
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2025

by **C Mayes CMLI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/25/3367446

High Garth, Park Lane, Pickmere, Cheshire East WA16 0LH

- 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 Maurice Leigh against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/5097/HOUS.
 - The development proposed is construction of a stand-alone 3 car garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the development 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 development on the openness of the Green Belt; and,
 - whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether or not it would be appropriate

3. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to state that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
4. Paragraph 154 of the Framework indicates that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to certain exceptions. Exception (c) permits 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. "Original building" is defined in Annex 2 of the Framework as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.
5. Policy PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (July 2017) (the LP), broadly conforms to the general thrust of national Green Belt policy in supporting limited extension or alteration of existing dwellings. While the Framework does not define "disproportionate additions", Policy RUR11 of the Cheshire East Local Plan, Site

Allocations and Development Policies Document (December 2022) (the SADPD) states that extensions to existing buildings in the Green Belt, including ancillary outbuildings, will only be permitted where the increase in size does not exceed 30% of the original building.

6. The Council calculates that, including previous extensions, the proposed development would increase the floorspace of the original dwelling by more than 170%. I have not been provided with any evidence to dispute this figure.
7. Policy RUR11 allows an exception to this threshold for a small-scale domestic outbuilding within a residential curtilage. However, the proposed three-bay garage with its single-storey form, external staircase and accessible roof space served by two dormers, would not be a small-scale domestic outbuilding, even when considering the moderate size of the host building, its curtilage and surrounding patterns of development.
8. The appellant contends that the proposed development would not be inappropriate development as it would fall under exemption (b) of paragraph 154. However, the provision of facilities, including buildings, referred to in this exemption must relate specifically to the existing use of land or a change of use for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments. As the appeal site is in domestic residential use exemption (b) is not applicable.
9. For these reasons, the proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful. The proposed garage would amount to a disproportionate addition to the existing dwelling and would not be a small-scale domestic outbuilding. Therefore, the proposed scheme would conflict with Policy PG3 of the LP and Policy RUR11 of the SADPD.

Openness

10. High Garth is situated on a rural road toward the edge of Pickmere with open fields to the rear and across the road. The appeal property forms part of a distinct cluster of closely spaced buildings at the junction of Park Lane and Frog Lane. From the appeal property, away from this group of buildings, the road curves toward the village centre. Mere View, the neighbouring property on this side, is positioned close to the roadside, oriented away from the appeal property, and forms part of another, separate cluster of buildings focused around Mere View Farm. The gardens of High Garth and Mere View create a noticeable gap in the development pattern, allowing views from the road through to open countryside.
11. Openness is a defining characteristic of the Green Belt, encompassing both spatial and visual elements. The proposed garage, positioned close to the roadside between High Garth and Mere View, would be clearly visible above the boundary hedge and reduce the gap between the two properties, thereby harming visual openness, irrespective of its position in relation to any public viewpoints. By increasing the volume and massing of built form on the property, the proposal would also diminish spatial openness. Consequently, the proposal would cause a modest degree of harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Other considerations

12. The appellant contends that the proposed garage, by matching the design, architectural language and materials of the existing building, would be subordinate and complementary in scale and form, and could be comfortably accommodated within the overall plot. However, the use of an appropriate design and matching materials is a

neutral factor in my determination, carrying no weight either for or against the appeal. Likewise, the absence of harm to neighbouring amenity, landscape character, ecology, or highway safety does not weigh in favour of or against the proposal.

13. I acknowledge that the proposed garage would provide some secure parking and storage, potentially supporting the long-term use of the property as a family home and enhancing its viability as such. However, these benefits do not outweigh the harm I have found. The appellant also argues that the proposed garage would reduce visual clutter by avoiding on-street or driveway parking. However, vehicle parking on the site does not have the same permanent effect on visual and spatial openness as the proposed garage. Moreover, I saw at my site visit that Park Lane is subject to parking restrictions thereby, preventing on-street parking in any case.

Conclusion

14. In summary, the proposed scheme would be inappropriate development and would result in a harmful loss of openness to the Green Belt. The Framework requires that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
15. For the reasons set out above, the harm to the Green Belt would not be clearly outweighed by the other considerations and, therefore, the very special circumstances required to justify a grant of planning permission have not been demonstrated. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Mayes

INSPECTOR