



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2026

by **S Simms BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 FEBRUARY 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/25/3375055

Okebrook, Ockley Road, Forest Green, Surrey, RH5 5SQ

- 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 and Mrs P Walker-Duncalf against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application reference is MO/2025/0976/D2.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a single-storey detached ancillary residential annex following demolition of existing residential outbuildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site address and description of development on the decision notice differ from those on the application form, but I have no evidence of the appellant's agreement to these changes. I have therefore used those on the application form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - protected species, in particular bats.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The site is a rectangular parcel of land close to the top of a stream bank within the grounds of a house. It contains a detached timber double garage with dual-pitched grey felt tiled roof, a shed and hardstanding adjacent to a branch of a driveway leading from Ockley Road. The garage is sited some way from the house.
5. A public footpath runs along the driveway, past the garage and over the stream. Both driveway and stream are lined with mature trees. The site is located within the countryside and an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), but is outside the Surrey Hills National Landscape, which is north of Ockley Road. Forest Green Conservation Area lies outside the grounds to the north and contains the nearest other buildings, which front Ockley Road and back on to the grounds.
6. The proposal would replace the garage and shed with a residential annexe in the same location, but on a slightly larger footprint and to a similar height, albeit with

higher subsidiary ridges and a chimney. The building would be timber clad atop a brick plinth with metal-framed windows and clay instead of felt tiles. The elevation currently containing garage doors would be blank and that facing the stream would have French doors instead of windows.

7. The effect would be to create a somewhat more substantial building that would appear less subsidiary due to the loss of the garage doors and introduction of a chimney and French doors. These features would suggest occupation rather than the less frequent use of a simpler outbuilding used for storage.
8. In practice, this more regular use would effect a change in character, with more frequent comings-and-goings and parked cars. Despite the size of the annexe relative to the house and its location on the driveway to it, this would nonetheless be noticeable within the otherwise open and spacious grounds.
9. Furthermore, as the proposal includes no alternative provision for the storage of vehicles or garden equipment, it could both displace and create a need for further outbuildings. As the extent of the curtilage is unclear, I cannot be sure that these would not be erected in locations more harmful to local character.
10. I have a duty to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape and this includes its setting. Whilst the size and scale of the proposal would have similar effect on it and the AGLV, more locally its use and domestic features would effect a harmful change in character.
11. I note that the Council is concerned that the annexe would be some way from the house, have all the facilities for independent living and may be used as a dwelling. However, no proposal for a dwelling is before me. Whilst described as 'ancillary', I am satisfied the proposal could be used as part of the house.
12. Whilst the Council's Design Guidance for House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2025) seeks to avoid the creation of separate dwellings, it does so to control effects on character and appearance. Whilst no dwelling is proposed, the proposal would nonetheless harm character and appearance, contrary to Policy EN4 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (2020-2039).

Effect on protected species

13. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the Regulations') impose a duty on me to consider whether a European Protected Species would be affected by the development and whether associated mitigation measures would be effective. Bats are such a European Protected Species.
14. An updated Preliminary Roost Assessment of the garage and shed undertaken on 15 October 2025 found negligible potential to support roosting bats.
15. The ecologist advised that no further surveys were necessary, but recommended development only take place in accordance with a reasonable avoidance method statement (RAMS) and ecological enhancements outlined in an earlier report, and that demolition should only occur outside of the bird nesting season.
16. Whilst a condition prohibiting demolition works during the bird nesting season would meet the tests in the Planning Practice Guidance¹, I have no copy of the

¹ Reference ID: 21a-003-20190723

earlier report and so cannot be sure that a condition requiring compliance with the RAMS and implementation of the ecological enhancements would.

17. Consequently, I cannot be sure that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on bats, contrary to the Regulations and Policy EN9 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (2020-2039). This policy requires an assessment of the impact of proposals on biodiversity and include measures to retain, protect and enhance significant species.

Other Matters

18. The appellant states that the Certificate of Lawfulness for the conversion of the garage, but not the shed, into a residential annexe associated with the primary residential use of the main house constitutes a fall-back. However, this would result in less floorspace, so is unlikely to be implemented as an alternative. As it would also provide storage, it would be potentially less harmful than the appeal proposal and so I attach only modest weight to this consideration.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

S Simms

INSPECTOR