



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2025

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 August 2025

Section 78 Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/D/24/3357597

Proposal: Demolition of existing garage, erection of two storey side extension and single storey and first floor rear extensions at Hill Crest, Old Amersham Road, Denham, Buckinghamshire, SL9 7BG

Application Ref: PL/24/2556/FA

Decision – dismissed

Reasons

Issue – Whether inappropriate development in the Green Belt

1. Policy GB1 of the South Bucks District Local Plan 1999 (LP) generally restricts development in the Green Belt. However, certain forms of development are supported, including limited extension of existing dwellings.
2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless a stated exception applies. One such exception is 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.
3. What is disproportionate in the context of extensions to buildings in the Green Belt, is not defined in either the Framework or Policy GB1 of the LP. It must therefore be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
4. The Council has confirmed that the building on the appeal site has been previously extended since the 1950s and the original building¹ was 136 square metres. The Council asserts that the proposed development would enlarge the original building by more than 90%. The appellant has not disputed these figures, and I am therefore content to rely on them.
5. The proposal comprises a wraparound extension that would be, in part, two storeys. When considered in combination with the previous extension, the proposed development would substantially increase the floorspace and volume of the dwelling. Such enlargement would amount to a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building.
6. Consequently, the development would not meet the exception at Paragraph 154(c) of the Framework, and it would comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

¹ As it was on 1 July 1948

Issue – Effect on the openness of the Green Belt

7. The increased footprint and volume of the enlargement would result in the reduction of the spatial openness of the site. Furthermore, the site is prominent in the street scene and the proposal would substantially reduce the spacing between the building and the neighbouring dwelling, thereby reducing visual openness.
8. Consequently, the development would, albeit to a relatively small extent, harmfully reduce the openness of the Green Belt.

Issue – Effect on protected species

9. A preliminary roost assessment was carried out in July 2024. Droppings in the hanging tiles and on a window were found. The ecological report recommended that further emergence surveys are required to determine the bat species present, characterise the roost(s) and inform a Natural England European Protected Species licence.
10. A report informed by further emergence surveys was not submitted to the Council and I have no such report before me. Current advice states that it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by development, is established before planning permission is granted. For this reason, it would be inappropriate to secure ecological surveys through a planning condition as all relevant material considerations may not then be addressed in making the decision.
11. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that the development would not adversely affect protected species, or their habitat, and the proposal therefore conflicts with the policies cited in the decision notice.

Issue – Effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring property with particular regard to outlook and light

12. The proposed extension would breach the recommended positioning guidelines in the annex to the development plan. Nevertheless, it would be situated to the north of the affected neighbour, reducing effects on light. The neighbour's ground floor windows are already obstructed by a boundary fence and the first floor windows are positioned a sufficient distance from the proposal to avoid the extension having a dominating or enclosing effect. The relative positions of the dwellings means that the windows in the neighbouring dwelling would be affected to a limited extent.
13. Consequently, the development would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring dwelling with particular regard to outlook and light and therefore complies with the policies cited in the decision notice.

Other considerations

14. Additional space would be provided to the appellant and their family, but it has not been shown that their requirements cannot be met in a less harmful way. There would be economic benefits arising from construction, but these would be small scale. Limited weight is therefore ascribed to these matters.
15. The proposal would not cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area, which is a different matter to effects on the Green Belt. However, the absence of harm carries neutral weight.

16. I acknowledge that there might be other similar examples of this type of development nearby, but that does not remove the harm that I have identified in this case.

Green Belt balance

17. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt that would lead to a small loss of its openness. In accordance with the Framework, substantial weight is given to the harm that would be caused by this. In this case, the other considerations do not clearly outweigh this harm, and any other harm previously identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances required to justify the development do not exist.

Conclusion

18. There would be no harm to living conditions. However, there would be conflict with the other policies cited in the decision notice and, therefore, conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR