

Agenda Item 82.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
173515	30/01/2018	Wargrave	Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe;

Applicant	Mrs Erin Barber
Site Address	Merchiston, Blakes Lane, Wargrave, RG10 9TA
Proposal	Householder application for the proposed erection of single storey sides and rear extension following the demolition of existing annex plus part two storey side extension to dwelling
Type	Householder
PS Category	633
Officer	Dariusz Kusyk
Reason for determination by committee	Listed by Councillor Halsall

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 14 February 2018
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director - Place

SUMMARY
<p>Merchiston is a large Edwardian detached house, with a detached garage positioned in front of the principal elevation line. The distinctive main dwelling includes spacious garden with numerous young and mature trees and it is surrounded by open countryside to the south and north. The rear garden also has a detached summerhouse. The property is site within the Metropolitan Green Belt.</p> <p>The main dwelling is sited in a significant distance from neighbouring properties and within a close distance to the road. The host dwelling's front and side elevations are partially exposed and visible from public views along this part of Blakes Lane.</p> <p>Strict policies are in place to prevent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, restricting extensions to dwellings to a limited scale (35% increase in volume). The proposed development would represent an increase in volume of 47% and by definition is inappropriate development, which would be harmful for the open character of the Green Belt and surrounding countryside.</p> <p>Furthermore, there will also be an unacceptable adverse impact on the dwelling as the proposal is not of a subservient scale and in keeping design when compared to the original dwelling. This will also adversely impact on the attributes of the Green Belt and the attractive appearance of the host dwelling.</p>

PLANNING STATUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt • Countryside • Groundwater protection zone

RECOMMENDATION
<p>That planning permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed development would result in significant harm to the rural character of the Countryside and the intrinsic beauty and openness of the Green Belt. It

would result in an excessive and inappropriate increase in volume of the original dwelling, therefore it is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and policies CP1, CP3, CP11, CP12 of the Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan Policy TB01.

2. The design of the proposed extension to the rear represents an unsympathetic extension that is inappropriate in scale and form when compared to the main dwelling. By virtue of a significant projection beyond the side elevation, flat roof form and due to out of keeping fenestration details, the proposed single storey rear extension would be considered as an out of keeping and excessively wide enlargement of the original building, which would visually overwhelm the appearance of the existing dwelling. Objection is therefore raised to the proposal.

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
18079	Proposed erection of single storey addition.	Approval.
28593	Proposed erection of a stable.	Approval.
29683	Proposed erection of a detached double garage	Approval.
F/1996/63284	Proposed erection of 2.75m high fence around tennis court.	Approval.
CLP/2010/2752	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of a new front pitched roof dormer extension plus enlargement of existing rear dormer window.	Refusal.
F/2011/0352	Proposed erection of a new front pitched roof dormer extension, plus enlargement of existing rear dormer window.	Approval.
F/2011/0457	Proposed erection of brick wall and vehicular entrance gates to front of dwelling.	Approval.
171373	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of a two storey rear extension and a single storey side extension, erection of two single storey outbuildings within residential curtilage, comprising an indoor swimming pool and a games room.	Approval.
172329	Householder application for proposed erection of single storey sides extensions to dwelling, proposed demolition of existing annex and new vehicular access.	Withdrawal.

SUMMARY INFORMATION
For Residential Site Area – 0.34ha Existing parking spaces 4-5 Proposed parking spaces 4-5 Original building’s volume – 866.0 m ³ Existing building’s volume – 1274.0 m ³ Proposed dwelling’s volume – 1320.0 m ³

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Highways	No objections, subject to conditions.
WBC Tree & Landscape	Objections raised on the following grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive scale; • Excessive footprint increase.
WBC Conservation Officer	Objections raised on the following grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsympathetic design.

