



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 September 2025

by **P B Jarvis DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/25/3368662

4 Bullens Green Lane, Colney Heath, St Albans AL4 0QS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Wickens against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref. is 5/25/0567.
 - The proposed development is single storey front, part single, part two storey side extensions with loft conversion and front roof lights.
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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 relevant development plan policy and the National Planning policy Framework (the Framework)
 - the effect on Green Belt openness
 - whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm would be clearly outweighed by other considerations to amount to very special circumstances such as to justify the development

Reasons

3. 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 (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. However, neither the Framework nor the accompanying Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) define what is to be considered as a 'disproportionate addition'.
4. Policy 1 of the St Albans Local Plan (1994) (SALP) sets out the development types that may be permitted in the Green Belt including where there are 'very special circumstances' but its wording is not wholly consistent with the Framework and it makes no reference to the extension or alteration of a building. SALP Policy 13 relates to the extension or replacement of dwellings in the Green Belt but the wording of the section relating to extensions is also not wholly consistent with Framework paragraph 154c, using the phrases "significantly larger" or "different in

character” rather than disproportionate. In accordance with Framework paragraph 232, this reduces the weight that can be given to the above policies.

5. However, the Council’s Residential Extensions and Replacement Dwellings in the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004) (SPG) provides some supporting guidance to Policy 13. Whilst it also predates the Framework, it does note that national guidance had been updated since the adoption of the local plan to include the use of the phrase ‘disproportionate additions’. In this context, it sets out some guidance regarding the size of extension that may be allowable, though confirms that the figures provided are guidelines with some flexibility in application having regard to how specific proposals perform in respect of a number of criteria.
6. Table 2 in the SPG states that for side and rear extensions increases in cubic content between 90 and 180 cubic metres or an increase in floorspace between 20 to 40 % may usually be acceptable, subject to an overall maximum of 300 cubic metres. As noted by the Inspector dealing with a recent appeal at the neighbouring property, No. 2 Bullens Green Lane¹, these size guidelines provide a useful starting point in terms of a numerical analysis, but it is evident that the Council apply them in a flexible manner having regard to the site-specific criteria.
7. The proposed extensions amount to an increase in floorspace of 109 square metres equating to a 136% increase, significantly exceeding the range set out in the SPG. The overall increase in volume would be 313 cubic metres, also in excess of the above guidance figures.
8. When considering the various site-specific criteria set out in the SPG, it is of note that the appeal site is located within a row of other, similar semi-detached dwellings which front Bullens Green Lane, many of which have been extended. In these views, whilst the proposed extensions reduce the gap to the side of the existing dwelling, wide gaps are not a particular feature of the street scene given the number and variety of side extensions that have been permitted to many of the nearby properties.
9. The appeal site is also adjoined by dwellings along Roestock Lane to the rear, (north), as referred to by the appellant. This results in a somewhat built up character to the sites’ surroundings, though it also lies close to the north-eastern edge of the village from where views of the surrounding countryside are possible. The bulk of the extensions are to the rear and these would be visible from Roestock Lane to the north, albeit screened to an extent by existing mature trees on the adjoining site and within the roadside verge. Whilst the proposal replaces an existing single storey rear extension and detached garage, it would nevertheless be considerably more prominent given the additional bulk that would be introduced at the upper levels of the dwelling, particularly the hip to gable addition, first floor crown roof addition and large rear dormer.
10. Taking all the above into account, I find that the proposal would result in a significantly larger building on the appeal site. Consequently, it would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. It would thus not satisfy Framework paragraph 154(c) and as such it would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would also fail to comply with SALP policy 13 and the SPG guidance.

¹ APP/B1930/D/23/3332109 dated 11 April 2024

Effect on Green Belt openness

11. Given that I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it is necessary to consider the effect on Green Belt openness as this is not part of the assessment under Framework paragraph 154(c). As noted above not only would the proposed extensions be of considerable size compared to that of the original dwelling they would also be highly visible within the area, particularly from Roestock Lane to the rear. However, given that the proposal would be mainly viewed within the context of the surrounding built context this impact would be limited.

Whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, such as to demonstrate very special circumstances to justify the proposal.

12. The proposed development comprises inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and which should not be approved except in very special circumstances. There would also be harm to Green Belt openness. Substantial harm is to be given to any Green Belt harm in accordance with Framework paragraph 153.
13. The appellant has referred to a number of nearby properties where it is argued that similarly sized, even larger extensions, have been permitted. However, given the different position of these dwellings compared to the appeal site, the assessment against the site-specific factors may have led to different findings. Particular reference is made to 130 Roestock Lane and the approved plans provided appear to show that the overall size of the extensions was greater than the appeal scheme. However, the proposal would also have been assessed against the SPG criteria taking account of, amongst other things, the type of extension, the location of the dwelling and visibility of the proposals. Having regard to these matters, the proposals are not directly comparable. The reference to other larger residential developments in the village are not comparable given the different considerations that would have been relevant.
14. The Council also cited conflict with SALP Policies 69 and 72 which relate to general design and residential extensions, but no specific conflict with these policies was identified in the officer report and it was noted that the proposal would perform moderately to well against the SPG criteria relating to policy 72. I find no conflict in this regard.
15. However, for the reasons given above, I have found that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are no other considerations that clearly outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt arising therefore very special circumstances have not been demonstrated. As a result, the proposal conflicts with SALP Policies 1 and 13, the SPG and with the Framework.

Conclusion

16. I therefore conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

P B Jarvis

INSPECTOR