



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 June 2025

by V Goldberg BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 JUNE 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/24/3358072

14 East View, Essendon, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL9 6HJ

- 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 Jan Bedregeanu against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Council.
 - The application Ref is 6/2024/1398/HOUSE.
 - The development proposed is a first floor extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 12 December 2024, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Having reviewed the changes, I am satisfied that they do not affect the substantive matters of the appeal and that proceeding without further consultation with the main parties would not be prejudicial to their respective cases.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to any relevant development plan policies and the Framework;
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and area; and;
 - whether any 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 inappropriate development

4. The site is located within the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 of the Framework sets out that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless

exceptions apply. One of these exceptions is the extension or alteration of a building, provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Policy SADM34 of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan¹ (Local Plan) aligns with the Framework and specifies that extensions and alterations to a building should not result, either individually or cumulatively, in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

5. The proposal would result in a substantial two storey wrap around extension that would dominate the host dwelling. In combination with existing extensions, the Council have indicated that it would represent a 141% increase in floorspace over and above the size of the original dwelling. This figure is not disputed. Given the significant bulk and mass arising from the scale of the proposal, it would represent a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building.
6. For the reasons above, the proposal does not fall within the exceptions to inappropriate development listed in Policy SADM34 of the Local Plan and it would therefore comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness

7. Openness is identified in the Framework as one of the Green Belt's essential characteristics. It has both spatial and visual aspects. The spatial impact of the proposal is significant, as it would significantly increase both the floor space and volume of the property.
8. With reference to the visual impact, the proposal would infill the gap between dwellings and block views of trees and undeveloped land to the rear. The erosion of this gap which provides an open spacious feeling between dwellings would have an adverse impact on the visual openness of the Green Belt. As a result, the proposed development would adversely impact openness resulting in significant harm to the Green Belt.

Character and Appearance

9. East View is a residential road with modest sized semi-detached dwellings lining either side of it. Properties tend to have pitched roofs with good symmetry between semi-detached pairs. Between dwellings, significant gaps provide views of the undeveloped land and trees to the rear. The consistency in the form of the dwellings combined with their layout positively contributes to the well designed, verdant and spacious nature of the road.
10. Despite matching materials, the roof being set down from the original ridge and the proposed front pitch of the roof matching the existing roof, the proposal would add significant bulk and mass to the host property and negatively affect the symmetry between the appeal site and the adjoining dwelling. The proposal would also unacceptably erode the gap between dwellings.
11. Whilst the first floor of the proposal would be half the width of the original dwelling when viewed from the front elevation, the rear section would extend across a large portion of the rear of the property. As a result, the proposal would fail to respect the modest design and size of the host property. Whilst the rear section of the proposal would not be visible from the road, this would not justify the failure of the

¹ Adopted in August 2016

proposal to respect neighbouring buildings and the surrounding context in terms of mass and scale.

12. Whilst properties in the road have been extended, alterations tend to be subservient single storey side and rear extensions. Reference is made to two storey extensions at 4 and 12 East View. However, these extensions are not directly comparable to the appeal scheme, as unlike the proposal, they do not extend beyond the side of the properties.
13. For the reasons above, the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the host property and area. It would therefore be contrary to policies SP1, SP9 and SADM16 of the Local Plan. These policies, amongst other things seek high design standards reflecting and respecting neighbouring buildings and the surrounding context in terms of mass and scale.

Planning Balance

14. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, I give substantial weight to the harm which would be caused to the Green Belt and its openness.
15. The proposal also results in harm to the character and appearance of the host property and area which I give significant weight. Whilst the proposal would provide additional accommodation for its occupants, it has not been demonstrated that alternative less harmful solutions could not achieve the same aim.
16. 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.

Conclusion

17. The development conflicts with the development plan and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

V Goldberg

INSPECTOR