REPRESENTATIONS
<p>Town/Parish Council: No objections.</p> <p>Local Members: Ward Councillor commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This new application redistributes less volume in a far superior layout and would have less impact or perhaps no more - on the green belt than the approved permitted development scheme. • Whether the proposed development would have a greater or lesser impact upon the openness of the Green Belt relative to the approved ‘fallback’ PD extensions subject of CLOPUD application 171373. • Refusal would be on the grounds of a strict percentage of volume increase but the criteria is protecting the openness of the green belt and WBC has no policy for volume increase only guidelines. <p>Neighbours: No comments received.</p>

APPLICANTS POINTS
<p>The massing and positioning of the proposed extensions have been thoroughly considered to minimise impact on views onto and from the site. The proposed scale and architectural design are in keeping with the existing building and improve the setting by removing a previous unsympathetic extension. It is therefore our view that the proposals put forward do not have an adverse effect on the area’s character or on the amenity of nearby properties and would in fact enhance this part of Blakes Lane by means of sensitive and contextual alterations.</p>

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP3	General Principles for Development

	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP11	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
	CP12	Green Belt
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC07	Parking
	TB01	Development within the Green Belt
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide – Section 4
		DCLG – National Internal Space Standards

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of the site:

1. Merchiston is a large Edwardian detached house. It has a large detached garage which is positioned in front of the principal elevation line. The main dwelling includes about 0.34ha of garden with numerous young and mature trees and it is surrounded by open countryside to the south and north. The rear garden also has a detached bothy with thatched roof, used as a summerhouse.
2. The application property is settled in significant distances from Denecroft to the west, of approximately 35.0m, and from Geble House to the east, of approximately 115.0m, within a close distance of Merchiston to the road. The host dwelling's front and side elevations are partially exposed and visible from public views along this part of Blakes Lane.
3. Merchiston displays fine detailing from the Edwardian era. It has distinctive tiled gables on each of the three storeys on the front elevation, sympathetically blended with the principal elevation. It also includes an open porch with tiled gable roof with attractive white wooden detailing, including decorative fascia, railings and narrow timber columns. The two-storey bay windows have stone lintels and tile-hung roofs at ground floor level and these and other windows have multi-paned glazing on their upper sections. The roof and dormers have ornamental terracotta ridge tiles with decorative finials and the chimneys have string course detailing. Overall, the design and form of Merchiston results in a visually attractive and distinctive property which is prominently sited along Blakes Lane.
4. The house has benefited from numerous extensions, some of them pre-dating the planning system. A double-height bay window is on the front and side north-east elevation, with tiled roof and with tile-hanging between upper and lower floor

windows. This is likely to be an early extension. Whilst it interrupted the original symmetry of the dwelling, the quality of design and detailing was maintained.

5. To the western side of the house and attached to it is a long single storey range with a pitched tiled roof. This was built as a later addition, also sympathetic to the original design and materials. This range is clearly visible from Blakes Lane.
6. The rear elevation includes several later additions. The most prominent is a five-sided two-storey extension. Whilst more recent, it has a turret roof, finial to the ridge, stone lintels and similar multi-paned windows and, as such, is sympathetic to the original design. A second extension to the rear is more simple, of two-storeys under a dual-pitched roof, similarly sympathetic, with a later single-storey flat-roofed extension. The rear elevation also has a flat-roofed dormer in the roof and a small link building at first floor level between the two two-storey extensions.
7. The rear elevation and the rear garden are screened from the road by a brick wall attached to the eastern side of the house.

The Description of Development

8. The application proposes to demolish the single storey range to the western side and replace it with a single storey extension containing design details which reflect the details in the original house. The existing 15.0m wide element would be replaced with an extension which would be approximately 6.4m wide, 5.1m high and it would retain the existing depth of 6.6m. The proposal would be covered with a dual pitched roof with a chimney and would include a gable to the rear roofslope with double glazed doors and two longitudinal windows in its rear elevation.
9. In addition, two and single storey enlargements are proposed to the rear and eastern side of the application property. The single storey extension to the rear and south-east side of the dwelling would extend the dwelling by 2.2m to the rear, 12.1m in length and 3.4m in height, with an open terrace provided above on the flat roof. The single-storey extension would project beyond the side elevation of the proposed two storey element by circa 2.5m and about 4.7m from the main house's side flank. This rear element of the proposal features a contemporary design with clean geometric lines and large glazed panels, to maximise views to the garden. The agent states that the proposal aims to open up the ground floor layout, providing a clear structure of spaces and that large sliding doors towards the garden have the potential to open up the internal space and provide a modern internal/external living.
10. The two storey extension would be approximately 3.15m wide, it would comprise a hipped roof, which would be set down by about 0.9m below the main dwelling's ridge and retain the existing eaves level. The proposal would not include any fenestration details on the first floor level, only a ground floor window facing the front driveway.
11. The materials proposed for the proposals differs in comparison to the main dwellinghouse, which is in brick throughout. According to the application form and the submitted Design & Access Statement, the proposed extensions would present a contemporary and modern design, including white render of the single storey element and aluminium window/door frames, which would evidently contrast with the original building and the proposed extension to the western side elevation.
12. The existing front driveway arrangement includes two separate accesses with approximately 2.0m high metal, black gates located in the north-western and north-

eastern corner in the front of application property. It is proposed to retain only the north-western gate and replace the north-eastern access with soft landscaping with approximately ten diverse sized trees which, given the semi-rural and green character of the surrounding area would be considered acceptable.

