



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 November 2025

by David Murray BA (Hons) DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 DECEMBER 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/25/3374220

10 Gibbons Close, Sandridge, ST. ALBANS, AL4 9EP

- 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 Mower against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/25/1074.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of conservatory, proposed full width ground floor extension with part first floor rear extension, part ground and first floor front extension, garage conversion and internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of conservatory, proposed full width ground floor extension with part first floor rear extension, part ground and first floor front extension, garage conversion and internal alterations at 10 Gibbons Close, ST. ALBANS, AL4 9EP, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/25/1074, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule.

Main issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal constitutes ‘inappropriate development’ in the Green Belt; and
 - If inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to very special circumstances.

Reasons

Background

3. The appeal site contains a semi-detached, two storey, property situated at the end of a cul-de-sac of similar properties which form a residential area in the village of Sandridge. The area is also part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. To the north, south and west of the site there are other residential properties while there are open fields to the east.
4. It is proposed to erect the extensions described above which in effect would add a gable projection front and back to the house with a roof ridge slightly lower than the existing main roof.

Policy context

5. The development plan comprises the St. Albans Local Plan Review (1994) (SALPR) and the Sandridge Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036. Within the SALPR the main relevant policy for this case is saved Policy 13 concerning extensions in the Green Belt however this is substantially different to and not consistent with the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). This limits the weight that can be given to the policy.
6. The Council advises that it is also preparing a new local plan which has been submitted for examination, but the Council agrees that at this time it has limited weight. The main issues should therefore be assessed primarily in relation to the provision of the Framework.

Whether 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt

7. Guidance in paragraph 153 of the Framework indicates that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 set out categories of development which are exceptions to being inappropriate and the relevant one for this case is (c) concerning the extension or alteration of a building.
8. An extension is not inappropriate where it would not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. The term 'original building' is defined in the Glossary as the building as it existed on the 1st July 1948, or as built, if it was constructed after that date.
9. The Council submits that, taking account of the previous extensions to be demolished, the proposals would add about 62 sq.m to the floor space of the original dwelling at about 112 sq.m which would be an increase of about 55%. The proposed additions would not be over the limit on volume but they would exceed the permitted levels of between 20% and 40% increase in floorspace, as set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004) (SPG) on extensions and replacement dwellings.
10. The SPG can only be given limited weight because it appears to stem from Policy 13 in the SALPR. Nevertheless, in relation to the policy in the Framework, and in the absence of any other guidance, I find that the scale of extensions proposed, at over a 50% increase, amounts to a disproportionate addition to the original property. On this basis the proposal has to be considered as inappropriate development although I would assess the level of harm as moderate rather than substantial.
11. The appellants suggest that the proposal should be considered under part 154(g) of the Framework but this relates to limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL). However the Glossary to the Framework indicates that the term PDL should exclude, amongst other forms, land in built up areas such as residential gardens. This exception therefore does not apply to the appeal proposal.

Other considerations

12. The appellants put forward other considerations in support of the proposal. In particular I note that the other half of the semi-detached property has already been extended at the front with a forward projection in a similar manner to the appeal

scheme. The neighbouring extension has a low hipped roof rather than a gable end as shown in the appeal proposal, but this difference would not be material to the overall appearance of the building. The appeal proposal would help restore the symmetrical pattern of the original pair of semi-detached properties.

13. At the visit I also noted that similar front projection extensions existed at No's 7, 29 and 30 Gibbons Close. These additions reflect the general developed character of the neighbourhood in the local part of the village. In this context, the extensions proposed would not harm the openness of the Green Belt nor be at odds with the purposes of Green Belt designation as set out in paragraph 143 of the Framework.
14. The extension at the rear would be seen in the context of the line of semi-detached houses and other built development to the south of the site and would not harm the openness of the Green Belt in either spatial or visual terms from the open field to the east.
15. Representations from a neighbour at application stage also raised concern about the close proximity of the extensions to the shared boundary of the properties and the effect on the access to pipework. However, the direct effect on a neighbouring property and access to pipework are private matters or are subject to other legislation such as the Party Wall Act. They are not determinative issues in this appeal. I also note the letter of support for the proposal from other local residents.

Planning and Green Belt balance

16. On the main issue, I have found that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt as it would involve disproportionate additions over and above the scale of the original property when built. The proposal would therefore conflict with the provisions of paragraphs 153/154 of the Framework. Great weight has to be given to this harm which I assess as moderate.
17. However this has to be balanced with other considerations. The proposed extension particularly to the front of the property would make the pair of semi-detached properties more symmetrical now and this would reinstate part of their basic character. In visual terms the proposal would not be appear out of place with other properties in the street scene, some of which also have a similar front of extensions. The proposal would not harm the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with any of the purposes of its designation.
18. These other considerations are relatively unique to the appeal site and its setting in the street scene and village environs. Taken together they clearly out-weigh the moderate harm caused. I am satisfied that they constitute 'very special circumstances' and therefore the appeal should be allowed.

Conditions

19. In terms of conditions the Council recommends that four standard conditions be imposed, regarding commencement of the development; accord with the submitted plans; and external materials to match the existing ones. These are necessary for clarity and to maintain the appearance of the area. A further one is recommended which requires that first floor flank windows facing 10a Gibbons Close and 15 Highfield Road are glazed with obscure glass and have their opening restricted to avoid overlooking. In the circumstances of this site this condition is reasonable and

necessary to maintain the living conditions of the occupiers of these neighbouring properties. I will therefore impose this condition.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

David Murray

INSPECTOR

Schedule of conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing No's HET 1827/01 A and HET 1827/02A.
- 4) The windows to be created in the first-floor side elevation facing towards No. 10a Gibbons Close and 15 Highfield Road shall be glazed in obscure glass and shall be non-opening below a height of 1.7metres taken from internal finished floor level. The window(s) shall not thereafter be altered in anyway without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.