



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2023

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/T0355/D/23/3317564

Hazeldene, Ascot Road, Holyport, Maidenhead SL6 2HY

- 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 Ms Elenora Lovato against the decision of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council.
- The application Ref 22/02582, dated 5 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 3 February 2023.
- The development proposed is first floor upwards extension by raising the ridge of the front gable and revisions to rear dormer window roofs.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the **first-floor extension**.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the **dormer window roofs**, and planning permission is granted for alterations to the rear dormer window roofs at Hazeldene, Ascot Road, Holyport, Maidenhead SL6 2HY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/02582, dated 5 September 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The alterations to the dormer window roofs hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The alterations to the dormer window roofs hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 22/HARH/06 Rev A; 22/HARH/07 Rev A; 22/HARH/09.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the alterations to the dormer window roofs hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Preliminary Matters

3. For reasons of clarity, I have added raising the ridge of the front gable to the description of the development set out in the banner heading above, as this more accurately describes the proposal. For the same reason, I have also replaced the word 'side' with 'upwards' as the proposed first floor extension would be upwards of the existing property and not to the side of it.
4. The Council's Notice of Decision refers to a conflict with Policy QM3 of the Borough Local Plan (2022) (Local Plan). However, from the evidence before me, this appears to be an error. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of a conflict with Policy QP3. The appellant recognises this error in their

statement and therefore would not be prejudiced by me determining the appeal on this basis.

5. The proposal subject to this appeal has two main elements consisting of i) first floor upwards extension by raising the ridge of the front gable; and ii) revisions to rear dormer window roofs. These elements are clearly severable from one another. For the purpose of brevity and clarity the elements of the proposal will be referred to in my decision as follows i) first-floor extension; and ii) dormer window roofs.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:

- whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
- the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
- the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and whether it would preserve or enhance the Holyport Conservation Area; and
- on the basis that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to very special circumstances required to justify the development.

Reasons

Inappropriate Development

7. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 147 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
8. Policy QP5 of the Local Plan is consistent with the provisions of the Framework. It seeks to protect the Green Belt against inappropriate development and does not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances are demonstrated. The policy also recognises that certain forms of development are not considered inappropriate within the Green Belt, as defined in the Framework.
9. Paragraph 149 of the Framework establishes that the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
10. The appeal property has been previously extended and with the proposal its resulting volume would be 87.8% greater than the original dwelling. This would be a relatively large overall increase in volume.
11. The appellant has drawn my attention to an appeal decision in the Borough, Ref: APP/T0355/D/20/3266022, whereby the Inspector considered an extension to a property to not be disproportionate despite them resulting in a 79% increase in the floorspace of the original dwelling. However, the approved

scheme would appear to be different from the appeal proposal before me. The approved scheme was a two-storey side extension located towards the rear of a large two storey property, whereas the appeal proposal includes an upwards extension at the front of a fairly modest sized bungalow. As such, the approved scheme is not determinative and affords limited weight in my decision. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own planning merits.

12. The appeal property forms part of a group of four similar detached bungalows that are set back from the highway on generous plots. While it may be that each bungalow has been extended or altered slightly differently, they have similar characteristics and unifying features. Although most of the bungalows have rooms in the roof, they are all single storey in their form with pitched roofs and dormer windows. Also, all the front elevations include a gable end with a bay window, which provides uniformity and rhythm along this part of Ascot Road. I saw on site that there is another similar group of five bungalows further north on Ascot Road. This group of bungalows are separated from the appeal property and its neighbours by a group of bungalows with slightly different forms and features.
13. Although the proposed **first floor extension** may be considered relatively modest and would not project above the ridgeline of the existing pitched roof, it would add bulk to both the front and side of the property, filling in space around the property that is currently open. The additional bulk at the front of the appeal property would be readily visible from the street-scene and the bulk to the side would be visible when approaching the appeal property from the south along Ascot Road. The additional bulk, particularly when viewed on the side of the property, would not be subservient to the host dwelling and would make it appear top heavy and unbalanced. Furthermore, the proposed Dutch roof which would replace the gable end on the front elevation of the appeal property would appear as an incongruous feature in the row of similar bungalows. This would make the additional bulk even more noticeable.
14. For the reasons above, the proposed **first floor extension**, as well as resulting in a relatively large overall increase in the volume of the original building, would be visually disproportionate to the host dwelling. Accordingly, it would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and would not comply with paragraph 49c) of the Framework. It would therefore be an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt and would conflict with Policy QP5 of the Local Plan and the associated provisions of the Framework.
15. Notwithstanding the overall increase in volume, the proposed revisions to the rear **dormer window roofs** would be very modest in size. The windows are only visible from the rear garden of the appeal property and those of its neighbours. They would be seen against the existing roof profile and their resulting form would be similar to the rear dormer windows on the neighbouring bungalow, Corton. For these reasons the revisions would not be visually disproportionate and the proposed **dormer window roofs** would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Given they would not be inappropriate development, there is no need for me to consider their impact on openness.

