



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 October 2026

by Jonathan Price BA(Hons) DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 October 2026

Appeal Ref: 6012629

Standelfield, Standhill Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9AE

- 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 Earl Kennaugh against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 26/00523/FPH.
 - The development proposed is two storey and part first floor front extension, single storey rear extension, installation of front and side canopies and erection of attached double garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Government published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) on 17 August 2026, after this appeal was made. Although this makes substantial amendments, its policies over achieving well-designed places remain generally consistent with those of the previous version. With regard to the issues in this appeal, it has not been found necessary to seek the further views of parties over this recently published Framework.
3. The refusal notice erroneously references North Herts Local Plan¹ (LP) Policy D3 (protecting living conditions), rather than Policy D2 (house extensions). Having alerted the main parties to this mistake, my decision takes account of LP Policy D2, rather than Policy D3 over which no conflict had been found.

Main Issue

4. The effects of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.

Reasons

5. Standelfield is a large, detached house occupying an elevated position in the centre of a mature garden with surrounding trees and vegetation. Evidently this dwelling once occupied larger grounds, parts of which have since provided the sites for adjacent developments. Nevertheless, this large, square plan dwelling is comfortably accommodated within its remaining plot, with ample space for the additions proposed to three of its sides.

¹ North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031, adopted 8 November 2022.

6. The Council's refusal was based on the cumulative harm of these additions on the character and appearance of the existing house and its surrounding area. As the surrounding development is of a varied nature, and Standelfield stands apart from this, considerations relate mainly to the impacts on the host dwelling. Historic environment considerations do not apply, as the house is neither listed nor within a conservation area. However, as the appellant fully acknowledges, this does not avoid the policy requirement for a high quality of design, in keeping with the building's character and that of its surroundings.
7. The proposal to extend the dwelling is acceptable in principle, and satisfactory in terms of protecting neighbouring living conditions, access, parking and all other relevant planning considerations, beyond that in dispute. However, the absence of harm in these other regards comprise neutral factors and provide no counterbalance to any adverse effects relating to character and appearance. Despite mature vegetation partly screening the property in external views, there remains a requirement in LP Policy D2 for any extensions to be sympathetic to the existing house.
8. The Council's refusal is based on the scale, massing, form and composition of the proposals resulting in visually dominant and poorly integrated additions to the host dwelling. The appellant's case to the contrary, is that the matching external materials and joinery, consistent roof forms and complementary detailing proposed would provide a coherent overall design to the extended house.
9. To my mind, this house has no obvious front and rear, with the square plan and spacious setting providing four equally significant and architecturally coherent elevations. The three extensions proposed relate to different angles of the house, set apart from each other but in combination found by the Council to be poorly integrated, 'bolt-on' additions of a visually intrusive and incongruous form.
10. The single-storey extension would be of a flat roofed design with raised rooflights, of a subservient height and scale to the main house. It would project from the elevation opposite to that fronting the entrance from Sandy Grove, which faces onto an open area of raised lawn. This is currently a pleasing elevation, with a row of classically proportioned upstairs sash windows, and a downstairs bay window. The drawing of the existing rear elevation shows the central downstairs window higher than it actually is, as I noticed its sill matches that of the adjacent bay window. As with the existing elevations generally, the drawings do not portray the oversailing roof at the eaves which is a strong feature of the architectural character of this house. Whilst not visible from the public realm, this side of the house contributes to its overall cohesive character. Although occupying a side of this elevation that is mainly blank, apart from a somewhat nondescript door, this extension would appear rather jarring, detracting harmfully from the square plan, plain elevational character of the house design.
11. To be read visually as a later addition, this extension should at least be set back slightly from the main wall of the left side of the house. The drawings are contradictory and insufficiently clear over this critical detail. This single storey extension therefore also harms the appearance of the left-hand side elevation of the original house. This side faces onto a well wooded area, where the grounds slope steeply away from the dwelling. This vegetation screens the property in external views. Nevertheless, this extension remains unsympathetic to the appearance of this aspect of the house. Although the brickwork is intended to

match the main house, the fenestration proposed on the side elevation of the extension contrasts somewhat with its adjacent part. This might matter less if this contemporary addition was differentiated by being set back from the side wall of the main house, which the plans are insufficiently clear over.

12. The attached side garage would be a larger addition but still subordinate in height and scale to the main house. Its rather plain design, including what appear from the drawings to be rather ordinary garage doors, would appear anachronistic on a house which, according to a date plate, was built in 1906. Attached to the main house, this double garage would also detract from its appearance from two sides, compounding the harm deriving from the single storey extension. It strikes me that a detached coach house design might have appeared more contemporaneous with the architecture of the main house, avoiding the incongruous 'bolt-on' appearance of an attached double garage. The proposed garage roof plan suggests this to be dual pitched with gable ends, whereas the elevations indicate this as hipped to all four sides. Again, the conflicting and poorly detailed drawings provide little assurance that an attached garage as proposed would fit in acceptably with the architectural character of the main house.
13. The side of the dwelling viewed from the entrance from Sandy Grove, nominally the front elevation, displays rather unbalanced fenestration but remains generally in character with the house as a whole. The two storey and part first floor front extension proposed to this would project outwardly a relatively small amount and attempts to provide somewhat better balance. Its hipped roof incorporates an existing chimney, although the proposed roof plans do not demonstrate how this would be managed. This two storey extension, and its associated roof configuration, appears a complex arrangement to provide just two upstairs en-suite bathrooms and somewhat incidental ground floor storage space. The cantilevered first floor section is supported by a pillar, with existing ground floor windows retained below. These pillars continue along the elevation, topped by a glazed canopy and framing the other ground floor openings. Along with the entrance canopies on the other side doors, these features seem somewhat at odds with the original character of the house. The Council's concerns over the front elevation appearing overly crowded and unbalanced, with an incoherent arrangement of fenestration and competing architectural features resulting in a lack of visual harmony, appear to me to be well founded.

Conclusion

14. The drawings fail to accurately portray the existing house architecture, including the array of chimneys, or demonstrate how the proposed additions would integrate successfully with this. In combination, these changes would erode the simple form and established character of the property, by appearing a series of unsympathetic and incoherent additions. As such, the principal conflict is with LP Policy D2, which requires extensions to be sympathetic to the main house. Although the house has its own unique character and spacious setting, distinct from the surrounding built environment, these proposals nonetheless fail to respond positively to this local context, in further conflict with LP Policy D1 over sustainable design. Furthermore, this scheme would not be the good design that LP Policy SP9 considers to be a key aspect of sustainable development.
15. I am mindful that the unlisted status of the house means there is limited control over certain changes, some of which might be achievable through permitted

development rights. However, these factors are not argued in the appellant's case, and my decision responds to the proposals before me. These would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings. This gives rise to a conflict with the LP when considered as a whole, which continues to reflect the key principles for well-designed places set out in the revised Framework. Material considerations would not indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan and, as a consequence, I conclude the appeal fails.

Jonathan Price

INSPECTOR