



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 April 2025

by V Goldberg BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/24/3354024

Keepers Cottage, Ranmore Common Road, Ranmore Common, Surrey RH5 6AZ

- 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 Jenifer Jenkins against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref is MO/2024/0211/PLA.
 - The development proposed is the proposed conversion of existing garage into 2-bed dwelling, along with single storey side/rear extension. Demolition of annex building adjoined to main dwelling known as 'stable cottage' a lawful dwelling. Relocate access to stable block.
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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 relied on and I have taken into account the representations received. 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) (MVDCP), adopted on the 15th October 2024.
3. Whilst the Surrey Hills National Landscape (SHNL) is not referred to in the reasons for refusal, reason four of the decision notice refers to the natural beauty of the landscape and the parties agree that the site is located within the SHNL. In addition, Policy EN8 relied on by the Council refers to the SHNL, therefore, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the site being within it.
4. 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 matters of the appeal and that proceeding without further consultation with the main parties would not be prejudicial to their respective cases.

Main Issues

5. The appeal site is within the Green Belt, so the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to any relevant development plan policies and the Framework;
 - 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 the Surrey Hills National Landscape;
- the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of future occupants, with particular reference to the proximity of the new access to the stables and the parking area for Keepers Cottage; and,
- whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

6. The site is located within the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 of the Framework sets out that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless exceptions apply. One of these exceptions is the extension or alteration of a building, provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Policy EN1 of the MVDGP aligns with the Framework and specifies that extensions and alterations to an existing building should not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
7. The existing garage has an approximate footprint of 50m². The proposal would add an additional 37m² which would represent a 74% increase in floor area. This would be a substantial addition to the garage which would significantly increase its bulk and mass by extending its width and depth. It would therefore be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original garage.
8. The appellant has considered the extension as an addition to the annex and garage, but the proposal extends the garage and not the annex. The proposal would result in the demolition of the annex; therefore, the proposed addition cannot be an extension to it.
9. For the reasons above, the proposal does not fall within the exceptions to inappropriate development listed in Policy EN1 of the MVDGP or the Framework, and it would therefore comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness

10. Openness is identified in the Framework as one of the Green Belt's essential characteristics. It has both spatial and visual aspects. The spatial impact of the proposal would be limited. This is because when taking into account the proposed demolition of the annex, there would be an overall increase in the footprint of the built form on site of less than 10%. In addition, the 0.3m increase in height would not be a significant increase in volume.
11. The visual impact of the proposed development would be more significant. This is because despite the proposal creating a larger separation gap between the proposed dwelling and Keepers Cottage, it would extend further backwards and erode the gap between the stable block and rear building line of the main dwelling

and garage. This would be particularly noticeable when approaching the site along Ranmore Common Road as you head towards Chapel Lane.

12. Whilst the increase in hardstanding would be limited due to the existing track being removed, the proposed parking area would introduce development where there currently is none. Therefore, the visual impact arising from the extended garage in combination with the proposed parking area would adversely impact the visual openness of the Green Belt, resulting in moderate harm to the Green Belt.

Character and Appearance

13. The appeal site is located on Ranmore Common Road, a rural lane, located in the Surrey Hills National Landscape. It is an area within a wider site boundary, with the wider site having a menage, horse walker and significant areas of grazing land. Keepers Cottage which is located within the application site is in an isolated rural location and along with its associated buildings (garage, annex and stables) it has the appearance of an equestrian site in keeping with the rural character of the area.
14. The garage is located significantly behind the front building line of Keepers Cottage and close to the stable block and main dwelling. As such it is read as part of Keepers Cottage due to its subservient position and scale within the site. The proposal would transform the subservient form of the garage into a sizeable two bedroom detached dwelling. Given its proximity to the main dwelling and stable block, the proposed dwelling would sit uncomfortably as a primary dwelling within a cluster of buildings that relate to the wider equestrian site. The awkward nature of this arrangement is emphasised by the proposed dwelling adjoining the revised access to the stables serving Keepers Cottage. Consequently, the layout would appear contrived.
15. Despite the proposal creating a gap between the proposed dwelling and Keepers Cottage, the alteration and conversion of the garage to a separate dwelling would dilute the rural equestrian appearance of the site. This is because the proposed boundary wall would subdivide the plot and the increased size and residential appearance of the garage, and its associated driveway would unacceptably urbanise the appeal site.
16. Whilst there would be a good separation distance between dwellings, each plot would be adequate in size and have its own access, this section of Ranmore Common Road is not characterised by groups of residential properties. As a result, the addition of a new dwelling close to Keepers Cottage would negatively affect the rural character of this part of the road.
17. Whilst the proposed dwelling would utilise an existing access, this access serves the stables and would be used less frequently than an access to a primary dwelling. This is equally true of the parking area to the side of the garage, as the main access to Keepers Cottage is separate. In contrast, the proposal would convert the existing track that has an agricultural appearance, into a formalised access and parking area. This would both urbanise and increase the intensity of use on the site, with the urbanisation resulting from the formation of the revised access to the stables and the parking areas for both properties.