Openness

16. The proposed **first floor extension** would unavoidably take up space that is currently open, which would result in some harm to the spatial openness of the Green Belt.
17. In terms of visual harm, as explained above, the additional bulk resulting from the proposed **first floor extension** would be noticeable in the street-scene and exacerbated by the change in the roof profile, which would be out of keeping with the neighbouring bungalows. This would result in harm to the visual openness of the Green Belt, albeit, given the fairly modest scale of the proposed **first floor extension**, this would be limited and localised.
18. For the reasons above, the proposed **first floor extension** would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt contrary to the fundamental aim of the Framework.

Character and Appearance

19. The appeal property is located within the Holyport Conservation Area (HCA). I have therefore approached this appeal in the context of Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (1990 Act), which requires special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the HCA.
20. The Holyport Conservation Area Appraisal (2016) (HCAA) explains that the aesthetic value of the HCA derives from a combination of the organic growth of the village, as well as the buildings, including many vernacular buildings, trees, green spaces, and water features.
21. Ascot Road is one of the main approaches into the HCA. The section of Ascot Road where the appeal property is located connects Moor Farm on the northern edge of the HCA with the Green, both of which are key historical features of the HCA and the evolution of the village. I saw on my visit that there are two distinct groups of similar buildings along this section of Ascot Road. These are the two-storey large, detached houses comprising Hearne Close and a row of fairly modest sized detached bungalows, which front Ascot Road.
22. The group of bungalows, which include the appeal property, are set back from the highway behind hedges and fences. Nonetheless, their frontages are relatively open and together with their low profiles, regular gaps between them, and glimpses of the open land on the other side of the highway through the roadside planting, this creates a sense of spaciousness. The roadside planting and soft boundary treatments also add greenery to the street scene. The significance of the HCA, in so far as it relates to this appeal, is the spacious and green character.
23. It may be that the appeal property in its current form could be considered unremarkable. However, its modest scale, set back and soft front boundary treatment add positively to the spacious and green character and thus the significance of the HCA.
24. While the form and features of the wider group of bungalows vary to a degree, their scale does not. Those with first floors have them set within the roof space served by velux and dormer windows. Given this, raising the ridge of the gable end to accommodate the proposed **first floor extension** would appear

incongruous, not only compared to the neighbouring bungalows but the whole group along this section of Ascot Road. It would be prominent in the street scene and would not be subservient to the host dwelling. The change in roof profile would exacerbate this. This would harm the character and appearance of the area and the significance of the HCA. While overall the harm to the HCA would be localised and limited, I note that the HCAA identifies roofscape as important to the character and appearance of the HCA, and for it to be vulnerable to inappropriate extensions.

25. As explained above, the proposed revisions to the rear **dormer window roofs** would be very modest and views of them would be limited. The Council in its Officer Report considers the pitched form of the proposed **dormer window roofs** to be an improvement on the current arrangement and, from my observations on site, I can find no reason to disagree. Accordingly, they would not harm the character and appearance of the area, nor would they harm the significance of the HCA.
26. For the reasons above, I would quantify the extent of harm to the significance of the HCA arising from the proposed **first floor extension** as being less than substantial. As such paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
27. I note that, with the exception of modest benefits arising from its construction, the benefits of the proposed **first floor extension** would be private, relating to an increase in accommodation. Given this, and that the Framework places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets, I find that there would be little public benefit to outweigh the identified harm despite it being limited.
28. Accordingly, I have found that the proposed alterations to the **dormer window roofs** would not harm the character and appearance of the area nor the significance of the HCA. Nonetheless, the proposed **first floor extension** would, and this harm would not be outweighed by public benefits. The proposed **first floor extension** would therefore conflict with Policy QP3 of the Local Plan, which seeks to ensure all new development contributes towards achieving sustainable high-quality design by, among other things, respecting and enhancing the local, natural or historic character of the environment. It would also conflict with Policy HE1 of the Local Plan, which seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Other Considerations

29. As noted above, the proposed **first floor extension** would result in modest economic and social benefits arising from the construction works and the improved space within the house.

Green Belt Balance

30. The Framework indicates that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
31. I have found that the proposed **first floor extension** would constitute an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt and would not preserve its openness. Paragraph 148 of the Framework states that any harm to the Green Belt should be given substantial weight.

32. In addition, I have identified other harm arising from the proposed **first floor extension** in the form of harm to the significance of the HCA which is not outweighed by public benefits. The Framework places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets and given my duty under Section 72(1) of the 1990 Act set out above, this matter carries significant weight.
33. On the other hand, the other considerations that I have identified are of modest weight in favour of the proposed **first floor extension**. Thus, they would not clearly outweigh the harm identified and, on account of this, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal have not been demonstrated.

Conditions

34. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have required the proposed alterations to the **dormer window roofs** to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans. This is in the interest of certainty. In order to protect the character and appearance of the existing bungalow, I have also imposed a condition requiring the external materials used in the alterations to match those existing.

Conclusion

Having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all other material considerations, I consider that the proposal is acceptable in part only. The appeal is therefore allowed insofar as it relates to the proposed alterations to the **dormer window roofs**. However, for the reasons given, and having had regard to all other relevant matters raised, the appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the proposed **first floor extension**.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR