



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 October 2024

by K Winnard Solicitor LL.B Hons

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/24/3346682

The Coves, Carr Lane, Alderley Edge, Cheshire SK9 7SL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs P A and A Bates against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/0846M.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing single storey side and rear extensions, and erection of two storey side extension together with infilling of existing roof overhangs and addition of two front pitched roof dormer windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area;
 - Whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be outweighed by other considerations to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The Coves, the appeal property, (The Coves) is a detached dwelling which has been previously extended, located within the Green Belt. The Framework states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate development within the Green Belt unless the development falls within specified exceptions. These include the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Core Strategy Policy PG3¹ (Core Strategy) and Policy RUR11 of the Development Policies Document ² (DPD) quantifies matters further by advising that a

¹ Cheshire East Core Strategy (adopted 2017)

² Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (2022)

disproportionate addition would be increasing the size of the original building by more than 30%, usually determined by the net increase in floorspace.

4. The appeal scheme before me is a revised scheme following a previous appeal on an earlier application³. The revised scheme has sought to scale down the bulk of the previous proposal and the floor space has been accordingly reduced. Whilst the Council and the appellant's figures differ as to the overall increase in floor space over the size of the original building, it is nonetheless accepted by the appellant that the proposed increases in floor area would still be greater than the Council would usually accept. I note that the Inspector did not consider that the higher overall floorspace proposed in the previous appeal scheme would constitute a significant change in relation to floorspace. However, floorspace is not the only determinative factor and in assessing whether a proposal represents a disproportionate addition, Policy RUR11 advises that matters including the height, bulk, form, siting and design will be taken into account.
5. In this instance, the proposal would increase the height and bulk of the building introducing a new dominant gable feature and additional dormer windows adding to the mass of the building. I find that these extensions would be sizeable, the scale of which would amount to a disproportionate addition to the original building. It would accordingly amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, a matter to which I attach substantial weight.

Openness

6. The essential characteristics of the Green Belt are their openness and permanence. The extended dwelling would be considerably larger and would result in a more prominent building exacerbated by the new gable elevation and front roof dormer windows. The proposal would have a greater visual and spatial impact when viewed from Carr Lane and as such there would be a reduction in the openness of the Green Belt, than there is currently. Given, in context, the scale of the proposal, I attach moderate weight to this harm.

Character and Appearance

7. The Coves is a traditionally designed attractive property set in a large plot. The extended dwelling would be considerably larger and the proposed side extension, notwithstanding the proposed removal of the existing single storey side and rear extensions, would result in a mass of built form at the side of the dwelling which would fail to be subservient to the host dwelling. The introduction of front dormer windows would be prominent features and be conspicuous in views from Carr Lane. Overall, the proposal would result in unduly dominant additions at odds with the original modest size of the dwelling.
8. I appreciate that the design is intended to ensure balance between the ground and upper floor accommodation and that the appeal scheme removes the bulk of the poorly located single storey side extensions. However, the scheme as designed would interrupt the simplicity of the original rural character and appearance of the dwelling. Accordingly it would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area.

³ APP/R0660/D/23/3327018

9. For the reasons given, I conclude that the proposal would be a visually obtrusive form of development and would harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area. As such it would be contrary to Policies SE1 and SD2 of the Core Strategy and Policies GEN1, RUR11 and HOU11 of the DPD. Together these policies require development to contribute positively to an area's character, reinforce or create local distinctiveness, and not to harm the character of the local area by, amongst other things, excessive scale or visual intrusion.

Other considerations

10. The appellant has cited extensions to properties along Knutsford Road and the local area in support of the proposal. Whilst I observed on my site visit those properties on Knutsford Road to which my attention has been drawn, I do not know the full circumstances surrounding any of these developments nor the relationship of these extensions to the size of the 'original' building. Moreover in the case of those dwellings sited on Knutsford Road, they are located on a stretch of road characterised by ribbon development and which gives this road a different character to that of Carr Lane. Accordingly direct parallels with these developments are not easily drawn and as such they merit limited weight.
11. I have some sympathy with the appellants' perception of such development, but no two sites are the same and I must determine the appeal on the basis of its own planning merits and the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Such developments, for the reasons given, do not therefore alter my view.

Conclusion and Green Belt Balance

12. The proposal would constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would reduce openness in this location, albeit moderate. In addition, the proposal would also have an unacceptably adverse effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area. In accordance with the Framework, I afford substantial weight to the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness and other harm. The other considerations described above do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
13. Accordingly for the reasons given, I hereby dismiss the appeal.

K Winnard

INSPECTOR