



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 August 2025

by **J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/D/25/3364024

4 Dacre Cottages, Berners Roding Road, Abbess Beauchamp And Berners Roding, Ongar, Essex CM5 0SY

- 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 Chris Whitelock against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is EPF/2320/24.
 - The development proposed is double storey side extension and partial extension with a flat roof. New side covered porch area. New fenestrations.
-

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 relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding 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 the proposal would be inappropriate development

3. The appeal property is a semi-detached two storey dwelling, located together with three dwellings of the same type within an open rural setting.
4. Policy DM4 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 Part One (2023) (DLP Part One) states that an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt 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. As such, the policy fully reflects the Framework in this regard¹.
5. Neither Policy DM4 nor the Framework define what might be considered to be a disproportionate addition. Consequently, there are different ways of assessing and

¹ Paragraph 154c).

measuring proportionality. The Council indicates that the extensions would result in an approximately 80% increase in volume, which is a significant change in size by this measure. The proposal would also materially increase the footprint of the original modest building. Furthermore, while the height of the two storey extension would be lower than that of the existing dwelling, the extensions as a whole would add considerable width and bulk to the side of the original building. Taking these findings as a whole, the proposal would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

6. The supporting text to Policy DM4 states that it is not intended to define 'disproportionate' since this would depend on the characteristics of the site locality, and existing buildings themselves in relation to the specific proposals. I note the appellant's contention that this means that extensions undertaken to the other three neighbouring dwellings should be taken into account in assessing the proportionality of the proposal. However, this would not be appropriate as the wording of both Policy DM4 itself and the Framework is clear that the only test to be applied is an assessment of a proposal against the size of the original building. More generally, the side extensions to the other properties were permitted some considerable time ago against a different policy context.
7. I have also had regard to the two appeal decisions referred to by the appellant. However, these involve different forms of development, which were assessed on their own merits in the particular circumstances pertaining in each case. As such, they are not directly comparable to the current appeal proposal, which I have also considered on its own merits.
8. Accordingly, based on the above findings, the proposal would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building, judged against both Policy DM4 of the DLP Part One and the Framework. As such, I conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
9. The proposed changes would result in a materially larger, bulkier building that would have some effect on the openness of the Green Belt, resulting in moderate harm. However, as the proposed development would occur within the established residential curtilage it would not harmfully encroach into the open countryside and, therefore, would not be contrary to a Green Belt purpose.

Character and appearance

10. While the proposed two storey extension would be a substantive addition to the host dwelling, the other three neighbouring dwellings have similar side extensions. As such, the proposal would not be uncharacteristic and would result in a balanced appearance to the pair of semi-detached dwellings.
11. The upper floor window to the rear would not be in keeping with the design and size of the existing fenestration. However, despite this, it would not be readily visible due to its position and, therefore, there would be no material harm. The open canopy to the side of the extended dwelling would have a limited presence and solidity and, therefore, would not be harmful.
12. Accordingly, for these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area. Consequently, there is no conflict with Policy DM9 of the DLP

Part One, which requires development to meet high design standards. Also, it is not contrary to the Framework, which advocates good design.

Other considerations and whether very special circumstances exist

13. The extensions would clearly be beneficial in increasing the amount of available living accommodation at the property, but no other considerations are put forward in support of the proposal. I acknowledge the appellant's contention that the Council failed to engage positively following the submission of the application. However, this matter is not within the scope of this appeal, which concerns the planning merits of the proposal.
14. The proposal would represent inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It would also result in moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The Framework requires that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. While the proposal would not be harmful to character and appearance, there are no other considerations raised in support of the development that would outweigh the harm identified to the Green Belt and, therefore, very special circumstances do not exist.

Conclusion

15. The proposal is contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. Accordingly, for the reasons given, it is concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR