
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 July 2021

by C McDonagh BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/21/3271186

7 Broughton Road, Adlington SK10 4ND

- 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 Mr and Mrs G Wright against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref 20/4708M, dated 26 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 28 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'construction of detached garage'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During the course of the appeal, the revised National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (the Framework) was published. Parties were provided with an opportunity to comment on the relevance of this, and I have taken any subsequent comments received into account in my determination of this appeal.
3. I have been referred to policies in the emerging Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD). I am advised that the SADPD has been submitted for independent examination. However, this document is at an early stage of development and in accordance with paragraph 48 of the Framework, I therefore afford its policies limited weight.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - Whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations and if so, whether this would amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development in the Green Belt

5. Paragraph 149 of the Framework sets out that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate development. One of the specified exceptions to this is 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 Framework does not define a disproportionate addition. As such, it is a matter of planning judgement. I would reasonably consider the proposed garage in this case to amount to an extension to the dwelling as the building, by virtue of its siting, proximity and use as a domestic adjunct.
6. Policy PG3 of the CELP¹ refers to the national policy stance on development in the Green Belt, reiterating the Framework's exception concerning the extension of buildings. Saved Policy GC1 of the MBLP² is broadly consistent with the Framework in this regard, albeit referring to dwellings and refers to Policy GC12. This policy concerns extensions to houses in the countryside, setting out that they may be granted for up to 30% of the original floor space and includes domestic outbuildings. The supporting text to GC12 alludes to disproportionate additions to buildings in the Green Belt and what may constitute inappropriate development for its purposes.
7. The appeal building has already been extended significantly. The cumulative floor space of previous enlargements is calculated by the Council to be 98% over that of the original. This calculation is not disputed, and I see no reason to disagree.
8. The Framework does not limit consideration of this matter to floorspace alone, but rather refers to size. In this sense, the garage would be of significant height with a pitched roof. Taken together, due to the positioning and size of the proposed garage, set against the already large increase in size of the original dwelling, the proposal would constitute a disproportionate addition to the dwelling. It would therefore represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt

9. Paragraph 137 of the Framework states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The assessment of openness requires a consideration of both visual and spatial aspects.
10. The site is located in a residential area within Adlington which is 'washed over' by the Green Belt. While the Green Belt was defined in the MBLP, which predates both the first and latest iterations of the Framework, for the purposes of the development plan the boundary remains valid.
11. I disagree that Adlington is 'extremely built up'. The area is clearly distinguishable as a small settlement which is surrounded on all sides by open countryside at a significant distance from Manchester and Macclesfield. Houses here are generally detached and sit in large plots. Street trees and hedges give

¹ Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2017

² Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004

the area a verdant character and houses have a fairly consistent set back from the road albeit with some alterations and extensions. Therefore, the village has an open character which makes an important contribution locally to the openness of the Green Belt.

12. Due to its scale and siting the proposal would be highly prominent from the public realm along Broughton Road. In spatial terms, a significant section forward of the front elevation to one side of the host building would be occupied by the garage, thus increasing the overall bulk of development present within the site. Consequently, the proposal would result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt, in that it would be reduced both visually and spatially.

Character and Appearance

13. Due to its significant footprint, height and its siting to the front of the property in an area which is typically devoid of development forward of front elevations, this proposal would be an incongruous feature in the street scene. From considering the inter-relationship during my site visit, this would add significant mass to the front of the property and erode the sense of spaciousness in the immediate locality. The use of materials to match the host dwelling, while appropriate in and of itself, would not overcome these concerns.
14. The front building line of houses on Broughton Road is not a strong characteristic, although other than gable projections and some integral garages, there appears to be little development forward of front elevations in the street scene. From the photographs submitted this appears evident in the wider area. As such this does not alter my assessment that the garage would be harmful to the street scene.
15. Accordingly, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the local area and would therefore be contrary to relevant provisions of policies SE1 and SD1 of the CELP. These seek to ensure development contributes positively to an area's character and identity in terms of height, scale and massing, among other criteria.

Other Considerations

16. The garage would provide additional storage space and/or the parking of a vehicle. However, this would be private to the appellants and of little weight in favour of the proposal.
17. My attention has been drawn to a previously approved planning application³ at No.6 Redbrook Way, close to the appeal site. In the assessment of that development, the additions were considered to equate to a cumulative 116% increase over the size of the original dwelling, but it was not considered inappropriate in the Green Belt. This exceeds the increase in the proposal before me.
18. I agree that consistency in decision-making is important, which is referenced in North Wiltshire⁴. However, it is incumbent on me to assess the proposal on its own merits, and I note in this particular example of case law the principle is not that all cases must be determined alike.

³ 18/6293M

⁴ North Wiltshire District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and Clover [1993]

19. I have accordingly assessed the appeal scheme against its site-specific context, the development plan and national policy at the time. I have reasoned that floorspace calculations are not, in and of themselves, determinative of whether or not a scheme represents 'inappropriate development', and there are inevitable differences between the proposal and context at No.6 Redbrook Way compared to circumstances here. I would therefore attach limited weight to this example.

Conclusion

20. Paragraph 148 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that very special 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. I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that it would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. These matters carry substantial weight. The proposal would also harm the character and appearance of the area.
21. With the above other considerations in mind, it is apparent that they would not clearly outweigh the totality of the harms I have found. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist.
22. The proposal would conflict with Policies GC1 and GC12 of the MBLP, Policy PG3 of the CELP and paragraphs 147 – 151 of the Framework. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

C McDonagh

INSPECTOR