
Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 8 December 2021

by Rachael Pipkin BA (Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/21/3270193

Woodview, Fern Lane, Wallis Wood RH5 5RE

- 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 and Mrs Windust against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2020/1543/PLAH, dated 3 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of one and a half storey front extension, comprising three new gable ends.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of one and a half storey front extension, comprising three new gable ends and two dormer windows to the rear at Woodview, Fern Lane, Wallis Wood RH5 5RE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref MO/2020/1543/PLAH, dated 3 September 2020 and 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 strict accordance with the following approved plans: TQRQM20174122352423, PL002A, 003 and PL004A.
 - 3) No development above slab level shall take place until details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extensions hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 4) All works shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations set out within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, November 2020 (Windrush Ecology).

Procedural Matter

2. Notwithstanding the description of development set out above in the banner heading, which is taken from the application form, it is clear from the plans and accompanying details that the development also includes two dormer windows to the rear. The Council dealt with the proposal on this basis and so shall I. I have included these additional elements of the proposal in my formal decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

4. Woodview is a detached chalet bungalow which lies in a secluded location accessed via a narrow lane off Fern Lane. It has a traditional character with modest proportions, featuring two front facing pitched roof dormers and one to the rear. The surrounding area is heavily wooded with various detached dwellings, generally bungalows and chalet bungalows of varying designs and scales. Properties are similarly located in secluded plots enclosed by woodland which screens them from views of each other, although they are more visible during winter months. The character of the area is sylvan and tranquil with a sense of enclosure created by the surrounding woodland.
5. The proposed development would extend the property to the front at ground and roof level with the formation of two principal gables that would span the full width of the property. A smaller third gable would project forward from the centre. The extension would be oak-framed with floor to ceiling glazing to both floors. The walls of the gables are indicated to be clad in weatherboarding.
6. There would be no increase in the height of the host property and whilst the enlarged property would occupy a larger footprint, it would not appear unduly large or out of scale within its sizeable plot. The altered north elevation of the property facing towards the lane would comprise a gable end with the front extension appearing as a wing projecting from it. This would result in a similar form to other properties within the locality, including Kingswood, The Timbers and Tall Trees.
7. The proposed development would give the property a more contemporary appearance, particularly when viewed from the front. The introduction of the triple gable feature and extensive glazing would be a bold addition to the front of this property which, due to its size, would not appear subordinate. However, because it has been designed to extend the full width of the building, it would appear less like an extension and more integrated with the property. This would accord with the advice set out in the Council's *Design Guidance for House Extensions (2000)* which acknowledges that extensions being designed so that they are not recognisable as an extension can be successful where properties are individually designed as they are in this locality.
8. The main changes to the host property would be orientated away from the entrance to the site, facing towards the woodland. Although they would make the property more prominent than it is in its existing form, these changes would not be prominent in the very limited views of the property from the surrounding area.
9. With the glazing set within the substantial timber frames forming the extension in combination with the use of timber weatherboarding, the proposal would not appear unduly urban. The use of timber would relate well to the surrounding woodland, whilst the use of weatherboarding would replicate some of the features of other properties within the locality which would link the proposal to its surroundings. Furthermore, the glazing would reflect the adjacent woodland which would lessen its visual impact.

10. Two pitched roof dormer windows would be inserted either side of an existing rear dormer window, matching this in design. The dormers would align with the ground floor windows. This would retain the symmetrical appearance of the host property. The proposed dormers would also be similar in character and appearance to the existing front elevation of the property with two dormer windows and a large porch canopy which in its current form does not appear unduly cluttered.
11. There is no uniformity in the design of properties within the surrounding area which include examples of modern two-storey houses, timber clad bungalows, a thatched cottage and mock tudor dwellings. My attention has also been drawn to a recently approved scheme for the enlargement of Kingswood through an increase in ridge height, insertion of dormer windows and the formation of a sizeable orangery which would similarly alter the scale and character of that property.
12. Within this context, the appeal scheme, whilst of a different design, would not appear incongruous with its surroundings. In coming to this view, I am also mindful of the advice set out in the *Building Design into The Surrey Hills* guidance which although concerned with the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which the appeal site lies outside of, recognises that contemporary architecture within a low density area may require a well-wooded setting. This seems to be the case here.
13. In conclusion, I find that the proposed extension would result in a more contemporary form of development that would change the character of the property. However, in the context of the varied designs of surrounding development this would not be inappropriate. Furthermore, it would not harm the sylvan, tranquil or secluded character of the wider area. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not harm the character and appearance of the host property or surrounding area.
14. The proposal would therefore accord with Policies ENV3 and RUD 7 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2000 and Policy CS13 of the Mole Valley Core Strategy 2009 which together require development in the countryside beyond the Green Belt to be appropriate in scale and form, to not detract from the appearance and character of the existing dwelling and rural character of the area and to respect, and where appropriate enhance the character and distinctiveness of the landscape character area in which it is proposed.

Other Matters

15. Due to the position of the property within a large plot, set away from the boundaries and enclosed by significant areas of woodland, the proposed additional dormers to the rear would not give rise to unacceptable overlooking of the garden to the neighbouring property to the east.
16. The woodland surrounding the appeal site is designated as ancient woodland. The proposed development would be set away from the nearest trees as indicated on the submitted block plan, Ref PL002A. The appeal scheme does not propose the removal of any trees. This is confirmed in the submitted *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (November 2020)*. The scheme would not therefore adversely affect the trees within the site.

Conditions

17. The Council has suggested a number of conditions which I have considered against advice in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.
18. A condition specifying the approved plans is necessary as this provides certainty. It is not intended for the front extension to be constructed in matching materials to the existing. Whilst the proposed materials have been described in the evidence these are not indicated on any of the drawings. In the interests of character and appearance, I have therefore imposed a condition requiring details of materials to be submitted. A condition requiring works to be carried out in accordance with the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is reasonable and necessary, in the interests of avoiding any harm to protected species.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons set out above, I conclude the appeal should be allowed.

Rachael Pipkin

INSPECTOR