



WESTCOTT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Westcott Village Association

Westcott

Dorking

Surrey

contact@westcottvillage.com

Planning Department
Mole Valley District Council
Pippbrook
Dorking
RH4 1SJ

27 April 2025

Dear Sirs

MO/2025/0565

Mill House, Rookery Drive, Westcott, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3LQ

Conversion of an existing triple garage to annex

We write to object to this application which we believe is inappropriate development in Green Belt, Surrey Hills National Landscape and an Area of Great landscape Value.

Mill House has a very extensive planning history, and this is the third attempt in as many years to secure consent for a residential conversion of a garage, originally consented in 2011 (MO/2011/0480). The 2011 permission came with 6 conditions, one of which read *“No part of the garage hereby permitted shall be used for habitable accommodation without the prior permission, in writing, of the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To prevent the garage being converted into living accommodation in conflict with Mole Valley Local Plan policy RUD9”*.

The history of the subject building: -

1. In 2024 - an application to “convert and extend the existing garage block to provide a new Annex following the removal of the existing summer house and conservatory” (MO/2024/1956). This was refused by MVDC in January of this year on three grounds: -
 - I. *The site is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The proposal, by reason of its size in relation to the dwellinghouse it would serve, is considered to be tantamount to a new dwelling. The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development, contrary to Policy EN1 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (2020-2039) and Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. No very special circumstances have been put forward which would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm arising from the proposal.*
 - II. *The proposed development, by reason of its design, size and massing, fails to respect the character of the existing dwelling, out of keeping with and harmful to the character of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal is contrary to Local Plan Policy EN4.*
 - III. *The site is situated within the Surrey Hills National Landscape as designated under Section 87 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the proposal would fail to conserve and enhance the existing special landscape qualities and harm the landscape character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Mole Valley Local Plan (2020-2039) policy EN8.*
2. In 2022 there was an attempt to secure consent for ancillary residential accommodation in a garage extension under a certificate of lawfulness (MO/2022/0902). This was refused and dismissed at appeal.
3. In 2021 a previous certificate of lawfulness (MO/2021/1547) was consented. This application was to regularise the size of the buildings – including the triple garage which is the subject of this application - which had been built considerably larger than consented. This application was approved by MVDC and the appraisal in the Officer's report stated: -

“In order to grant the certificate, the buildings need to have been in situ for a period of more than 4 years. It’s clear from the history of the property that the garage was granted planning permission in 2011. The conservatory on the summerhouse was granted planning permission in 2004. Both these structures were built bigger than granted.

However, it is concluded that as the structures, as built, have been there for more than 4 years, the certificate should be granted. There have been applications to try to convert the garage building into a dwelling, however these

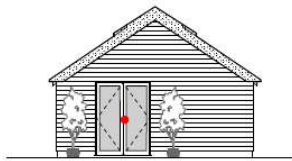
have been refused so the current use as an ancillary domestic outbuilding would still stand.

As this is an application just to regularise the garage and conservatory that were built larger than their respective planning approvals, it is considered that there is enough evidence to state that on the balance of probabilities both structures have been in situ for more than four years. Any use of either building as a separate dwelling would require planning permission”.

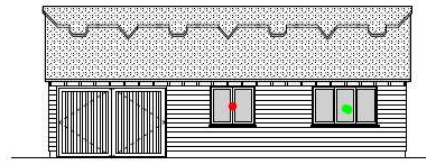
4. Also in 2021 a previous application for the extension to the existing triple garage to provide ancillary workshop/storage for the main dwelling, Mill House (MO/2021/0361) was refused by MVDC on the following grounds: -
 - I. *“The proposed extension to the garage building would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, which would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt, in conflict with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework, and Mole Valley Local Plan policy RUD9. There are considered to be no very special circumstances that clearly outweigh the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm.*
 - II. *The site is situated within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as designated under Section 87 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 2000 and the proposal would fail to conserve and enhance the existing special landscape qualities and harm the landscape character and appearance of the area in conflict with Mole Valley Core Strategy policy CS13, policies P1 and P2 of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan 2020 -2025”.*

The proposed conversion of the garage to a residential annex is in a building which is in on the other side of Pipp Brook, and 35 metres removed from Mill House.

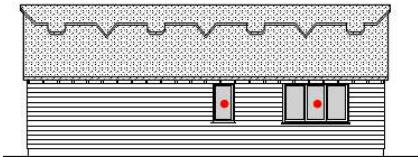
The extract from the proposed elevation and plan drawings overleaf show that considerable additional fenestration is proposed (the existing building has none – just three pairs of garage doors which make it a “dark” building). The red and green dots show the new patio doors and windows. The green dots show a discrepancy between the plan and elevation drawings. Are two or three casements proposed for the kitchen window?



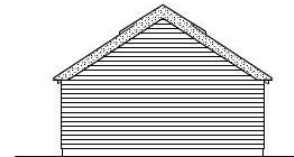
SIDE ELEVATION (south) AS PROPOSED



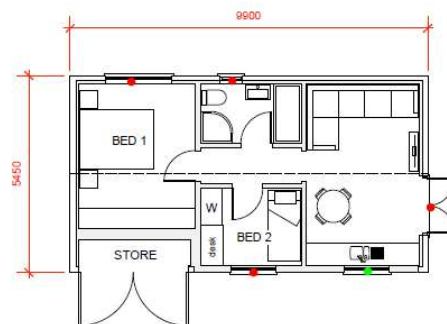
FRONT ELEVATION AS PROPOSED



REAR ELEVATION AS PROPOSED



SIDE ELEVATION (north) AS PROPOSED



PLAN AS PROPOSED TO CONVERT THE EXISTING GARAGE INTO AN 2 BED ANNEX

Additional Points

1. The application form refers to a Design and Access Statement, but this is not up on your portal. We do not believe this will say anything that would change WVA's views on the application.
2. We note that the Surrey Hills AONB Planning Officer has not been consulted on this application having been consulted on all previous applications referenced above.
3. If permitted this proposal would leave the host house without any garaging or storage. We are concerned that a permission would inevitably result in the submission of an application for replacement garaging/storage. Having permitted the loss of the existing it would likely be difficult for MVDC to refuse, and this would add to further development in the nationally protected landscape.

We do not believe that very special circumstances have been demonstrated for this proposal in accordance with the following Policies in the new Local Plan: -

Policy EN1 – Green Belt. The proposal fails to comply with paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 a-e.
Policy EN4 - Character and Design - relationship to the existing built development and features. Paragraphs 3 f-h refer.
Policy EN8 - Landscape Character.

We believe the conversion of the existing garage from non-residential to residential use, together with new fenestration and associated residential paraphernalia, is inappropriate in this landscape and dark sky location. We are concerned about the harm that this proposal will have on the openness of the Green Belt and National Landscape and fail to see how it will conserve and enhance the National Landscape.

If MVDC is minded to approve this application, WVA request that details for landscaping, re-provision of car parking for Mill House and outdoor lighting proposals should all be conditioned to limit the negative impact of the annex on the open landscape. The application is incomplete.

We nevertheless strongly urge MVDC to refuse permission for this application.

Yours sincerely,



James Leaver
Planning Lead, Westcott Village Association

Cc Clive Smith, Surrey Hills National Landscape Planning Adviser