



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 December 2019

by William Walton BA MSc Dip Env Law LLM CPE BVC MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/19/3239802

Reindeer Cottage, Chelford Road, Ollerton, WA16 8RD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant full permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Simon Knight against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref 19/2789M, dated 8 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as the infill of small area between existing living room / kitchen and bedroom and small second shower room under existing overhanging roofline.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

Whether or not the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;

The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area; and

If the development is inappropriate, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations that amount to the very special circumstances enough to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The appeal property is a single storey brick-built stables conversion within a group of other agricultural residential conversions broadly arranged in a rectangle. These properties stand within the grounds of Kerfield House and are accessed via a long drive from Chelford Road.
4. The proposed development comprises, first, the filling in of a courtyard enclosed on 3 sides to form a new snug that would face the main garden and, second, the extension of the dwelling within an enclosed passageway to form a new shower room.

5. The property sits within the Green Belt. Within the Green Belt any development that is categorised as being 'inappropriate' is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Under Paragraph 145c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) the alteration or extension of a building within the Green Belt is, however, not inappropriate development if it does not result in a disproportionate addition to the original building.
6. Saved Policy GC12 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004 (MBLP) allows extensions of dwellings up to a maximum of 30% over and above the floorspace of the original building providing that its scale and appearance is not significantly altered. However, the policy also states that where the subject property is part of a group of buildings the 30% restriction may be disapplied if the extension is not prominent.
7. Furthermore, the 30% maximum figure may also be disapplied where the extension is needed to accommodate basic facilities, such as in a small cottage. For the avoidance of doubt, whilst I note the appellant's submission that the cottage is the smallest within the curtilage of Kerfield House and that the proposed snug would allow an existing room to be freed up for an additional bedroom, I consider that because of the size of the property and the range of facilities that it includes, such as three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large conservatory and a utility room, the dwelling subject to this appeal does not fall within this basic facilities exemption contemplated by the policy.
8. Planning permission for the conversion of the former stables to residential use was granted in July 2014 (13/4955M). This planning permission also incorporated an extension to accommodate a master bedroom. In 2015 planning permission was granted for the erection of a new natural oak framed conservatory attached to the garden facing elevation. Permission for a mezzanine floorspace to form a spare guest room on the first floor was granted in 2016. All of these planning permissions have been implemented.
9. I find that the existing dwelling is part of a group of dwellings. Furthermore, neither of the proposed extensions would protrude from the footprint of the existing dwelling. The extensions would, instead, help round off the building. The proposed shower room extension within the enclosed passageway would be invisible to visitors and neighbours. The proposed snug would fill the void between the existing garden facing extensions. It would only be visible from the rear garden of the property.
10. However, Policy GC12 only allows the 30% restriction to be disapplied if the proposal would not significantly alter the scale and appearance of the original building. The 2 new extensions combined would add approximately 25 square metres of new floorspace to the dwelling. There is a discrepancy between the scale of the overall increase from the original dwelling given by the Council (97%) and one of the objectors (85%) but there is no dispute that the new extensions would result in the property being significantly above the 30% threshold expressed in Policy GC12 of the MBLP.
11. For reasons that will be explained under the next main issue, I also find that the proposal will adversely affect the appearance of the appeal building.
12. Consequently, I find that the development proposal would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling. It is

therefore inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It thus fails to accord with Policy GC1 of the MBLP that allows limited extensions in the Green Belt subject to compliance with Policy GC12 that, in turn, allows development within a group of dwellings subject to it not significantly altering the scale and appearance of the original dwelling. It would also fail to accord with Policy PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan: Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 2017 (CELPS) that only allows extensions to buildings in the Green Belt where they would not result in a disproportionate increase in size over and above that of the original structure.

13. Finally, I find that the proposed development would not accord with the advice set out in Paragraph 145c) of the Framework that extensions should not result in the disproportionate addition to the existing building.

Character and appearance

14. The two existing extensions are each about one-third the width of the appeal dwelling's garden-facing elevation. The proposed snug in the gap in between would almost run flush between the conservatory on one side and the bedroom on the other. It would be largely made of glass with French-style patio doors and nearly floor to ceiling windows either side. The flat roof would incorporate 2 skylights.
15. The use of large amounts of glass in the timber-framed conservatory has permitted some visual penetration into the dwelling from the main garden. The proposed snug would also incorporate a large amount of glass and this would allow some visibility of the existing brick wall, so enabling one to read the building's link with its agrarian past. Nevertheless, I consider that the result of the vertical window and door frames and horizontal roof support would be a considerable loss of visibility of the middle elevation of the original dwelling.
16. Notwithstanding that the proposed development is slightly set back from the elevation of the adjacent bedroom, when considered in combination with the earlier extensions, it cannot be regarded as being subservient to the existing dwelling. Instead, the extension would be bulky and disproportionate in comparison to the original building.
17. I do not accept that any harm to the host building should be pooled and shared between the neighbouring dwellings. Such an approach would mean that an occupant's ability to extend his or her dwelling would be contingent upon the level to which his or her neighbours had extended their own properties.
18. The facts that the proposed extension would not be visible from a public vantage point, that it would not overlook any neighbouring properties and that the three oval stable windows on the elevation beyond the bedroom would be unaffected, do not alter my findings regarding its effect on the character and appearance of the host building.
19. In contrast the proposed extension to accommodate a shower room would be far more modest in scale. It would be subservient to the original building and so would not harm its character and appearance. However, I am required to consider the effect of the proposed development overall.
20. For the foregoing reasons, I conclude that when considered as a whole, the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area. It would therefore be contrary to

policies SD1, SD2 and SE1 of the CELPS which, respectively, seek to ensure that new development contributes to protecting the built environment, that it is of a high quality and that it contributes to reinforcing the distinctiveness of the local area.

21. It would also fail to accord with Policy DC2 of the MBLP which seeks to ensure that new extensions respect the existing architectural features of the building. Similarly, it would fail to conform to Policy D1, Policy D2 and Policy H3 of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan 2010-2030 2019 which require, respectively, that development proposals have regard to the Knutsford Design Guide, respect local distinctiveness and meet the standards set out in the Knutsford Design Guide.

Other considerations

22. Because the cottage already provides for a good standard of accommodation, I attach only limited weight to the need for additional space. Similarly, I consider the lack of impact on the living conditions of neighbours as being a neutral matter.

Other Matters

23. I note that the development proposal does not cause any issues as regards roads and highways. However, this matter is neutral rather than being a benefit.

Conclusions

24. As outlined above I find no harm would be caused to highway safety. However, the Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. In addition, there are adverse impacts to the character and the appearance of the host building and surrounding area. Substantial weight should be given to the harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm are clearly outweighed by other considerations.
25. I give limited weight to the other considerations. However, even when taken together, these do not outweigh the harm that the proposed development would cause. The substantial weight to be given to Green Belt harm is not clearly outweighed by the other considerations sufficient to demonstrate very special circumstances. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed, and planning permission is refused.

William Walton

INSPECTOR