Principle of Development:

The NPPF

13. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF explains 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. Paragraph 89 continues by explaining that local authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. The limited exceptions that follow include:

- 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,
- the replacement of a building provided that the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.

The Core Strategy

14. Core Strategy policy CP12 resists inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined by PPG2, now superseded by the NPPF. MDD Local Plan policy TB01 refers to paragraphs 89 & 90 of the NPPF and explains that development for those limited purposes will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt. Point 3 is of particular relevance to this application as it states that:

“The alteration and/or extension of a dwelling and the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling in the Green Belt over and above the size of the original buildings shall be limited in scale”.

The MDD Local Plan

15. The MDD Local Plan clarifies in Paragraph 3.4 that, with regard to the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling, proposals will be assessed against the original building(s) as defined by the NPPF: a building as it existed on the 1 July 1948 or if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was originally built.

16. Due to the restrictive policies that apply to the Green Belt, only limited extensions to a dwelling will generally be permitted. *“Limited”* is defined by para 3.4 of the MDD Local Plan as a cumulative increase of generally no more than a 35% increase in volume over and above the original dwelling. Paragraph 3.5 also clarifies that, with regards to buildings ancillary to a dwelling, changes should not result in disproportionate additions to the original building(s) or cause detrimental alteration to the scale of the dwelling or to the scale of development on the site.

17. Policy TB01 states that *“For the purposes of clarity, any assessment of increase in volume of a dwelling will not include any other buildings on the site”.*

The Borough Design Guide

18. The Borough Design Guide section 8 emphasizes that the Countryside and Green Belt designations aim to protect the environment and that in the Green Belt the aim is to retain openness.

Development in the countryside

The Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan

19. As the application also falls within the designated countryside, the restrictions of Core Strategy policy CP11 also apply. It states that an assessment will need to be made as to whether the proposals would result in an inappropriate increase in the scale, form and footprint of the original buildings. Any excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings will not be acceptable in this location.
20. Policy TB01 of the MDD Local Plan and Policies CP11 & CP12 of the Core Strategy emphasise that proposals outside the development limits would be permitted by way of exception where the scale, form or the footprint of the original building would not be inappropriately increased or excessively encroached and extended away from the main dwelling.

The Borough Design Guide

21. Section 8 within the Borough Design Guide states that new development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area. Also in terms of the built form, new development in the rural area should respond to the typical forms of buildings in the village or locality and with regards to new extensions, these may be permissible provided that the scale, form and footprint does not have an unacceptable impact upon the countryside.

Proposed increase in volume:

22. In order to help to determine the impact of the proposal in the Green Belt, it is necessary to establish the volume of the original dwelling and the cumulative increase in volume that has arisen from its extension and alteration. This can then be compared with the increase in volume associated with the current proposal. The applicant's agent has provided calculations showing the total volume of original and proposed extensions and he has also shown the increase which could occur under approved Certificate of Lawfulness reference 171373. The Design and Access statement includes that "*The proposed house will have exactly the same footprint than that of the existing house today as described on the images on the left. In addition, the proposed footprint is significantly smaller (21% less) than the permitted development proposal*". Notwithstanding that the permitted development fallback is a material consideration, it is not the scheme which has been put forward for consideration.
23. The proposal comprises a combination of extensions, which would cause a number of highly detrimental elements in comparison to the approved Certificate reference 171373. The proposed two storey extension would project beyond the side elevation, therefore it is considered to be in a more exposed and visible position which would result in more significant harm in terms of openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore, in connection with its unsympathetic fenestration it would result in significant adverse impact upon the main dwelling. The view upon the frontage of the dwelling would include a bare rendered front elevation wall of the single storey element, with a total lack of any fenestration details but with a terrace surrounded by a glazed balustrade on top. Finally, the current application includes a removal of part of the original walls of the dwelling, while the approved Certificate proposes to retain them, in accordance with the Conservation Officer

recommendation. The more detailed assessment of these aspects is included in the 'Proposed design' paragraph of this report.

