



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2025

by **G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/D/25/3364598

Laurels, The Heath, Hatfield Heath, Bishop's Stortford, CM22 7AB

- 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 A Starbuck against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/25/0095/HHF.
 - The development proposed is a two storey and single storey side addition to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

3. Saved Policy S6 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005) (ULP) allows for infilling, limited development or redevelopment compatible with the character of the settlement and its setting within the limits of four identified villages. The appeal site lies outside these on land identified as Green Belt. The ULP pre-dates the Framework, however, the supporting text explains that in such areas development will only be permitted if it accords with national planning policy on Green Belts.
4. The Framework states at paragraph 154 that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of a number of listed exceptions apply. These include, at paragraph (c), 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. Neither the Framework nor the ULP define 'disproportionate additions'; it is therefore a matter of judgement.

5. Laurels is set within a large plot and comprises a variety of buildings. The main two-storey house has been recently extended to the east side, and to the rear is a glazed link to a complex of outbuildings. Additionally, there is a range of other outbuildings, including a car barn located to the front of the site.
6. I have not been provided with any plans or specific details to indicate the configuration of the property in relation to the original building at the relevant date of July 1948. Nor have either party provided any quantitative figures in relation to the footprint or volume. It is, however, clear that the property has undergone a range of alterations and additions and has evolved over time.
7. The proposal would effectively replicate the recently added two-storey extension to the other side, together with a single-storey projection to the rear. In combination, these two extensions would significantly increase the size of this building and would increase the width of the frontage by approximately 75%. Additionally, with reference to the planning history, a first-floor extension was also added post 1948 (planning permission granted in 2014). The proposal would create symmetry to the building as it exists, and through the slight setback and setdown there would be a level of subservience, with these elements read as extensions. Nonetheless, this does not diminish their scale and massing and their combined size relative to the original form.
8. Thereby, cumulatively, the extensions and alterations to the building would result in disproportionate additions and therefore do not accord with exception 154 (c). The proposal would therefore constitute inappropriate development and is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness

9. The extension would have a spatial impact on the extent and spread of the built form. Due to its scale and location, aligning with the entrance drive, it would be a visible addition, and there would be a notable increase in the scale of the house. The property is situated some distance back from the road, and in the context of the site, existing buildings and mature landscaping, the overall impact on the wider appearance of the Green Belt would be limited. Nonetheless, there would be some localised harm to openness. Accordingly, it adds to the harm to the Green Belt.

Other Considerations

10. The proposal is well-designed and would be a high-quality extension in keeping with the existing property, including with regard to the materials and detailing. The extension can be accommodated within the site, and there would be no impact on the neighbours. While the Council, in their officer's report, has made reference to the impact on the character and appearance of the building, the reason for refusal is only in relation to the Green Belt.
11. However, the absence of harm and compliance with policy in relation to these other respects is not a positive consideration, as acceptability in design and amenity terms is to be expected. The lack of objections is also a neutral matter and does not address the conflict with the Framework.
12. The Framework promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Green Belt is, however, one of the protected areas (footnote 7) where the

application of policies within the Framework provides a strong reason for refusing development (paragraph 11).

13. The composition of the existing property is the result of a recently approved extension, and while enhancing the living accommodation, there is nothing to suggest that the proposal is to address a particular issue.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

14. The proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including openness. Even taken together, the other considerations put forward provide little support for the scheme. Therefore, they do not outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, and the very special circumstances necessary have not been demonstrated. There would be conflict with the Framework and the UDP, and there are no other material considerations which outweigh that finding.
15. Therefore, for the reasons given the appeal is dismissed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR