The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2023

by R J Redford MTCP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 JANUARY 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/22/3303471
Holmwood Post Office, 9 Warwick Road, South Holmwood, Surrey RH5 4NP

- 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 Daniel and Mrs Emma Poyastro-Pearson against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
- The application Ref MO/2022/0814/PLAH, dated 9 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 29 June 2022.
- The development proposed is described as a garage conversion to home office/storage/family space ancillary to the main house.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and the living conditions of the occupants of 9a Warwick Road with specific regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site constitutes a semi-detached two-storey dwelling on a corner plot between Warwick Road and Norfolk Road within the village of South Holmwood. This area of the village is residential and characterised by closely positioned properties. Although the properties are generally traditional in design and generally two-storey, there is a mix of vernaculars, materials, and semi-detached, detached, and terraced layouts. Where properties have garages or outbuildings these are generally subservient to the main dwelling, single storey, and functional in design.

4. Within the appeal site, to the rear of the appeal dwelling is a series of linked single storey outbuildings which include a carport, pitch roofed garage, pitched roof store and flat roofed store. The carport and garage have off road parking in front of them accessible from Norfolk Road, whereas the stores are within the rear garden of the appeal dwelling which is separated from the off road parking by a solid fence. Visually, therefore, the outbuildings appear more in context with Norfolk Road.

5. The proposal would extend the garage and pitched roof store (host buildings) upwards to provide a second storey of accommodation. This would increase the overall bulk and size of the host buildings which would create a form more consistent with the smaller houses along Norfolk Road rather than other

outbuildings in the vicinity. The proposal would also be taller than many of the other outbuildings and the replacement of the garage door with a window would reduce its functional appearance further assimilating its features with the houses on Norfolk Road. This would mean the proposal would fail to retain the subservient nature of the host buildings to the main dwelling. The location of the host buildings in front of the adjacent properties on Norfolk Road would further emphasise this visual impact. Therefore, the proposal would have a dominating effect in the street scene, harming the road's overall appearance and unbalancing the traditional relationship between dwelling and outbuilding characteristic of the area.

6. It is, nevertheless, appreciated that in isolation the choice of materials would be in keeping with those used in the local area. However, this would not overcome the harm found in relation to the bulk and size of that proposed.

7. Although not implemented, it is noted that a previous enlargement of the outbuildings was approved (reference MO/2006/1821). However, from the information before me, that approval was linked to the previous commercial use of the site and approved prior to the adoption of the Mole Valley Local Development Framework Core Strategy (CS). Therefore, the considerations for that approved scheme would have been different. Furthermore, although a portion of the approved scheme would have been taller than that which is before me, the majority would have been single storey and would have reduced the height of the existing pitched roof store. Thus, the schemes are sufficiently different both in use and design to warrant individual assessment.

8. I therefore find that the proposed development would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. It would not comply with CS Policy CS14 nor Policies ENV22, ENV23, and RUD9 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (LP) insofar as they seek to ensure that the design of new development respects and enhances the character of the area it is within.

Living conditions

9. 9a Warwick Road (No 9a), is the attached property to the appeal dwelling. It's garden is compact and broadly square, similar in size to many of the other residential gardens in the area. No 9a's garden is enclosed by solid fencing, and directly to the rear is the 2 storey side elevation of the property behind. Therefore, the only open aspect from the rear of No 9a and its garden is to the sides above the fence.

10. The proximity of the outbuildings to the side boundary and their position partially between No 9a and the property at the bottom of No 9a's garden would mean that the proposal would significantly increase the bulk of built form immediately adjacent to the garden boundaries. This would have an enclosing effect on the rear garden. The consequences of which would be to introduce a further oppressive element within the already constrained outlook from the rear of No 9a and reduce it to a narrow, single sideways aspect.

11. The proposed development would therefore significantly harm the living conditions of the occupants of No 9a with specific regard to outlook. This would be contrary to LP Policy ENV22 insofar as it seeks to prevent harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Other Matters

12. The appeal site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and would constitute an extension or alteration of a building. Notwithstanding the identified harm the proposal would have on character and appearance, in isolation it would not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original outbuildings. Consequently, it would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt in accordance with Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council have not objected in this regard and there is nothing before me to contradict my findings on this.

13. The appeal site is also in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONBs are designated for the purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty and Section 85(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty upon me to have regard to these purposes in this decision. The Council again did not object to the appeal scheme in this regard and I agree that due to the surrounding built form and siting of the proposal, the special qualities of the AONB would not be adversely affected.

14. It is appreciated the proposed use of the extended outbuildings would be for the existing occupants of the appeal dwelling only, and the use of the existing buildings for such purposes is not considered by the appellant to require planning permission. Nevertheless, this does not overcome the harm identified in the main issues.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, the appeal scheme would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and there are no sufficiently weighted material considerations, including the Framework, that would indicate a decision otherwise. The appeal is, therefore, dismissed.

R J Redford

INSPECTOR