24. The volume enlargement is not the only determining factor, therefore a significant weight should be given to the scale, design, form, materials and visual appearance and their cumulative impact on the application property and surrounding area. The planning application reference 173515 should be considered in its own merits, accordingly with Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan Policies and the Borough Design Guide, adopted by the Wokingham Borough Council.

Previous extensions

25. According to the planning history for the site, the original dwelling constitutes a two storey detached dwellinghouse of around 866 cubic metres which has been extended several times since 1982. Applications approved in 1982 (18079), 1988 (29683) and 2011 include a single storey extension granny annexe, detached garage and dormer extension. These previous extensions have resulted in a 47% increase in the overall volume of the dwelling from its original form.

Proposed extensions

26. The proposed extensions subject of this application would represent an increase of the host building's volume by another 46.0m³ resulting in a total volume of circa 1320.0³ and 52.4% increase when compared to the original building.

Combined impact of previous and proposed extensions

27. Policy TB01 of the MDD Local Plan states that the existing detached garage and other outbuildings are exempted from the calculations of additional volume.
28. The proposed dwelling's volume enlargement combined with volume of implemented extensions would constitute approximately 52.4% increase when compared to the original building.
29. According to the restrictive Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies related to Green Belt, such an increase in volume of the original dwelling above 35% would be considered to be inappropriate development harmful to the appearance of the dwelling and to the visually attractive and open character of the Green Belt.

Very Special Circumstances

30. Whilst 'openness' is not defined in the Framework, it has been held by the Courts (Gallagher Homes Limited v Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council [2014] EWHC 1283) that it is not necessary for development to be entirely visible to harm openness, but the degree of visual impact is nevertheless a criterion along with the Permitted Development fallback compared to the volume of built development proposed in this application. In accordance with the policy, development should not be approved except in very special circumstances and these circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
31. With openness as a criterion for whether development is inappropriate, and with the need to balance 'very special circumstances' against harm, it is considered that given that the original dwelling is measured to be in the region of 1320.0 m³, and the extensions to be about 52.4% increase in volume, it would be inappropriate development. Therefore in this instance creating larger accommodation for residents is not considered to represent very special

circumstances which would outweigh the harm to the openness of the Greenbelt.

32. The applicant has argued that the approved Certificate of Lawfulness reference 171373 represents higher volume increase in comparison with the current application and that this should be considered as a crucial determining factor in the determination of the proposal which would create 'very special circumstances'. Whilst there may be certain works that could be undertaken as permitted development (including some extensions to the dwelling and outbuildings) the proposed development requires the express consent of the Local planning Authority, and must be considered against the development plan. Therefore the other types of development which the applicant may carry out are material, but carry limited weight and do not amount to very special circumstances. The proposal represents a cumulative increase in volume which would have a detrimental impact to the openness of the Green Belt and therefore other development that the applicant may carry out is not considered as a 'very special circumstance' to outweigh the harm identified.

Proposed design

33. The proposed replacement of the range on the western side of the dwelling would meet the criteria included within Paragraph 4.11 of the Borough Design Guide, which requires a single storey side extension to be subservient to the form and scale of the original building and be well designed and respond positively to the original building.
34. The agent states that the area currently occupied by the annex will be reconfigured around the original dwelling, concentrating all the spaces around it, but the submitted 'Proposed Ground Floor Plan' clearly shows removal of external walls in the eastern rear corner of the original building, which contradicts with the agent's statement.
35. Although the application property is not a Listed Building, due to its distinctive character and attractive Edwardian design, the Borough Council's Conservation Officer has raised concerns about the way that the contemporary addition to the rear and side is uncompromising in the way it wraps around the existing building. The Conservation Officer states that the proposed design doesn't reflect the architecture behind and that there is no recognition of the rhythm or articulation of the projecting two storey bays or recesses. Its design could be modified to deal with this concern. This arguably over-confident approach is evident in the ground floor plan, where the existing Edwardian building is visually and, in parts, physically cleared away to create the larger open space, leaving little evidence of the original plan. Applying the principles of a listed building, the Borough Council would insist that the conservation principle of 'new work built around old' is applied, rather than the other way around, as in this case. The Conservation Officer considers that the contemporary addition is uncompromising and does not respond sympathetically to the original building.
36. Notwithstanding the above assessment with regards to the impact on the Listed Building, the proposal would be considered detrimental and the adverse impact would occur in a broader context in terms of the Green Belt's openness and attractiveness. When looking at this issue, it is worth considering what is meant by the term 'openness'. In this context, openness is considered to be the absence of built structures. Hence, any new built structure would have the potential to detract from openness. The degree to which the development would detract from openness depends not only on its size, scale and mass but its relationship to