18. The appellant considers that the view of the appeal site from Ranmore Common Road would not be significantly different in terms of the layout and additional built form, however, I do not agree. When traveling along Ranmore Common Road towards Chapel Lane, the low level hedging and wire fencing running along the road allows views across the site and to the open land to the rear. From this viewpoint and directly in front of the application site, the increased scale of the garage, formalised parking area and associated hard surfacing and private garden area would all be visible and would fail to maintain the rural appearance of the site.
19. Whilst the Surrey Hill AONB officer did not object to the application based on the proposed additional building mass, reference was made to the alterations being clear to see from the road. The officer did not comment on the altered layout of the site which I consider fails to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty in the SHNL for the reasons set out above.
20. Reference is made to the imposition of planning conditions to prevent future domestication of the site i.e. outbuildings or extensions. However, such conditions would not address the harm identified.
21. For the above reasons, the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area and the SHNP. It would therefore be contrary to policies EN4 and EN8 of the MVDGP. These policies amongst other things seek development to complement the character of an area and conserve and enhance and limit the scale of development within the SHNL. It would also be contrary to para 189 of the Framework which sets out that great weight is to be afforded to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks.

Living Conditions of future occupants

22. The proposed dwelling would sit behind the reallocated drive area for Keepers Cottage and adjacent to the new access to the stable block. There are no windows on the proposed dwelling that would either face the parking area or access to the stable block.
23. The proposed dwelling would adjoin the new stable block access. Given that these are the private stables of the appellant, it is likely that vehicle movements to and from them would be limited. Therefore, due to limited vehicle movements and there being no windows facing the access, future occupants of the proposed dwelling would not be adversely affected by the use of the stable access.
24. Whilst the reallocated drive for Keepers Cottage would be in front of the proposed dwelling, the only window serving this elevation would face the grass bank rather than the parking area. As such the outlook for future occupants of the proposed dwelling would not be negatively affected by the reallocated drive. In addition, it is unlikely that the proposed dwelling would be negatively affected by noise and disturbance arising from the use of the driveway, as it would only serve Keepers Cottage and therefore vehicle movements would be limited.
25. For the reasons above, the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on the living conditions of future occupants, with particular reference to the proximity of the new access to the stables and the parking area for Keepers Cottage. It would therefore be compliant with Policy EN4 of the MVDGP insofar as

it seeks to ensure that the amenity of future occupiers is not significantly affected by a proposal.

Other Matters

26. Whilst there have been no objections to the scheme from consultees or local residents this would not imply that the proposal complies with the development plan or the Framework.
27. Reference is made to a previously refused application on the site¹ and revisions that have been made to the scheme to address the previous reasons for refusal. Whilst amendments to the scheme have been made, these do not overcome the harm identified.

Planning Balance

28. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and it would cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, I give substantial weight to the harm which would be caused to the Green Belt and its openness.
29. The proposal also results in harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the SHNL which I give great weight. Whilst the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupants, this would not outweigh the harm identified.
30. For the reasons set out above, the harm to the Green Belt would not be clearly outweighed by the other considerations and, therefore, the very special circumstances required to justify a grant of planning permission have not been demonstrated.

Conclusion

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

V Goldberg

INSPECTOR

¹ MO/2022/1907