policies ENV22, ENV24 and RUD7 and Mole Valley Core Strategy 2009 (CS) Policy CS14 state that proposals should be appropriate in terms of scale, form and appearance and should respect and not detract from the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the locality. Development will not be permitted where it would result in a cramped appearance, having regard to the space around buildings in the locality. Consistent with this section 12 of the Framework states that new development should be sympathetic to local character, be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and add to the overall quality of the area, whilst optimising the potential of the site.
11. The Council's Design Guidance for House Extensions 200 (SPG) advises that side extensions can result in a terracing effect within the street scene. To help prevent this, gaps of at least one metre should normally be provided between two storey side extensions and the adjacent site boundary. In some areas gaps need to be wider to retain the character and appearance of the area.
12. To the front of the appeal property the existing garage is located some 1.01 metres from the side boundary of the property. To the rear the garage is sited 1.7 metres from the side boundary. This would not change with the proposal. There is also a small gap between No.23 and the shared boundary and a mature hedge runs along the side boundary to the front of the two dwellings. To the south there is a particularly generous sized gap between the appeal dwelling and the dwelling at 21 Becket Wood.
13. The proposed extension would occupy a recessed position between the side/front elevations of No.23 which project closer to the road and the dominant front projecting wing on the opposite side of the appeal dwelling. The extension would sit above the existing garage wing and would have dormer windows to the front and rear. The roof and walls of the extension would be clad in tiles to match the roof of the host building.
14. As indicated on the drawings the height of the external walls of the garage would be increased by 1.8 metres and would be lower than the two storey part of the dwelling. Whilst the size of the roof itself would be unchanged, it would have a half hip rather than a gable end. The eaves height of the half hip would be approximately the same height as the ridge line of the existing gable end.
15. As a result of these factors the proposed extension would be visually subservient and would respect and blend in appropriately with the host dwelling. It would not have a terracing effect or appear cramped or out of keeping with the street scene.

16. The appellant has referred to a side extension at 5 Becket Wood, which was allowed at appeal in 2018. However, that property is located in a different part of Becket Wood and is not directly comparable to the appeal proposal. As such it has not influenced my assessment of the appeal scheme, which has been assessed on its individual merits and in accordance with the prevailing planning policies and advice.
17. I conclude on the third main issue that the proposal would respect the character and appearance of the street scene. Accordingly, it would comply with LP Policies ENV22, ENV24 and RUD7, CS Policy CS14, the SPG and the Framework.

Living conditions

18. The proposed extension would be sited to the south and would project beyond the rear wall of the dwelling at No.23 by approximately 3.5 metres. It would have a rear eaves height of four metres and its roof would be hipped to the rear and have a half hip to the side. The rear of the appeal dwelling is orientated away from No.23 and the gap between the rear elevation of the proposed side wing and the boundary with No.23 is 1.7 metres.
19. As a result of these factors the proposed extension would fall outside the 45° plane referred to in the SPG and the resultant additional loss of daylight and overshadowing within the adjacent rear rooms and garden at No.23 would be modest. These rooms and the rear garden would continue to benefit from good levels of daylight and sunlight, despite sitting at a lower level to the appeal dwelling. The existing small windows in the side elevation of No.23 would similarly receive less daylight/sunlight. However, the impact would be modest and these windows are not the sole or primary windows that serve the main habitable rooms.
20. Due to the siting and orientation of the proposed extension and the juxtaposition between the two dwellings and their gardens, the proposal would not have a materially adverse impact on the outlook from the dwelling and garden at No.23. For these same reasons the outlook from the proposed rear first floor window of the proposed extension would not result in a material loss of privacy for the occupiers of No.23. Having regard to the width of the gap between the two dwellings; the planting along the party boundary; the staggered building lines; and the modest depth of the existing garage to be extended I am satisfied that the proposal would not materially increase the wind tunnel effect between the two properties.
21. I conclude on the fourth main issue that the proposal would not have a materially harmful impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of No.23, with regard to loss of daylight, sunlight or visual impact. Accordingly, the proposal would comply with LP Policy ENV22, which states that developments should not significantly harm the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Other matters

22. The Council has suggested the imposition of conditions relating to the use of matching external materials and adherence to the submitted drawings. Both of these conditions are necessary to ensure that the extension respects the host building and in the interests of certainty.

23. Finally, it is noted that concern has been expressed that the proposed extension could be converted to a separate dwelling in the future. The proposal does not seek to do this and any such proposal would require full planning permission. As such, it is a matter that falls outside the scope of this appeal.

Conclusion

24. Having regard to the conclusions on the main issues the appeal is allowed.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR