

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 December 2024

by V Goldberg BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 January 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/24/3344809

4, Pixholme Court, Pixham Lane, Pixham, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1PG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Robert Sturges against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref is MO/2024/0259/PLAH.
 - The development proposed is described as 'provides conversion of lower ground floor, erection of extensions with materials to match the main house'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development plan against which the application was determined has changed, as Mole Valley District Council adopted a new local plan in October 2024. On this basis, and in the interest of clarity, the Council was asked to confirm the policies that they would wish the appeal to be determined against. The appellant was given the opportunity to comment on the policies and subsequently confirmed they had no comments. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the policies provided by the Council from the Mole Valley District Council Plan (2020-2039), adopted on the 15th October 2024.
3. On 12 December 2024, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Having reviewed the changes, I am satisfied that they do not affect the substantive matter of the appeal and that proceeding without further consultation with the main parties would not be prejudicial to their respective cases. The paragraph numbers referred to, have been updated to align with the updated Framework.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed roof extension on the existing dwelling and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Pixholme Court is a large detached two storey property that has been converted into six flats. The central section is recessed with a tiled hipped roof with a flat top, and has a lower height compared to the higher forward projecting wings on either side. There are rooflights in the roof, but the form of the original roof

remains unaltered. This positively contributes to the building retaining its original character and appearance.

6. Whilst small in relation to the overall building and simple in design, the proposed dormer, due to its height and position would appear disproportionately large, as it would extend significantly above the ridge of the central section of roof. The dormer would occupy a large area of the lower section of the roof and unacceptably disrupt its original form. The use of high-quality materials would not negate the harm arising from the position, form and height of the proposed dormer.
7. Despite its private setting, being set back from the road and enclosed by adjoining built form, the proposal would be visible from the parking area to the front of the building and the access lane. As a result, its incongruous nature would negatively affect the appearance of the building and the character and appearance of the area.
8. For the reasons identified above, I conclude that the proposed roof extension would have an unacceptable effect on the existing dwelling and the character and appearance of the area. The development is therefore contrary to Policy EN4 of the Mole Valley District Council Plan (2020-2039) insofar as it requires all new development to make a positive contribution to local character and be of an appropriate scale, height, massing proportion and form.

Other Matters

9. Reference is made to paragraph 154 of the Framework and the proposed development constituting limited infilling. In this context infill development is detailed as an exception in respect of proposals affecting the Green Belt. Given that the Council is satisfied that the proposal is not a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, further exceptions do not need to be considered.
10. There would be some very modest economic and social benefits associated with the proposed development in terms of employment during construction and meeting the needs of the appellant. However, these benefits do not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the building and area identified.
11. Major redevelopment across the road is about to commence, but this would not negatively affect Pixholme Court as it would neither alter the building nor be read in the same context as the appeal site.
12. The appellant refers to surrounding development along Pixham Lane being found acceptable. However, no examples are cited and therefore the planning circumstances or type of development referred to is unknown. In any event, there is no evidence before me of similar roof extensions to the appeal scheme to justify a planning permission.
13. Whilst the proposed development maintains residential amenity, the absence of harm in this respect is a neutral factor and does not weigh in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

14. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

V Goldberg

INSPECTOR