existing built form. The design, form and scale of the proposed development would visually overwhelm the existing appearance of the main dwelling, resulting in an out of keeping and inappropriate extension of the host house. The wrap-around nature of the rear extension would result in it being visible from the front elevation, above the garden wall, with a first floor external terrace which would include contemporary design and materials and the provision of outdoor seating and similar domestic paraphernalia at first floor level, resulting in detriment to the green belt and open countryside.

37. The proposed development would therefore not comply with advice contained within the Borough Design Guide which states that “*Alterations and extensions to buildings should: be well designed; respond positively to the original building; contribute positively to the local character*” and that “*Alterations and extensions should respond positively to the context, maintaining or enhancing the street scene and local character*”. Furthermore, the proposed unacceptably unsympathetic flat roof form would not accord with the BDG, which emphasizes that “*the roof form of the extension should take its form from the main building*” and within the Core Strategy CP11 policy, which states that “*In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building*”.
38. Given the positioning of the main dwelling, scale and form of the proposals, they would result in an unacceptable detrimental and adverse impact on the character of the surrounding Countryside and the distinctive appearance of the host dwelling.
39. The extensions as proposed would therefore be considered as an inappropriate enlargement and detrimental design within the countryside and Green Belt location.

Residential Amenities:

40. Loss of Light and Overbearing

The proposed extensions would not lead to a loss of light to adjacent properties due to existing separation distances, positioning and the form of the development. Despite the two storey scale of the proposal, it would not prevent sunlight from reaching any neighbouring properties.

41. Privacy and Overlooking

The proposed alterations will not lead to any loss of privacy to neighbours, because the proposal would maintain the sufficient existing separation distances from adjacent properties, therefore no adverse impact is considered to occur.

Access and Movement:

42. There would be sufficient space for vehicles parking on the existing driveway area and the proposal can therefore be accommodated without unacceptable harm to highway safety. The Highways Officer recommended several conditions to maintain the existing garage for vehicles and provide parking spaces with turning area in accordance with the submitted plans.

Landscape and Trees:

43. The site is located in the countryside and the Green Belt and in Wokingham District Landscape Character Area (WDLCA) G1 ‘Hare Hatch Farmed Chalk Slopes’. There are no protected trees on the site. Scattered woodland is typical of the area and highly valued and giving an intimate feel to the landscape character. Species

typically found in the woodland are Oak, Ash and Hawthorn. The quality of the landscape is of a moderate condition and sensitivity, and the landscape strategy is to enhance the character by actively managing it.

44. The site is characterised by mature and sensitive landscaping with glimpses through access points from Blakes Lane to the dwelling itself. Removing the secondary access from Blakes Lane and just retaining the access to the NW, and filling the secondary access with planting, has not been objected to by the Tree and Landscape Officer.
45. The Tree and Landscape Officer considers that the proposals will result in a change of character of the plot, where the extended footprint gives way to a much more extensive two-storey building in place of the single storey extensions.
46. It is considered that the proposed development would be contrary to the TB01 MDD Local Plan and CP11 Core Strategy Policy. Consequently the openness of the Green Belt and the intrinsic character of the countryside would be unacceptably harmed.

CONCLUSION

47. The proposals to extend to the rear represent an unsympathetic extension that is inappropriate in scale and form when compared to the main dwelling. By virtue of a significant projection beyond the side elevation, flat roof form and due to out of keeping fenestration details, the proposed single storey rear extension would be considered as an out of keeping inappropriate and excessively wide enlargement of the original building. Furthermore, by virtue of a significant and excessive volume enlargement, the proposed extensions would fail to preserve the quality of the Green Belt. The proposals are therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3, CP11, CP12 and the advice contained within the Borough Design Guide. It is therefore recommended that this planning application is refused.

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