



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2026

by **D Ellis MPlan MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/D/25/3373671

Waters Farm Cottage, 252 Ongar Road, Stapleford Abbots, Romford, Essex RM4 1RD

- 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 Carl Isherwood against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is EPF/0732/25.
 - The development proposed is single storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of development plan policy and the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (the Framework);
 - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - if it would be inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Inappropriate Development

3. The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework) establishes that new buildings in the Green Belt are inappropriate except in certain circumstances as listed in paragraphs 154 and 155. Policy DM4 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 Part 1 (LP) is consistent with the Framework as it includes a general presumption against inappropriate development. Part C(iii) of DM4 and paragraph 154 c) of the Framework both allow for 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.
4. Neither the Framework nor LP Policy DM4 define 'disproportionate'. However, the supporting text to DM4 does state that the definition of 'disproportionate' would depend on the characteristics of the site locality and the existing buildings themselves in relation to the specific proposals.

5. The appeal property is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling which has been previously extended. When taken together, the appellant states that the previous and proposed extensions would increase the floor area of the original property by 82%. However, size can be more than a function of floor area. In this case, the footprint, bulk and mass of the building have already been considerably increased through the previous extension. The appeal scheme would further increase the footprint and massing of the dwelling by a not insignificant amount.
6. The appellant asserts that the combined increase in floor area would match that of the approved extensions at the adjoining property at 2 Waters Cottages¹ (No 2). Consistency in planning decisions is important. However, the extensions at No 2 include a two-storey extension with the resultant footprint of No 2 being significantly smaller than that of the extended appeal property. Accordingly, based on the evidence before me I am not persuaded that the approved extensions at No 2 are directly comparable to the appeal scheme.
7. Consequently, and taking all of the above into account, the combination of the previous and proposed extensions would amount to disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. This would result in conflict with both LP Policy DM4, the aims of which I have set out above, and the Framework.

Openness

8. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt, and one of the fundamental aims of the Green Belt is to keep land permanently open. The Planning Practice Guidance states that openness is capable of having both spatial and visible aspects, so that both the visual impact of the development and its size may be relevant². The land take and mass of the proposed extension, despite its contextually modest size, would take up otherwise undeveloped space in the Green Belt. As such, there would be an unavoidable reducing effect on the spatial aspect of its openness. There would be a more limited effect on the visual aspect given the existing buildings present in the immediate area. Overall, and taking into account one of the fundamental aims of Green Belt policy being to keep land permanently open, the appeal scheme would reduce the openness of the Green Belt. This would also conflict with the Framework. This harm would be in addition to that caused by the proposed development's inappropriateness.

Other Considerations

9. The precedent of the approved extensions at No 2 has been discussed above. The appellant states that the existing extensions at the appeal property and No 2 have eroded the original symmetry of the appearance of the pair of dwellings, and that the proposed extension would not have a significant effect in this regard. However, as this would be a lack of harm, the effect on the character and appearance of the dwelling would be neutral.

Other Matters

10. The appeal site is within the setting of the Grade II listed barn at Waters Farm. The historic nature, design and materials of the barn contribute strongly to its

¹ Planning application ref. EPF/1244/22

² Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-013-20250225

significance. Given the location and modest scale, in context, of the proposed extension, the proposal would not have a significant effect on the setting of the listed building.

Conclusion

11. The proposed extension would cause harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness and through reducing openness, to which substantial weight should be afforded. Development should not be approved unless the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Those I have identified would not attract sufficient weight to clearly outweigh the totality of the harm and subsequent development plan conflict. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposed development do not exist.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

D Ellis

INSPECTOR