



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 December 2016

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 17 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/16/3161570

The Barn, Applegarth Farm, Logmore Lane, Westcott, Dorking RH4 3JN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Jodie Shann against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application, Ref. MO/2016/1247/PLAH, dated 25 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 5 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is a 2 storey side extension together with passing bay and parking spaces layout details.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a 2 storey side extension together with passing bay and parking spaces layout details at The Barn, Applegarth Farm, Logmore Lane, Westcott, Dorking in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. MO/2016/1247/PLAH, dated 5 October 2016, 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 shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Nos. 9755.1.A; 000; 003 Rev. 04;
 - 3) Prior to commencement of the development hereby approved, details and samples of the external materials to be used shall be submitted in writing for the approval of the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the Framework') and any relevant development plan policies; (ii) the effect on the openness of the Green Belt, and (iii) the effect on the character and appearance of countryside that lies within the designated Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

3. On the first issue, the Notice of Refusal cites a conflict with Policy CS1 of the Mole Valley Core Strategy 2009. The policy is a spatial strategy that in the context of this proposal refers to the former PPG2: 'Green Belts', now superseded with its main provisions included within Section 9 of the Framework.
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Policy CS1 is not of direct relevance to the proposal and indeed is not referred to in the analysis in the Planning Officer's report, which refers more helpfully to saved Policy RUD7 (Extensions to dwellings in the countryside) of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2000. This policy seeks to preclude disproportionate additions over and above the size of original dwellings in the countryside and is thereby consistent with Paragraph 89 of the Framework.

4. There is no reference to the appropriate amount of floorspace for extensions in the supporting text to Policy RUD7, but the officer's report advises that 30-50% is a guideline figure and calculates that in this case the proposal amounts to 56%. However, as the appellant's architect has pointed out, part of this figure is derived by some of the eaves space of the existing building becoming useable floorspace as a result of the extension. Together with the total floor area being only a small percentage above the guideline figure, this suggests that a conclusion that the extension would be 'disproportionate' on a quantitative basis alone is unconvincing.
5. This appears to be recognised by the Council to some extent, as the officer's report proceeds to argue that the extension would have an adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt, with an inference that this is part of the assessment of whether the proposal would be inappropriate development. I agree that the consideration of openness is relevant to an appraisal of the scheme as a whole (and hence main issue (ii) in paragraph 2 above). However, I also note that although a factor in the definition of inappropriate development as regards the second and final categories of development in paragraph 89 of the Framework (together with all the categories in paragraph 90), the other categories in paragraph 89 - including the extension or alteration of a building - do not have this caveat.
6. In terms of appearance and any perception of a disproportionate addition, the extension would be substantial in size but replicates the plain and simple design form of the original building. Although the ridge is not set down slightly to provide an element of subservience, I consider that this is not necessary in this case. This is because the outcome of the appeal scheme would be one of the whole building appearing as if it had originally been built to that size and in that form, especially considering the modest scale of the original.
7. When taken together with my conclusion on the proportionate floorspace of the extension, I conclude on issue (i) that the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and Policy RUD7. Accordingly 'very special circumstances' are not required to justify it.
8. Turning to issue (ii), the effect on openness, the extension would inevitably have some effect on the openness of the Green Belt. However, I have concluded that it would not be a disproportionate addition to the original building. Accordingly, the effect on openness would be limited and would not cause material harm to the Green Belt and consequential conflict with the Framework.
9. As regards issue (iii), the effect on the countryside, as this was not mentioned as a separate refusal reason I must presumed it arises because of the reference in the Notice of Refusal to the 'visual amenity' of the Green Belt. This is protected by the AGLV and AONB designations in Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy and not Policy CS14, as incorrectly referred to in the officer's report.

10. I saw on my visit that The Barn lies in a valley immediately to the west of a very large and linear building within the grounds of the now separate Applegarth Farm. The original building is of a modest size and because the proposed extension would be proportionate the appeal proposal would not make it a large one. The context of the much larger building to the east also diminishes The Barn's impact on the landscape, as does the fact that the extension would be in keeping with the plain and simple design that I have already referred to. The proposed external materials are also sympathetic to this rural setting. On this issue I see no harmful conflict with Policy CS13 or Section 11 of the Framework: 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'.
11. In the light of my conclusions on the main issues I shall allow the appeal. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is needed for the avoidance of doubt. A condition in respect of external materials will ensure that the extension harmonises with the existing building and thereby safeguards the landscape character of the area.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR