



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2024

by Sarah Colebourne MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/23/3333087

Mill Lane Cottage, Byley Lane, Cranage, Middlewich, CW10 9LP

- 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 R Brown against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref 23/3767C, dated 4 October 2023, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is a two storey extension to front of dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Reasons

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the dwelling. The development plan includes policies SE1, SD1 and SD2 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (CELPs) (2017) and policies GEN1 and HOU11 of the Site Allocations and Development Plan Document (2022). Together those policies seek to ensure that development is of a high quality design that reflects local character and reinforces or creates local distinctiveness. The National Planning Policy Framework has similar objectives.
3. The appeal site lies in open countryside between the villages of Cranage and Byley on Byley Lane. The lane has a pattern of scattered, linear development with dwellings of varying ages and styles and both traditional and modern farm buildings. Many of the dwellings are existing or former farm houses and cottages with red brick walls, slate roofs and small windows which contribute positively to the distinct rural character of the area.
4. Mill Lane Cottage is a modestly sized three bedroom cottage with a simple rectangular plan form and a pitched roof, its long elevation facing the side and its gable end facing the lane. A small single storey extension projects from the rear part of the side elevation with an oak framed porch. It adjoins Mill Lane House, a cottage style dwelling which is sited at 90° and faces the lane. The main elevation of the appeal dwelling faces towards Mill Lane Farm which includes a large range of traditional/converted farm buildings. The small windows in the dwelling reflect its typical cottage style although their upvc materials and the white fascia board detract from that to some extent.
5. The proposed development would extend the existing plan form to the front with a two storey extension that would project forwards of the front part of the dwelling, continuing and extending its existing plan form by less than 3m

according to the plans, to provide an enlarged bedroom and ensuite. As such it would form a modestly sized extension and I agree with the Council that its siting, size and form would be acceptable.

6. The new gable end would have a large 'cathedral' style window at first floor level and a large floor-to-ceiling window at ground floor level. The plans were amended during the course of the application in response to the officer's request to reduce the amount of glazing used and a full two storey high window in the side elevation also omitted. The appellant would like to 'keep an old barn feel' and says that the glazing would improve insulation and energy consumption.
7. The size and scale of the window openings and the ratio of glazing to brickwork would be disproportionate to those of the existing window openings in both the dwelling and its attached neighbour. Furthermore, the proportions of the individual glazing panels do not reflect those of the existing windows and would result in a rather uncharacteristically squat appearance. As such, the proposed windows would overly dominate the front elevation of the dwelling.
8. The appellant has indicated in his appeal statement that seasoned oak would be used to clad the outside although the plans show brick walling materials and timber windows. Whilst the use of seasoned oak timber is to be welcomed and would match the existing porch, the size, scale and proportions of the proposed windows would result in an extension with a contemporary character at odds with the existing, traditional style of the dwelling and its nearest neighbours.
9. Rather than an 'old barn feel', the proposal would appear somewhat contrived. Even with the more slender window design of the original plans, which mirrors those seen in the large cart openings of barn conversions, in this position it would be inappropriate and would be better sited on a rear elevation or on a detached dwelling with greater separation from its neighbours. The appellant says that there are similar examples elsewhere in the wider area but I have not been referred to any that would set a precedent for this proposal and in this context, the proposal would not reflect the local character.
10. Even if the windows could be installed as permitted development in the existing elevation, I have no evidence that the appellant has a serious intention to do so. It is unlikely that this extent of glazing would be more beneficial than smaller windows in terms of improved insulation and energy efficiency and in any case those objectives could be achieved through other measures or a more appropriate design solution. These matters do not, therefore, persuade me to alter my findings.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude that by reason of the size, scale and proportions of the proposed windows, the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the dwelling. It is therefore contrary to the development plan policies referred to earlier and there are no material considerations that would outweigh this. The appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector