



---

## 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: 29 APRIL 2025

---

**Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/24/3351937**

**The Old Riding School, Beatrice Webb House, Pasture Wood Road, Abinger, Surrey RH5 6LQ**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Callanan against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
  - The application Ref is MO/2024/0754/PLA.
  - The development proposed is the conversion of former riding school, stables and staff accommodation to one dwelling with associated extensions and alterations including; two storey rear extension with balcony; single storey side/rear extension; single storey front extension; the insertion of new windows, doors and rooflights and landscape works.
- 

### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of former riding school, stables and staff accommodation to one dwelling with associated extensions and alterations including; two storey rear extension with balcony; single storey side/rear extension; single storey front extension; the insertion of new windows, doors and rooflights and landscape works at The Old Riding School, Beatrice Webb House, Pasture Wood Road, Abinger, Surrey RH5 6LQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref MO/2024/0754/PLA, subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
  - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing Nos: ORSH/PAD1.1, ORSH/PAD1.2, ORSH/PAD1.3, ORSH/PAD1.4, ORSH/PAD1.5, ORSH/PAD1.6, ORSH/PAD1.7, ORSH/PAD1.8, ORSH/PAD1.9, ORSH/PAD1.11A, ORSH/PAD1.12, ORSH/PAD1.13, ORSH/PAD1.14, ORSH/PAD1.15, ORS003 dated 12/04/2024 and ORS003 dated 31/04/2024.
  - 3) No development above ground level shall take place until details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
  - 4) No development shall take place until a Construction and Environment Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Statement shall provide for:
    - i. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
    - ii. measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;

- iii. a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;
- iv. delivery and construction working hours;
- v. a map showing the location of all ecological features;
- vi. a risk assessment of the potentially damaging construction activities on the ecological features;
- vii. practical measures to avoid and reduce ecological and noise/visual/vibrational impacts during construction;
- viii. location and timing of works to avoid harm to biodiversity features including nesting/breeding seasons;
- ix. measures to protect trees in accordance with the requirements of the arboricultural method statement as provided for in Condition 7;
- x. a reptile precautionary method of working;
- xi. responsible persons and lines of communication;
- xii. use of protected fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved Construction and Environment Method Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period for the development.

- 5) No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall be based on the enhancement recommendations set out within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by Darwin Ecology in January 2024. The Plan shall provide for:

- i. A description and evaluation of the features to be provided;
- ii. a location plan of all ecological enhancement features to be provided;
- iii. ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence the management approach;
- iv. proposed management actions and approach;
- v. ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Ecological Enhancement Plan.

- 6) No development shall take place until a Sensitive Lighting Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan.
- 7) The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the Arboricultural Method Statement prepared by Challice Consulting Limited on 12 April 2024.
- 8) Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted the Remediation Method Statement prepared by Albury S.I Ltd in July 2024 (reference 24/12850/B/GO) shall be implemented and a verification report to confirm that the work detailed in Sections 2 and 3 of the Statement has been satisfactorily carried out shall be submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. There shall be a minimum of three on-site verification visits undertaken and all verification work shall be carried out by a suitably qualified site investigation consultant. If any additional remediation work is identified as being necessary during the verification process it shall be undertaken,

documented and submitted as part of the verification report to be approved in writing by the local planning authority.

- 9) No development above ground level shall take place until details of a scheme to demonstrate that the development is zero-carbon ready has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted. In the event that Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) technology is proposed as part of the scheme full details including the specification and maintenance of the ASHP system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

