



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 June 2022 by Darren Ellis MPlan

Decision by Chris Preston BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/22/3297123

24 Sandy Lane, Macclesfield SK10 4RJ

- 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 & Mrs Wallace against the decision of Cheshire East Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/5592M, dated 28 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is an extension remodel of an existing 2-storey bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and so the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development for the purposes of development plan policy and the National Planning Policy Framework, including the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwellinghouse, its wider setting and the countryside with particular regards to its prominence;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - if the proposal would be inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Whether the proposal is inappropriate development and the effect on character and appearance

4. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes that new buildings in the Green Belt are inappropriate except in certain circumstances, including where they involve the extension of an existing building. This is
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provided that the extension does not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. The Framework defines 'original building' as 'a building as it existed on 1 July 1948, or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.' It does not however define 'disproportionate'.

5. Policies PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (July 2017) (CELPs) and GC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (January 2004) (MBLP) are consistent with the Framework in that they seek to protect the Green Belt but allow limited extensions to existing dwellings. Policy GC12 of the MBLP states that alterations and extensions to existing houses in the countryside may be granted for up to 30% providing the scale and appearance of the house is not significantly altered. The policy further states that an exception to this threshold may be permitted where the proposal lies within a group of houses or ribbon development where the extension would not be prominent and would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the countryside.
6. Given the absence of a definition within the Framework, it is common for guidelines and policies to be set within Local Plans to reflect local circumstances. Such local criteria will often specify volumetric or floorspace limits but may also set out site specific circumstances where exceptions may apply. Therefore, and notwithstanding the age of the MBLP, I am satisfied that the criteria within policy GC12 remain broadly consistent with the Framework and mark a reasonable method to assist in assessing whether an extension would be 'disproportionate'.
7. The dwelling has been extended previously and the Council has calculated that the previous and proposed extensions combined would be an increase of 73% of the volume of the original dwelling. The appellant has not disputed this figure. This would substantially exceed the 30% threshold set out in Policy GC12.
8. The property is in a group of dwellings in a ribbon of development along Sandy Lane. It is in the middle of three bungalows whose rooflines largely follow the levels of the street. The increase in the height of the roof would see the ridge being higher than the adjacent bungalows which would not respect the sloping nature of the land levels or the existing pattern of development. It would be conspicuous as a result and the increase in volume would undoubtedly be prominent in that context.
9. The addition of three front rooflights would add considerable clutter to the roofslope. Together with the increase in roof height, this would create a dwelling that would, in comparison with its neighbours, have a top-heavy form and massing.
10. The proposed flat-roof rear dormer would dominate the roofslope, and there are no other flat-roof dormers in the vicinity of the appeal site. The sides of the rear dormer would be visible from the street, and the proposed zinc cladding would be at odds with the material palette found in the street.
11. For these reasons, the proposal would, as a matter of judgement, amount to a disproportionate increase above the size of the original building. The increase in volume would be substantial in terms of the numerical calculation alone. In addition, the proposed extensions and increase in roof height would further increase its scale, bulk and prominence. Owing to the proposed design and

materials being out of keeping with the surrounding area, the proposal would also adversely affect the character and appearance of the countryside.

12. In view of the above, the proposal would not meet the exception in Policy GC12 for extensions to properties in a ribbon development and therefore would be a disproportionate addition. Accordingly, it would be inappropriate development which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. The proposal would conflict with Paragraph 149 of the Framework, Policy PG3 of the CELPS and Policies GC1 and GC12 of the MBLP.
13. Furthermore, the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the dwellinghouse and the wider streetscene. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies SD2 and SE1 of the CELPS and Policy DC2 of the MBLP, which all require development, including extensions, to contribute positively to an area's character and surroundings.

Openness of the Green Belt

14. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The Planning Practice Guidance states that openness is capable of having both spatial and visible aspects, so that both the visual impact of the proposal and its volume may be relevant.¹
15. The proposed extension would increase the visual and spatial bulk and massing of the dwelling and would therefore result in a reduction in the openness of the Green Belt. However, given the appeal dwelling's position amongst other dwellings in a ribbon development, that harm would be limited. Nonetheless, one of the fundamental aims of Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open and, having regard to the Framework, I afford this harm substantial weight, in addition to the harm by reason of its inappropriateness.

Other considerations

16. My attention has been drawn to two previous appeal decisions which allowed extensions to dwellings in ribbon developments where the 30% threshold of Policy GC12 was exceeded. At Reb Gables, Mere², the front of the property was significantly enclosed by trees and there was limited visibility from the adjacent properties. The surrounding properties were large individually designed properties and the Inspector concluded that the proposal would not be prominent among those dwellings. At Tree Tops, Styal³, the extended property would be of a comparable size and scale of the neighbouring properties and as such would not appear prominent. As the appeal proposal would not be significantly screened from the street and as it would increase the prominence of the dwellinghouse, these previous appeals are not directly comparable to the appeal scheme. In any event, this case has been determined on its own merits.
17. I understand that planning permission has been granted for a two-storey side extension, single story rear extension and a redesign of the roof at 34 Sandy Lane⁴. However, the increased roof height would still respect the rooflines of the adjacent properties and would follow the levels of the street. Furthermore, the specific design of that extension is not comparable to the proposal before

¹ Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722

² Appeal ref. APP/R0660/D/20/3250084

³ Appeal ref. APP/R0660/D/20/3264384

⁴ Planning application ref. 20/3249M

me which would result in a top-heavy appearance with dominant dormer window. As such the approved extension at No 34 is not directly comparable to the scheme before me and the fact that the Council approved the development at No 34 Sandy Lane does not alter my conclusion on the merits of the present appeal scheme.

Whether very special circumstances exist

18. The proposed extensions would cause harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness and reduction in openness, to which I afford substantial weight.
19. The Framework states that development should not be approved unless the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The other considerations identified above do not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the front extension do not exist.

Conclusion and Recommendation

20. There are no material considerations which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal be dismissed.

Darren Ellis

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

21. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and I agree with the recommendation and the reasons set out and shall dismiss the appeal.

Chris Preston

INSPECTOR