



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 September 2024

by G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/T0355/D/24/3346958

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 Lavato against the decision of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
 - The application Ref 24/00274.
 - The development proposed is for the raising of secondary ridge and alterations to the existing three dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the raising of the ridge to the front projection.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the existing three dormer windows to the rear, and planning permission is granted for alterations to the dormer window roofs at Hazeldene Road, Holyport, Maidenhead, SL6 2HY, subject to the following conditions.
 - 1) The alterations to the three dormer windows hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The alterations to the three dormers shall be carried out with the following plans: 24/HARH/09, 24/HARH/08, 24/HARH/01, 24/HARH/02, 24/HARH/03, 24/HARH/04, 24/HARH/05 24/HARH/06 and 24/HARH/07.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the alterations to the three dormers hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Preliminary Matters

3. A different scheme for the same type of alterations was the subject of an appeal in 2023 (APP/T0355/D/23/3317564). This approved the alterations to the existing rear dormer windows but dismissed the extension to the front of the property. The proposed alterations to the roof of the dormers are the same as that previous scheme, which has consent, and therefore, my considerations focus on the element in dispute - the raising of the ridge to the front projection. For ease of reference, I will refer to this aspect as "the proposal".

Main Issues

4. 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

5. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes that development within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of the specified exceptions applies. Exception (c), as set out in paragraph 154 of the Framework, allows for the extension and alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
6. Policy QP5 of the Borough Local Plan 2013-2033 (Local Plan) reflects the approach in the Framework. The Council consider the proposal, in combination with previous development, would constitute disproportionate additions. The previous appeal decision also found that the first-floor front extension would be disproportionate.
7. A definition of “disproportionate” is not found in the Local Plan nor the Framework. However, I agree with the appellant, who has referred to a number of appeal decisions and judgements that it is not just a mathematical calculation of floor space or footprint.
8. The Council indicate that there would be a 103% increase in volume from the original building, yet the previous scheme, which was larger, was noted by the Inspector to equate to an 87.8% increase. The appellant advises that the revised design reduces the volume by 42m³, although reference is also made to a reduction of 42%.
9. Neither party has provided a full set of calculations, and notwithstanding the potential discrepancy with the figures, the increase in size from the original property as a result of additions would be large, and substantially over 50%. Whilst this revised design changes the roof shape and has lower eaves the reduction in scale is relatively modest. Visually the proposal would create a notable projection to the front elevation through the increased ridge height to the entire depth of the projection.
10. Having regard to the matters raised in the previous appeal decision the extension would still infill a space to the front that is currently open, and the extension would not be subservient. The design does have more regard for the form of the existing property, and the half hip cuts off the front corner, but this

feature is not significant in altering the visual massing and would also add to the lack of unity with the neighbouring properties.

11. The appellant has referred to other appeal decisions where large percentage increases have not been found to be disproportionate. The full details of those cases are not before me, although the decisions refer to “not dominating” and being “subservient”, and the officer’s report for the neighbouring property, Corton, refers to it creating a similar chalet-style bungalow to Hazeldene. Moreover, every proposal is different and is to be considered on its own merits.
12. The proposed addition may be modest compared to the size of the existing building, and there would be no increase to the footprint; nonetheless, due to its scale and location, it would be a prominent addition. The revisions from the previous scheme, nor the evidence before me, have led me to a different finding from that of the previous appeal.
13. The alterations to the front projection would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. For the reasons set out, I conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would be contrary to Policy QP5 of the Local Plan and the Framework. Paragraphs 152 and 153 of the Framework state that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and that substantial weight should be given to any such harm.

Openness

14. The increase in the ridge height would add bulk to the front projection, which would be noticeable in views along Ascot Road. This would have both a spatial and visual impact. The impact on the Green Belt would be limited and localised, nonetheless, there would be harm to the openness.

Character and Appearance

15. The appeal property is part of a small group of bungalows set back from Ascot Road of a similar scale and architectural style and which form part of the Holyport Conservation Area. The Holyport Conservation Area Appraisal (2016) describes Ascot Road (character area 4) as one of the main approaches to the conservation area and advises that away from the highway the area is characterised by significant open space and that the small scale of the houses fronting the highway limits their impact on the conservation area.
16. I concur with the previous Inspector’s description of the area and that the significance of the Holyport Conservation Area in the context of the appeal site is the spacious and green character. The modest scale and homogeneity of the bungalows play a part in this setting. Despite maintaining the eaves line and a consistent pitch, the increased ridge height and the extra bulk would disrupt this and create a conspicuous addition. In contrast to the existing single-storey gable end projections, the proposal would create an obvious first floor with the ridge effectively aligning with that of the rest of the property and a half hip to the front. This would both change the appearance of the property and would be out of keeping with the character of the area.
17. There are other styles of properties in the wider vicinity and the bungalows are not of any significant historic or architectural merit. Nonetheless, their limited scale contributes to the spaciousness of the area which is part of the significance of the Holyport Conservation Area.

18. The impact of the development would be localised, and the effect on the Conservation Area as a whole would be less than substantial. Nonetheless, in accordance with the Framework, great weight is to be given to the conservation of heritage assets irrespective of the level of harm, and there are no identified public benefits which would outweigh this harm. Whilst there would be some limited economic and social benefits, primarily, the extension of the property would be for the private benefits of the occupiers.
19. Thus, the proposal 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.

Green Belt Balance

20. In accordance with the Framework very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
21. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It would also cause some limited harm to openness. In accordance with paragraph 153 of the Framework, I place substantial negative weight on this harm. The proposal would also harm the character and appearance of the area, including that of the Conservation Area. Again, the Framework places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets, and this harm is also given significant weight.
22. The appellant's position is that the proposal is not inappropriate development, and they have not put forward any very special circumstances. Notwithstanding this, other considerations provide little support for the proposal beyond the occupier's requirements for additional space. Accordingly, these do not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm, and therefore, the 'very special circumstances' required to justify the proposal do not exist.

Other Matters

23. The dormer windows also form part of the development applied for. There is an extant consent, and there have been no other changes in circumstances, which lead me to find that element is not acceptable. Accordingly, as they have been included in the application and work has not commenced, I will split the decision to allow planning permission for the dormers. In line with the previous decision and statutory requirements, conditions are required in relation to the approved plans and external materials. As this will be a new permission, the time limit for commencement will be three years from this decision.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons set out and having regard to all other matters raised, the proposed development comprising the raising of the ridge to the front projection is dismissed. However, in so far as the appeal relates to the alterations to the three rear dormer windows it is allowed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR