



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2025

by **N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/25/3367107

Yew Tree Cottage, Reigate Road, Buckland, Surrey RH3 7BG

- 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 L Jepson against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref is MO/2025/0313/PLAH.
 - The development proposed is described as a two-storey linked detached building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”) and relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the appeal proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the appeal proposal on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling; 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 appeal proposal.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development

3. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. Paragraph 154 of the Framework explains that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the listed exceptions apply. Relevant to this appeal is exception 154(c), namely 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.
4. Policy EN1 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2024 (“the LP”) is also consistent with the Framework and paragraph 6.4 of the LP, outlines criteria for assessing whether an extension to an existing dwelling would be disproportionate to the original building. This supporting text provides a reasonable basis upon which to assess whether an extension would be disproportionate.

5. There is no evidence before me to suggest the conservatory is part of the original building. The Council says that the proposed development would result in a 51% increase over the original building and the Appellant states a similar figure at 50%. Even if I take the lower figure, this is a significant increase; however, the assessment goes beyond a mathematical exercise and the change in scale, volume and built form over and above the original building also needs consideration.
6. The proposed extension would provide a two-storey extension to the side of the original building. The extension would be of generous width, and it would be deeper than the original building sitting forward of its building line. It would incorporate a barn hip roof with a dormer window which would extend across one of the roof elevations. Taking all these factors together, the increased width, height, and depth would significantly add to the scale, volume and built form. Therefore, and based on my observations with the evidence before me, the proposed extension would disproportionately increase the volume, floorspace, mass and bulk of the building over and above the size of the original building.
7. In conclusion, the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development which is harmful to the Green Belt as it would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. Any harm to the Green Belt carries substantial weight and it would therefore conflict with LP Policy EN1, as well as the Framework.

Openness

8. Paragraph 142 of the Framework states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
9. Openness has both a spatial dimension and a visual aspect. There is no formal definition of openness but, in the context of the Green Belt, it is generally held to refer to an absence of development. The proposed development would be larger than the conservatory it would replace, and it would introduce additional built form to the site which would be wider, deeper and taller. It would also have a bulky roof design by reason of the barn hip roof and dormer window. This would result in a loss of spatial openness.
10. I appreciate that landscaping, boundary treatments, and the location of the development would mitigate some visual impacts regarding openness both in the short and longer range views. However, taken together the spatial and visual impacts of the proposal would nonetheless result in a moderate reduction in openness. Tying all these factors together, the proposal would result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt in conflict with both LP Policy EN1, as well as the Framework.

Character and Appearance

11. The immediate area is rural in character with sporadic development. The appeal site sits within a spacious plot and the appeal dwelling is a detached two-storey locally listed cottage dating from the 17th Century. The significance of the building stems from its traditional vernacular as a cottage. Key features include its architectural form, choice of materials, roof design and window arrangement.

12. To the side of the two-storey elements of the dwelling is an existing 19th Century single storey section and the floorplans show this as a study. These existing elements are constructed primarily of brick and stone sitting under a plain tile roof. A more modern single storey conservatory extends from the single storey study.
13. It is proposed to remove the existing conservatory and erect a link detached extension. The extension would be over two floors with the first floor in the roof space. The proposed development would be finished in timber weatherboarding under a tile roof. The roof would feature barn hips, and one roof elevation would also incorporate a crown roof dormer window.
14. The Council's Design Guidance for House Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance Document ("the SPG") states that the size of extensions should not be excessive in relation to the existing house. The SPG explains that extensions should harmonise with the overall shape and proportions of the original house.
15. The proposed development would be considerable in footprint and scale. It would be deeper than the main dwelling projecting forward of the building line and its side projection from the host building would also be significant. I appreciate the host building has existing rear dormer windows, however, the proposed dormer window to the side also introduces substantial bulk at the first floor. Even when taking the removal of the conservatory into account, given the width, depth, height, scale and bulk of the proposed extension, these factors in combination would not respond to the shape and proportions of the host building.
16. The proposed development, however, is not without merit; it would be experienced as a separate phase of the building's history but still joined to the 19th century section of the building with a narrow link. This is important as any impact on the historic phases of the building would be limited. I also find the proposed materials would be appropriate. All these factors would allow the original building to be understood as a historic cottage. However, they do not outweigh the overall harm I have identified in respect of this main issue.
17. Therefore, the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling would be unacceptable and this harm carries substantial weight. The proposed development would conflict with the relevant provisions of Policy EN4 of the LP. This, amongst other things, looks to promote attractive, high-quality design which would be of an appropriate scale, height, massing, proportion, and form.

Other Considerations

18. The Appellant highlights their need for more space particularly the need to work from home and their growing family including children who share a room. I also note that the limitations in the kitchen with a need to modernise the host dwelling and a backdrop of high house prices. I have no doubt that these limitations affect the Appellant and their family.
19. However, it has not been robustly shown that the restorations and improvements could only be achieved through the proposed development or that the extension would be the minimum necessary to achieve these personal benefits.
20. Even if it was, planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, Planning Practice Guidance sets out that planning permission usually runs with the land,

and it is rarely appropriate to provide otherwise. There may be exceptional occasions where development that would not normally be permitted may be justified on planning grounds because of who would benefit from the permission¹. However, personal circumstances rarely outweigh broader planning considerations. As a matter of fact, and degree, I do not consider these personal circumstances amount to an exceptional occasion. They therefore carry limited weight.

21. I also appreciate there is significant space around the dwelling and other buildings in the local area may be larger than the appeal property. Nonetheless, as set out above I am required to test the proposal in respect of the increase in size over the original building, the impact on openness, and the effect on the character and appearance of the host building. The size of the plot or other buildings in the locality carries limited weight in favour of the appeal proposal.
22. I note the neighbouring sites have been developed and the Appellant brings my attention to these². However, I do not have the details before me as to what policy and circumstances were at play, how the Council considered these, and if they directly compare to the appeal proposal before me. These considerations therefore carry limited weight.
23. The absence of harm to living conditions of neighbours, the historic sections of the building, or biodiversity are neutral considerations which neither weigh for or against the development proposal.

Balance and Conclusion

24. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that when considering any planning application, substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
25. I have concluded that the appeal scheme constitutes inappropriate development and would, therefore, be harmful to the Green Belt. I have also found harm to the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the host building. These matters in combination carry substantial weight.
26. The other considerations are of limited weight in favour of the appeal proposal. Consequently, these considerations do not clearly outweigh the substantial weight to be given to the identified harm, either individually or collectively, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the appeal proposal.
27. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole and for this reason the appeal should be dismissed. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be made contrary to this conclusion.

N Praine INSPECTOR

¹ Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 21a-015-20140306

² the Pheasant Pub and Little Everest