
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 April 2025

by **S Rawle BA (Hons) Dip TP Solicitor**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/24/3350462

Hawthorn End, Westcott Street, Westcott, Surrey RH4 3NY

- 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 Chris Lucas against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref is MO/2024/0740/PLAH.
 - The development proposed is to grub up the pool and erect a single storey side/rear link extension to The Studio.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted to grub up the pool and erect a single storey side/rear link extension to The Studio at Hawthorn End, Westcott Street, Westcott, Surrey RH4 3NY in accordance with the terms of the application Ref: MO/2024/0740/PLAH, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2023/390/03 and 2023/390/04.
 - 3) The external surfaces of the building shall be constructed of the materials specified on approved plan 2023/390/04.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies; and
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether or not inappropriate development

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to state that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

4. The Framework further establishes that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate subject to a number of exceptions including the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building which is defined in the glossary as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948, or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.
5. Policy EN1 of the Mole Valley Local Plan adopted in October 2024 (MVLP) is generally consistent with the Framework as it sets out that within the Green Belt inappropriate development will not be permitted unless very special circumstances are demonstrated which outweigh the potential harm and it sets out the same exception in relation to extensions and alterations of an existing building.
6. The explanatory text in support of the Policy sets out that in assessing whether an extension or alteration to an existing dwelling is disproportionate to the original building, an assessment will be made of the design, bulk and mass of the proposed alterations and their impact on the scale of the building, in addition to its impact on openness. It goes on to highlight that although the amount of additional floorspace is a factor, the assessment is predominantly a qualitative one which is unique to the design and massing of each individual building.
7. The proposal would involve an extension to link the existing bungalow with a separate building known as The Studio. I accept the appellant's detailed calculation of the floor area of the proposed development which would amount to 80.2m².
8. Based on the available evidence I understand that the original bungalow was constructed in 1968 and although The Studio has a more complicated planning history, of particular relevance is that it was given permission in 2000 to be used as a separate dwelling.
9. As a result, I consider it reasonable to assume that there are two original buildings, the existing bungalow and the separate building known as The Studio. Bearing in mind the particular circumstances involved, it is reasonable to determine this appeal on the basis that the proposal involves the extension of both the bungalow and The Studio.
10. It is common ground that the floor area of the original bungalow was about 141.7m² which has been extended by 17m². I accept the detailed figures prepared by the appellant in relation to The Studio which indicates that the original floor area was about 94.8m². This has been extended by a mezzanine of about 18m² and a front extension of about 9m². The Studio has also had a conservatory added, but this replaced about the same floor area of the original building and so this element has a neutral effect on the calculation of the original building prior to this proposal.
11. Consequently, the total floor area of the original buildings is 236.5m². They have had total extensions amounting to 44m² and the proposed development would have a floor area of 80.2m². Taking account of the demolition of the conservatory which has a floorspace of 16.2m², the totality of the increase over and above the original buildings would be about 46%.
12. The appellant accepts that the size of the proposed extension is at the upper limits of what can be considered to be proportionate. I agree. However, the explanatory text in support of the relevant Green Belt policy contained within the MVLP

provides helpful guidance in relation to whether an extension or alteration to an existing dwelling is disproportionate to the original building and as set out above highlights that although the amount of additional floorspace is a factor, the assessment is predominantly a qualitative one which is unique to the design and massing of each individual building.

13. In this case, the proposed design would ensure that the extension would be subservient to both buildings. It would have a very modest bulk and mass with the ridge height of the roof being set down from the ridge height of the roof of The Studio. Moreover, it would be discretely tucked away between the existing buildings and would replace an existing swimming pool and its patio/hardstanding surround. Consequently, the scale of the proposed extension would be compatible with the existing built form on the plot and overall, it would not have a harmful impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
14. I therefore conclude that taking account of the very particular circumstances of this case, I find that the proposed development would not amount to inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Consequently, the proposal would accord with Policy EN1 of the MVLP as the proposed extension would not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original buildings. The proposal would also accord with the Framework for the same reasons.

Character and appearance

15. Although the appeal site is located outside the settlement boundary of the village, it is within an established residential area comprising a mix of types of dwelling from different periods. The appeal site comprises a generous plot with both the existing bungalow and The Studio being set back at the front by a generous parking area. There is also a mature rear garden behind the bungalow. Consequently, overall there is a sense of spaciousness which makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
16. As outlined above, the proposed development would be discretely tucked away between two existing buildings and would represent a subservient addition to both buildings.
17. Moreover, the architectural design and proposed materials would be compatible with the host buildings. The proposed extension would have a very modest bulk and mass with the ridge height of the roof being set down from the ridge height of the roof of The Studio. Although where the proposed roof connects to The Studio would be somewhat awkward, it would not be so discordant or jarring as to unacceptably harm the existing character and appearance of the area.
18. Further, the proposed extension would not be closer to the appeal site boundary than the existing buildings and it would also discretely fill the gap between the two existing buildings. In addition, plenty of space would remain both to the front of the two buildings and to the rear of the existing bungalow. Consequently, the existing spacious appearance of the appeal site would not be unacceptably diminished and the proposal would not represent an overdevelopment of the appeal site and the proposed extension would not appear cramped on the plot.
19. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the proposal would accord with Policy EN4 of the MVLP which among other things seeks to ensure that all new

development is of a high-quality design that respects, contributes to and enhances the local environment and character.

Conditions

20. For the avoidance of doubt, I shall impose a condition to ensure the development is constructed in accordance with the approved plans. Moreover, in the interests of good planning and to protect the character and appearance of the area I shall impose a condition to ensure that the materials used match those specified by the appellant on the submitted plans.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

S Rawle

INSPECTOR