



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2025

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/25/3374751

Farmgate Cottage, Farm Lane, Lower Withington, SK11 9DU

- 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 Mark Spencer-Speak against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/0742/HOUS.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a two-storey front gable extension; an extension to an existing front dormer; and a new rear dormer with Juliet balcony.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of the proposed development on the application form and the decision notice includes detail relating to the purpose of the proposal and certain internal implications. I have restricted my description used above to the actual development proposals themselves.
3. There appears to have been some confusion as regards whether the site lies within Green Belt or Open Countryside. It is, in fact, within Open Countryside, and I have used the appropriate figure for 'disproportionate additions', as set out in the adopted development document, in my considerations below.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed extensions on the character and appearance of the open countryside around Farm Lane.

Reasons

5. Farm Cottage is a detached house situated on the southern side of Farm Lane, in open countryside to the west of the small settlement of Lower Withington and to the east of the Jodrell Bank Telescope complex. The property currently comprises the main dwelling which has a rural cottage style of appearance with front gable dormers within the roof slope. Accommodation is over two floors that also includes a large modern two-storey rear extension of sympathetic design. In addition to the main house, there is a modern single-storey building to the side, including a garage and television room, and a large modern outbuilding set beyond the garage within the curtilage of the current appeal site.

6. Policy PG6 of the Council's Local Plan Strategy (LPS), adopted in 2017, indicates that only development that is essential for certain specified uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted. Exceptions may be made for extensions to existing dwellings where the extension is not disproportionate to the original dwelling.
7. Policy RUR 11 of the Council's Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADP), adopted in 2022, relates to extensions and alterations to existing buildings (including the construction of ancillary outbuildings or structures in their curtilages) in the open countryside. These will only be permitted where the proposed development would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building; would respect the character of the existing building; and would not unduly harm the rural character of the countryside by virtue of prominence or visual intrusion. Proposals will usually be considered to represent disproportionate additions where they increase the size of the original building by more than 50% in the open countryside, and is usually determined by assessing the net increase in floorspace.
8. The Council contends that the proposal is an inappropriate form of development within the Open Countryside when considered cumulatively, both numerically and visually, with previous additions to the dwellinghouse. The appellant contends that the net increase in floorspace would be only around 11 sq metres, and that the scheme would restore a degree of symmetry to the front elevation of the house.
9. The appellant has provided floor space figures for the various elements of the property which can be read against previous planning permissions/certificates for the extensions and additions. This information correlates closely with figures produced by the Council and indicates that cumulative extensions and additions to the original property account for an increase of around 100% on the original floorspace. This apparently does not include the addition of the large outbuilding recently constructed within the curtilage, beyond the existing garage but within the application site. Even excluding this outbuilding, the figure of around 100% is clearly significantly higher than the 50% figure taken to represent disproportionate additions to dwellings in open countryside as set out in Policy RUR 11 of the SADP.
10. I note that a number of extensions and additions have already taken place at the property, and that these have received permission from the Council or have been built under permitted development rights. It would appear that these have been constructed prior to adoption of the SADP but, in any case, I consider that the cumulative increases in both floorspace and overall bulk, are now significantly disproportionate to the original building, and that even the relatively small addition represented by the current proposal would be harmful to the character of the property by way of increased bulk.
11. I also have concerns regarding the visual impact of the proposals. I acknowledge that the extension to the front bedroom dormer would result in a degree of symmetry within the front elevation. However, I do not consider that symmetry is a necessary benefit in the context of a generally complex set of buildings with a range of extensions and additions over time. Moreover, the addition of the rear dormer element to the same bedroom, and in particular the use of a Juliet balcony, would not be in keeping with the appearance/design features otherwise in evidence at the rear of the house.

12. With regard to the proposed front gable extension, the current central front dormer is set wholly within the front roof slopes and appears as a feature of appropriate scale and design within the context of the overall front elevation. It does not overpower the other gable dormers at the front of the house. The submitted proposal would result in the dormer becoming a large, prominent two-storey element, set forward beyond the existing main front elevation up to roof ridge level. It would be viewed as a dominant feature, both in the context of the host property and in the street scene, and it would be unsympathetic to the 'cottage-style' character and appearance of the house.
13. The appellant makes note of hearsay evidence that the current house originally comprised 3 cottages, one of which was demolished and the other 2 combined to create the current dwelling. I have no detailed information on this, and there is no other evidence available relating to the composition of any earlier cottage(s) that may have been in existence at different points in time. In any case, I consider the recent additions to the house, including the rear, two-storey extension, the garage/television room, the large outbuilding, and the other smaller extensions, to be disproportionate to the bulk and massing of the original house, in its form as a single dwelling.
14. In conclusion, I find that the proposed extensions and alterations, when considered cumulatively with other earlier extensions and alterations, would represent disproportionate additions to the original house. In addition, the proposed central two-storey front extension would be an over-dominating feature, out of character with the scale, style and design of the current front façade of the house. Finally, the proposed rear dormer with a Juliet balcony, would be out of character with design features at the rear of the house, including window designs. On the basis of the above, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property, the street scene, and the wider, open countryside around the property and the area around Farm Lane. It would conflict with Policy PG6 of the LPS and with Policy RUR 11 of the SADP. Accordingly, I dismiss the appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR