



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 September 2022

by M Ollerenshaw BSc(Hons) MTPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/22/3301368

Carr House Farm, Mill Lane, Prestbury SK10 4LT

- 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 Munroe against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref 21/4908M, dated 17 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as freestanding oak framed garage and storage complex to side.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework);
- 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
- If it is 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 the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The appeal site relates to a dwelling and its associated curtilage located on Mill Lane within the Green Belt and countryside some distance to the north of Prestbury. The property is a substantial two storey dwelling with an attached barn linked by a glazed extension.
4. Policy PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan 2017 (the Local Plan, 2017) and paragraph 149 of the Framework set out several categories of new buildings which are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. One such exception is a building for agriculture and forestry. The submitted floor plans show that the proposal would be used primarily for garaging and storage and it would be

situated within the domestic curtilage of the property. It has been applied for as a householder development for works or extension to a dwelling, rather than as an agricultural development. Accordingly, the development cannot be regarded as benefitting from the exception for agricultural buildings in the Green Belt.

5. The categories in the Framework and Policy PG3 of the Local Plan, 2017 include the extension or alteration of an existing building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Although the appeal proposal would not be an extension to the dwelling, given its proximity to the dwelling, I consider that the principles of these policies are still relevant.
6. The Framework does not specify what might be considered a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, but saved Policy GC12 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004 (Local Plan, 2004) states that alterations and extensions to existing houses in the countryside may be granted for up to 30% of the original floor space provided that the scale and appearance of the house is not significantly altered.
7. The parties are in agreement that the proposal in combination with the previous glazed link extension would increase the floor space of the building from 921m² to 1,183m² which would represent an increase of 28.4% above that of the original building. The proposal would not therefore increase the original floor space of the building by more than 30%. However, Policy GC12 is clear that the scale and appearance of the house should not be significantly altered. Moreover, whether a development would be disproportionate is also influenced by other factors such as the relationship in terms of footprint, scale, form and massing.
8. Although the Council is concerned that the proposal would not be sufficiently incidental to the host property, its primary use as garaging and for storage would not be unreasonable and could be considered incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling. Nevertheless, the proposed building, despite being only single storey, would be of significant scale and massing, with a length of some 40 metres, a width of 6 metres and an overall floor area of 221m². It would appear as a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. Such a large outbuilding close to the property would, in my view, significantly alter the scale and appearance of the house. For the reasons set out below, it would result in the loss of Green Belt openness.
9. For these reasons, I consider that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Such development is, by definition, harmful and is contrary to the guidance in paragraphs 147 and 149 of the Framework, Policies PG3 and PG6 of the Local Plan, 2017 and saved Policy GC12 of the Local Plan, 2004. Amongst other things, these policies seek to protect the Green Belt and open countryside. The resultant harm should be given substantial weight in determining the appeal.

Openness

10. The Framework states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. The development would introduce a large new building in a location that is currently free from development. The proposal would be partly visible from the surrounding countryside. The siting and scale

of the proposal, albeit limited to a single storey, would result in the loss of both spatial and visual openness. Moreover, through the intensification of development which would occur as a result of the appeal scheme, it would fail to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, one of the 5 purposes of the Green Belt.

11. The proposal would conflict with the fundamental aim of keeping land permanently open. The proposal would result in moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 148 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.

Character and appearance

12. The proposed building would have a rectangular footprint and be situated to the south of the house and barn close to the southern boundary of the site. Whilst the existing house has a substantial footprint, the proposal would appear overly large for an outbuilding due to its significant footprint and length, and it would represent an unacceptable intensification of development on the site.
13. Although the trees along the southern boundary of the site would provide some screening, there are gaps between them which would allow views of the proposal from the countryside to the south and east and it would also be partially visible in views along Mill Lane to the south-west.
14. The proposed use of timber framing and panelling would not be inappropriate as this material is common to many outbuildings in the countryside. Planning permission has previously been granted for a timber framed garage on the site which has not been implemented but remains extant¹. It establishes that the use of timber is not an unacceptable material for an outbuilding on the site.
15. Notwithstanding the above, I consider that the scale of the proposal would result in an intensification of development on the site and unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. In this respect, the proposal would conflict with Policies SE1 and SD2 of the Local Plan, 2017 and saved Policy DC2 of the Local Plan, 2004 which, amongst other things, seek development proposals that make a positive contribution to their surroundings.

Other considerations

16. The Framework is clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 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.
17. The proposal would allow additional accommodation for the occupants which would improve their living conditions and would provide a storage facility for vehicles and machinery. However, these are private benefits which I afford limited weight. It would also generate economic benefits during the construction phase of the development, though any benefits in this regard would be limited given the scale of the development.
18. Although planning permission has previously been granted for a timber framed garage, there is no indication that its scale was as substantial as the appeal

¹ Council ref 19/4926M

proposal, which I have considered on its own merits. Consequently, little weight can be attributed to the previous scheme. The appellants state that they would welcome a condition that ensures that the previous approval cannot be implemented. However, such a condition would not overcome my concerns regarding the inappropriateness of the appeal proposal.

19. No objections have been received from neighbouring residents in relation to this proposal. The proposal would not be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and in this respect would accord with Policy SE1 of the Local Plan, 2017. However, this is a neutral factor which does not add weight in favour of the development.

Conclusion

20. In conclusion, I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would also harm the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area. I have given only limited weight to the other considerations in favour of the proposal, and conclude that, taken together, they do not clearly outweigh the harm that the proposal would cause. Consequently, the very special circumstances do not exist to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. For the above reasons, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Ollerenshaw

INSPECTOR