



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2025

by A Phillips MPlan BA CertHE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/25/3372606

High Crest, Rectory Road, Steppingley, Bedfordshire MK45 5AT

- 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 and Mrs Richard Long against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref is CB/25/01353/FULL.
 - The development proposed is single storey side extension and alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council in the Planning Officer Delegated Report states that the Green Belt is named South Bedfordshire Green Belt, while the policy provided refers to only Central Bedfordshire Green Belt that extends across much of the south of the district. I have used the name in the relevant policy within the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan July 2021 (Local Plan). However, the name of the Green Belt is not considered to be material to my decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (Framework) and relevant development plan policies.
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness and purposes of 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 the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Is the proposal inappropriate development?

4. The site is located within the Central Bedfordshire Green Belt. The current building is a single storey bungalow with a detached garage to the side. To the rear of the site is a public recreation ground.
5. Paragraph 153 of the Framework requires that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including its openness. It goes on to state 'Inappropriate

development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances’.

6. Paragraph 154 of the Framework defines that development is inappropriate development unless ‘it 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’.
7. The Central Bedfordshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance that any extension to a dwelling within the Green Belt should not exceed 60% of footprint, floorspace or volume. The Council has commented that the original bungalow footprint has been extended from 89.7sqm to 138.3sqm. The proposed extension seeks to increase the footprint to 202.7 sqm, which equates to 126% increase and significantly exceeds the limit in the SPD. The proposal would, therefore, be a disproportionate addition to the original dwelling.
8. The proposed extension, by virtue of its size is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and on this basis causes substantial harm to the Central Bedfordshire Green Belt.

Openness and purposes of the Green Belt

9. The purpose of the Central Bedfordshire Green Belt is to maintain the openness of the countryside, preventing the coalescence of several settlements and protection of dispersed settlement patterns.
10. With the proposal contained within the existing residential plot, the proposal would not cause any additional harm regarding coalescence of settlements or loss of dispersed settlement patterns.
11. The proposal seeks, in part, to infill the gap between the existing bungalow and garage. This would reduce the through views between the public open space to the rear and Rectory Road to the front of the site. The proposal, therefore, would cause loss in the public perception of the openness of the Green Belt. The loss of this view between two public spaces is minor and, on this basis, only causes limited harm.

Do other considerations amount to Very Special Circumstances?

12. With the proposal being inappropriate development it should only be allowed if there is a very special circumstances as detailed under paragraph 153 of the Framework.
13. It is noted that there is a fallback position, which from the evidence before me would lead to the same footprint increase though seeks to extend the dwelling primarily to the rear of the site. The Council has also stated that if this proposal was allowed, both extensions could be built out leading to a greater footprint increase to the original dwelling. With no evidence to the contrary or legal agreement to revoke the previous permission, I only grant limited weight in favour on this basis.
14. It is also noted that the appellant is seeking to transition the dwelling to renewable energy to heat the dwelling and improve energy efficiency as part of the proposal to. Given that some of these measures could be likely achieved without extending the property, this only holds limited weight in favour of the proposal.

15. It is accepted that the proposal is well designed that would be in keeping with the street scene. However, high quality design is the minimum standard set under paragraph 131 of the Framework. In addition, the submitted existing floor plan shows that the proposal can already be used as a family home. On this basis, the enlargement of the living space and the quality of the design is a neutral factor in my determination.
16. The other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and therefore do not form very special circumstances. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be a disproportionate extension in the Green Belt and there are no very special circumstances to justify allowing this development. On this basis, the proposal does not accord with Policy SP4 of the Local Plan or Section 11.32 of the SPD that sets the presumption against inappropriate development in line with the Framework, as well as providing guidance on the limits of additions to the original dwelling in the Green Belt. The proposal also does not accord with chapter 13 of the Framework, specifically paragraphs 153 and 154, as detailed above.

Other Matters

17. I have had regard to the duties contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. However, I am of the same view as the Council that the proposal would have a neutral impact on the Conservation Area and the Grade II Listed building Public House known as The French Horn. In addition, the proposal is not considered to have any material impact on the setting of the local church of Saint Lawrences. On this basis, the proposal accords with chapter 16 of the Framework.
18. The appellant has stated that the Council has failed to provide good customer service. However, the way in which the Council has dealt with the application is not a matter for me to consider in an appeal under section 78.

Conclusion

19. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.

A Phillips

INSPECTOR