



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 July 2025

by Mark Caine BSc (Hons) MTPL MRTPI LSRA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/25/3359909

Springfield House, 48 Tilsworth Road, Stanbridge, Central Bedfordshire LU7 9JA

- 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 M Malik against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref is CB/24/02972/FULL.
 - The development proposed is the removal of an existing porch and the erection of a two storey front porch extension.
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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;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - If the proposed development would be inappropriate development, 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 necessary to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development

3. The appeal relates to a large 3 storey detached dwelling that is located in a backland location within a settlement of dwellings that have been washed over by the Green Belt.
4. Policy SP4 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 (2021) (Local Plan) includes a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and states that proposals will be assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and Planning Practice Guidance. The Framework establishes that new buildings within the Green Belt are inappropriate unless, amongst other things, it involves the extension of a building. This is providing it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

5. Neither the Framework nor the Core Strategy define 'disproportionate'. However, the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide, 2023 (SPD) states that, as a guiding principle, in order to be considered as proportionate the original building should not be added to by more than 60% of the footprint, floorspace and volume.
6. It is common ground between the main parties that Springfield House has previously been extended at 2 storey level to the side and rear with a raised roof. The Council's planning officer report also identifies that a detached triple garage has been granted planning permission, which I saw had been constructed on my site visit. The Council sets out that the total footprint of the proposal together with the other existing extensions would be approximately 168% more than the footprint of the original building. It also calculates that the floorspace of the original building would be expanded by 243% as a result of the proposal and existing extensions. I have no substantive reason to question these figures.
7. Based purely on these statistical measurements the proposed extension would lead to a substantial cumulative increase in the size of the original building. However, assessing proportionality is primarily an objective test based on size. Although the proposal would only have around a 5.3 metre² larger floor area than the existing porch that is to be demolished, it would add to the bulk of the existing building, and consequently result in a significant cumulative increase in the volume, scale and massing of the original building.
8. As such, adding the proposed two storey porch extension to the other extensions would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Consequently, the proposal would constitute inappropriate development that is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and in conflict with Local Plan Policy SP4 and advice within the SPD.

Openness

9. Paragraph 142 of the Framework advises that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. This openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt and has a spatial and visual aspect.
10. The proposal has been designed so that it would not harm the character and appearance of the property or the surrounding area. Nonetheless, the scale and bulk of the Springfield House would be increased. Whilst it is surrounded by dwellings the proposal would still be apparent from certain vantage points along Tilsworth Road. This would inevitably result in a reduction in the visual and spatial openness of the Green Belt, albeit to a modest extent.

Other Considerations

11. It has been put forward that the proposal would improve the functionality and appearance of the dwelling and that it would not have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the amenity, including the privacy of neighbouring occupiers. It has also been put to me that it would not create additional living space but would allow for larger pieces of furniture to be taken upstairs. However, these matters did not appear to be contentious in the appeal and the absence of harm in these respects would be neutral, and therefore not attract any positive weight in the overall Green Belt balance.

12. The lack of objections from local residents has also had no bearing on the outcome of this appeal as I have only had regard to the planning merits of the proposal that is before me.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

13. I have identified that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined by the Framework. The Framework establishes that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. In addition, it would also modestly reduce the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, even when taken together, the other considerations reviewed above do not clearly outweigh the harm that the proposal would cause. Consequently, the very special circumstances that are necessary to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist. As a result, the proposed development conflicts with Local Plan Policy SP4 as set out above, and with Section 13 of the Framework which both seek to protect Green Belt land.
14. The appeal scheme consequently conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations including the Framework that warrant taking a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Mark Caine

INSPECTOR