### **Preliminary Matters**

2. At the site visit I observed that works to convert the former riding school have already commenced. This has been undertaken in accordance with a planning permission that was granted in 2021<sup>1</sup> (2021 permission). At the time the original application subject of this appeal was rejected the Council were of the view that the 2021 permission had expired. However, a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development was issued by the Council in 2024<sup>2</sup> which confirmed that the 2021 permission had lawfully commenced. As the works in relation to the 2021 permission have not been completed and are on-going, I have determined this appeal on the basis that it is a separate proposal for the conversion of the riding stables as set out on the application form. That is consistent with the approach of the main parties.
3. I am also aware that a subsequent planning permission has been granted in 2024<sup>3</sup> (the 2024 permission) which allowed for some relatively small extensions, some reconfiguration and additional cladding in comparison to the 2021 permission. I have taken account of the planning history of the appeal site in the determination of the appeal.
4. At the time the application was refused by the Council they did not consider that the appellant had provided a satisfactory preliminary ground level bat roost assessment (the bat roost assessment). Although the appellant did submit a bat roost assessment before determination, they accept that it did not give the Council enough time to consult relevant parties on this information.
5. Given that the assessment was submitted prior to determination and that as a subsequent application included a preliminary ground level bat roost assessment which was subject to appropriate consultation, I am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by me taking account of the bat roost assessment in the determination of the appeal.

### **Main Issues**

6. 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;

---

<sup>1</sup> MO/2021/0973

<sup>2</sup> MO/2024/1831

<sup>3</sup> MO/2024/1690

- The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
- Whether or not sufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposal would not harm any protected species.

## Reasons

### *Whether or not inappropriate development*

7. 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.
8. The Framework further establishes that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate subject to a number of exceptions including an extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building (paragraph 154 c) and the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, including a material change of use to residential, whether redundant or in continued use which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt (paragraph 154 g). For the purposes of paragraph 154 c) of the Framework, the original building 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.
9. 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 exceptions in relation to extensions and alterations of an existing building and the redevelopment of previously developed land.
10. 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.
11. As outlined above, I have determined this appeal on the basis that it is a separate proposal for the conversion of the riding stables as set out on the application form. On that basis the original building is the riding school as constructed. The Council accept that as the original riding school building had a volume of 5340m<sup>3</sup> compared to the volume of the proposed development of 3225m<sup>3</sup>, in numerical terms the proposal would not represent a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and would comply with Paragraph 154 c) of the Framework.
12. However, the Council go on to highlight that it is also necessary to consider what disproportionate means in a visual sense. On that basis, they consider that although the proposal would have less two storey elements and the volume of the single storey elements would be less than the original, these elements would not

satisfactorily relate to the visible building and would appear as disproportionate additions by reason of their discordant appearance.

13. The explanatory text in support of Policy EN1 of MVLP provides helpful guidance in relation to whether an extension or alteration to a building 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.
14. In this case, the proposed design would be of a high quality. There would be extensions at both ground floor and first floor to the west of the existing main building on the appeal site. However, these would be contained within the existing wall of the sand school which was previously covered by a roof. Given that the proposal would incorporate an extensive area of lawn within a walled garden on the remainder of the former sand school a sense of significant openness would be achieved particularly in comparison to the original building.
15. Moreover, an area that was previously used as a carport and is currently used as a parking area would be used as a garage. This would be a modest structure which would be set down from the main building to ensure that it appears as a subservient addition. Further, the proposed use of green roof would ensure that the proposed garage would sit comfortably on the plot.
16. To the north, outside of the existing sand school the proposal would introduce a gym, bar and pump room that would partly utilise an area currently used by an existing water tank. These elements would be incorporated into the slope and would neatly sit behind the northern elevation of the proposed extension. As a result, this element would have very little visual presence and although glazing would be introduced into the southern elevation of this extension, this would look into the proposed walled garden and would not have a significant visual presence from any public vantage points.
17. Overall, bearing in mind the significant reduction in the volume of the proposed development in comparison to the original building and the sensitive high quality architectural design, the scale and massing of the proposed development would be entirely 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.
18. As a result, I find that the proposed development would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Consequently, the proposal does not represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
19. Having reached that view, it is not strictly necessary to consider in detail the other exemption under paragraph 154 of the Framework. However, I will do so briefly. Paragraph 154 g) deals with the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land. It is common ground between the main parties that the appeal site meets the definition of previously developed land. Given my finding that the proposal would not have a harmful impact on the openness of the Green Belt, it also follows that I am satisfied that the proposed development would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Consequently, the proposal would also not represent inappropriate development under the exception set out in paragraph 154 g).

