
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 June 2025

by **A Owen MA BA(Hons) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/25/3364193

3 Rollswood Road, Welwyn, Hertfordshire AL6 9TX

- 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 Clayson against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Council.
 - The application Ref is 6/2024/2347/HOUSE.
 - The development proposed is erection of a two storey side extension, following demolition of existing single storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Preliminary matters

2. The plans show the appeal site, indicated by a red line, as including the house, its gardens and a substantial amount of the woodland behind it. The appellant says the red line does not intend to define or extend the residential curtilage and only shows the land owned by the appellant. I have taken the same view as an extension to the curtilage was not included in the description of development and curtilage is not necessarily defined by an appeal site boundary. I have therefore based my decision solely on the development as described on the application and appeal forms.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are
 - i) whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') and development plan policies;
 - ii) the effect of the development on openness;
 - iii) the effect on the character and appearance of the area;
 - iv) the effect on biodiversity; and
 - v) whether the harms to the Green Belt, and any other harms, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the development.

Reasons

Green Belt

4. Policy SADM 34 of the Local Plan (2023) sets out that extensions to buildings in the Green Belt must not be disproportionate over and above the size of the original

building. This is consistent with paragraph 154 of the Framework. The explanatory text to the policy explains that a quantitative and qualitative assessment will be undertaken to consider what is disproportionate.

5. In quantitative terms, the explanatory text states that an extension that would result in the dwelling being 50% larger than the original dwelling would be considered disproportionate. Although a single storey, flat roofed, side extension would be demolished as part of the proposal, the Council state that the two-storey extension that would replace it would result in the original dwelling being enlarged by 65% in floor area and 82% in footprint. These figures are not disputed by the appellant.
6. In qualitative terms, the scale, bulk and massing of the extension within the context of the site, and in the wider context, are considerations. The development would be fairly narrow and would be set back slightly from the façade of the existing house. However by being two-storey, including a pitched roof, the extension would be considerably taller than the extension it would replace. Moreover, in the context of the original house, the proposal, along with the other single storey extensions, would represent a significant sprawl of development on both sides of the original dwelling. In the wider context, I understand the property at No.1 has been subject of extensions which have added floorspace of over 200%. Nonetheless, due to extensive intervening vegetation, there is little intervisibility between the two houses, or any other nearby properties, and therefore the wider context has little bearing on the proposal in respect of these qualitative design elements.
7. Overall the extension, along with previous additions, would result in the original dwelling being extended disproportionately. The proposal would therefore be inappropriate in the Green Belt. As such it would conflict with policy SADM 34 and the Framework, as set out above.

Openness

8. Paragraph 153 of the Framework identifies that harm to the Green Belt, including harm to openness should be given substantial weight. Openness is commonly considered in spatial and visual terms.
9. Spatially there would be very little increase in footprint given the demolition work. But due to the volume of the extension at first floor and roof levels compared to the existing structure, there would be some loss of open space. Visually too, there would be a loss of openness as the extension would be seen from the road from directly in front of the driveway, and from points further west along the road where views across the front garden of No.1 are possible. Indeed from the latter position, the development would introduce built form anew as the existing extension cannot be seen from here.
10. As such the extension would result in some loss of openness in both spatial and visual terms. The harm would not be great due to the modest scale of the extension, but nonetheless, the weight to be given to that harm is substantial.

Character and appearance

11. Rollswood Road is a private road serving a few properties. There is a mix of bungalows and two-storey houses and no overriding pattern of design. The key

characteristics are their detached nature and the spacious and verdant gardens in which they sit. The host dwelling contributes positively to this character.

12. The house at the appeal site comprises a central two storey pitched roof section with a single storey pitched roof part to its side and then single storey flat roofed sections at each end, making for a rather wide dwelling. The variety in the form of the various parts of the house means the only consistency derives from the brick and tile used and the window design.
13. The extension would have a ridge height that is lower than that of the main part of the house, but higher than the single storey section at the other side of the dwelling. It would also incorporate half dormer windows, which are not a style of window found elsewhere on the property.
14. However it would replace a flat roofed extension, which appears to be constructed of wood, with glazed walls to its front and rear. This bears little consistency with the design of the rest of the house. The development would represent a considerable improvement insofar as it would be constructed of matching materials, have a similar glazing pattern and have a pitched roof form to match the main building. The proposal would allow the house to continue to contribute positively to the character of the area.
15. Consequently, the extension would not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling or the wider area. It would therefore accord with policies SP 1 and SP 9 of the Local Plan which aim to ensure development relates well to the site's character and its surroundings.

Biodiversity

16. As set out above, the existing building to be removed is a flat roofed wooden structure on a brick base with extensive glazing. At my site visit I saw no gaps or spaces in the structure that could offer a potential habitat for bats. As such the proposal would not be likely to have any adverse impact on protected species and so would accord with Local Plan policy SADM 16 which seeks to maintain biodiversity.

Other considerations

17. A Lawful Development Certificate¹ has been granted for a two-storey rear extension on the basis that it constitutes permitted development. The appellant states this would add a further 51sqm of floor area, which is larger than the appeal proposal. In spatial terms, the proposal would be less harmful than the lawful rear extension. However visually, the proposal would be more harmful as it would be seen from the road, whereas the rear extension would not be visible beyond the rear garden of the site. Therefore, overall, the development is of no great benefit in terms of openness.
18. It is understood that the development would provide a sensory room for the appellant's son who has special educational needs. However as set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance, planning is primarily concerned with land use in the public interest and not private interests such as personal circumstances. In any case the rear extension already granted permission would appear to provide a similar benefit in this regard. As such the proposal is of no advantage.

¹ Ref 6/2024/1774/LAWP

19. The development is inappropriate in the Green Belt and would cause harm to openness. These should both be given substantial weight. There would be no harm to the character and appearance of the area or to biodiversity, but an absence of harm in these respects does not carry positive weight. The other considerations do not clearly outweigh the substantial weight I give to the harm to the Green Belt. They do not therefore amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the development.

Conclusion

20. The proposal would fail to accord with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations that indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. As such, the appeal is dismissed.

A Owen

INSPECTOR