



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 April 2025

by G Sylvester BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/D/25/3362407

Larch House, Crawley End Road, Chrishall, Royston, Essex SG8 8QJ

- 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 D and J Millband against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/24/2421/HHF.
 - The development proposed is the extension to the front of Larch House and internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area.

Reasons

3. The character and appearance of the appeal dwelling is predominantly derived from the simple and balanced proportions of its front elevation. This features a short and well-proportioned forward projecting central gable that contributes positively to the visual hierarchy of its built form in the street scene. The evidence indicates that it was originally a single storey bungalow that has been enlarged through previous extensions.
4. Policy H8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 ("the ULP") seeks for extensions to respect, amongst others, the scale and design of the original building. However, apart from the main parties' calculations indicating an increase in footprint over and above the original dwelling, I am not aware of any drawings showing the scale and form of the original dwelling. Furthermore, the previous rear extension, which is described by the Council as substantial, appears to be of little relevance to the appearance of the dwelling in the street scene given its position and limited visibility in street level views. For these reasons, and for the purposes of my decision, I have assessed the effect of the proposed extension on the appeal dwelling as it currently exists.
5. Compared to the existing short forward projecting central gable, the proposed extension would be narrower, lower in height, and with less mass to its front elevation. However, by projecting forwards of the appeal dwelling's façade by a considerable distance and with relatively long flank walls, its scale and elongated proportions would add considerable bulk in a clearly visible position. As such, the proposed extension would have a dominating and imposing impact on the appeal

dwelling's façade and an awkwardly jarring visual relationship with the proportions of the existing forward projecting central gable, which is much shorter. For these reasons the proposed extension's scale would not be subservient to the host dwelling, and it would markedly increase its visual prominence in the street scene.

6. Longer distance views of the proposed extension would be precluded by other buildings set closer to the road. However, in shorter distance views the proposed extension would, for the above reasons, appear as a visually discordant addition to the appeal dwelling that would harmfully erode the simple and balanced proportions of its front elevation. Matching materials would not be sufficient to overcome this harm.
7. Given the overall scale of the proposed extension, the retention of the hedgerow along the northern boundary of the appeal site would have a very limited screening effect in views looking southwards, and no discernible effect in other views. It would not mitigate the proposal's visual harm in any meaningful way. In any event, I am not aware of any mechanism to safeguard hedgerows, which could be reduced in height or thickness by different occupiers.
8. Gabled roof forms are a characteristic of the buildings fronting the road. There are a number of examples of front facing gables in the street scene, including those drawn to my attention by the appellants. However, unlike the appeal proposal, those front gables are generally well proportioned and project only a short distance forwards of the main core of their host dwelling. This contributes to the impression that the front elevations of the majority of dwellings in the street scene are more or less flat, thus contributing to an appreciable sense of consistency, despite their mixed architectural styles. In this context, forward projecting gables of the scale and proportions proposed in this appeal are not a characteristic of the street scene in the area of the appeal site.
9. The proposed extension would not project closer to the road than the dwelling to the north, nor would it depart from the stepped building line along this part of the road. Several dwellings are set closer to the back edge of the road. The loss of a relatively small area of vegetation in the appeal property's front garden would have a negligible effect in the context of the planted frontages in the street scene. However, regardless of any impact on the building line, the appeal proposal would, for the above reasons, introduce an overly large extension in a prominent position that would be out of keeping with the scale, proportions and appearance of the host dwelling and those in the street scene.
10. For these reasons, the proposed extension would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling, and area, contrary to ULP Policies H8, GEN2 and S3, insofar as they require development, including extensions, to respect the scale, form and appearance of the host dwelling and those in the surrounding area and settlement. The appeal development would, for the same reasons, conflict with Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework"), which states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment.

Other Matters

11. The appeal proposal would increase the density of living accommodation at the appeal property, making a more effective use of the land and meeting the

appellants' need for additional living accommodation. I am referred to a supporting paragraph in the ULP stating that extensions to homes may be the only way that many households can afford to secure the accommodation they need. However, planning is normally concerned with land use in the public interest¹, and the benefits arising from the proposal would be very small given its scale. Together they would not be sufficient to outweigh the significant visual harm that I have identified above. Furthermore, the effect of the proposed development would likely remain long after the appellants' personal circumstances cease to apply.

12. The proposed extension would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of nearby properties. The Parish Council and nearby residents have raised no objections to it. However, an absence of harm and third-party objections are neutral factors that would not weigh in favour or against the proposal.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, the appeal proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area, sufficient to bring the development into conflict with the development plan as a whole. The appellants consider that the policies of the ULP are out of date under the terms of the Framework and that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites in its area.
14. Even if I were to consider the appeal proposal against the Framework's policies and no others, I have already found that it would adversely affect the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area, contrary to Framework Paragraph 135, and the Framework's objectives in Paragraph 131 of securing good design and the creation of high quality places, which are fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. The proposal's adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of making a slightly more effective use of the appeal site for living accommodation to meet the appellants' needs.
15. Consequently, when assessed under Framework Paragraph 11.d)ii., the adverse impacts of granting the appeal proposal planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, including having particular regard to making effective use of land and securing well designed places. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.
16. The proposed development would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other material considerations, including its benefits and the provisions of the Framework, that outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposal is unacceptable, and the appeal should be dismissed.

G Sylvester

INSPECTOR

¹ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 21b-008-20140306