20. I therefore conclude 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 and with the Framework for the reasons I have set out above.

#### *Character and appearance*

21. The appeal site is located within the Surrey Hills National Landscape (SHNL) and has a rural countryside setting. The existing building is constructed of brick with a barrel-vaulted roof. The Council accept that the two-storey/single storey rear extension would harmonise with the proposed dwelling and the building would retain its shape with the proposed extensions being enclosed within the existing sand school walls. As a result, they consider this element would be appropriate in scale, siting and appearance. Similarly, they consider that the garage would be set within the existing bank which would reduce its visual impact and together with the proposed green roof consider that this element would also not harm the character and appearance of the area. They also do not have any concerns that the proposal would fail to conserve the SHNL. I agree with that analysis.
22. However, they consider that the proposed extensions to the north that are built into the bank outside the existing sand school walls would be excessive in scale which would represent an overdevelopment of the appeal site. I do not agree. This part of the proposed development would be set within the existing bank and would replace an existing large water tank. Due to its siting and modest height it would not appear as a discordant feature, but rather would sit comfortably in this sensitive location. Moreover, as outlined above, this element of the proposal would have very little visual presence and although glazing would be introduced into the southern elevation of this extension, this would look into the proposed walled garden and would not have a significant visual presence from any public vantage points.
23. 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.

#### *Protected species*

24. I have taken account of the bat roost assessment and am satisfied that no potential roosting features were identified. Consequently, no bat roosts would be unacceptably impacted by the proposed development. That said, I accept that bats are highly mobile and move roosts sites frequently and unidentified bat roosts may still be present. Consequently, it is reasonable to take a pre-cautionary approach to ensure that bat roosting opportunities are integrated into the proposed development as recommended by the appellant's ecologist and I am satisfied that this could be secured through a suitably worded condition.
25. I therefore conclude that sufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposal would not unacceptably harm any protected species. Consequently, the proposal would accord with Policy EN9 of the MVLP which among other things seeks to ensure that development proposals retain, protect and enhance significant habitats and species.

## Conditions

26. I have had regard to the conditions suggested by the Council, and the comments from the appellant on them and have amended them as necessary in the interests of precision and clarity, as well as to comply with advice in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). It is necessary to impose pre-commencement conditions, and the appellant has confirmed that they agree to such conditions.
27. A condition is needed to secure compliance with the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. For the avoidance of doubt, I have also included plans that show the proposed street scene and section plans in the list of approved plans. However, I do not think that this condition should be expanded to include other documents and so where necessary I will impose separate conditions to deal with matters covered by relevant technical assessments and other documents submitted in support of the proposal.
28. In the interests of the character and appearance of the area it is necessary to impose a condition to ensure that the proposed dwelling is constructed of appropriate materials. Given the sensitive location of the appeal site, the limited width of the access road and in the interests of biodiversity, it is necessary to impose a condition requiring the submission, approval and implementation of a construction and environmental management plan. I do not agree with the appellant that the condition should only deal with ecological matters.
29. In the interests of ecology and biodiversity, it is necessary to impose a condition to ensure that an ecological enhancement plan is submitted, approved and implemented and that appropriate sensitive lighting is provided. Given that I am satisfied that an appropriate bat roost assessment has already been undertaken, it is not necessary to impose a condition requiring such an assessment. Moreover, the requirement for bat roosting opportunities to be integrated into the proposed development can be secured as part of the ecological enhancement plan.
30. In the interests of the character and appearance of the area it is necessary to impose a condition to ensure that the proposed development protects relevant arboricultural features. To ensure that any contamination associated with the appeal site is appropriately identified and treated a condition is necessary. Finally in the interests of meeting the challenge of climate change it is necessary to impose an appropriate condition.

## Conclusion

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

*S Rawle*

INSPECTOR