



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 May 2025

by **Les Greenwood MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/W/25/3360819

The Bungalow, Croft Lane, Gailey, Staffordshire ST19 5PY

- 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 Ms Amy Perkins against the decision of South Staffordshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01003/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the change of use of land to use for the stationing of a single mobile home for use as living accommodation ancillary to use of The Bungalow as a single dwelling house (retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

2. The mobile home was in place in a field to the rear of The Bungalow at the time of my site visit. It previously benefitted from temporary planning permissions and is now stated to be used as ancillary accommodation by a member of the appellant's family, living as part of the household. Both main parties have treated the mobile home as falling within the legal definition of a caravan¹, rather than as built development, and I see no reason to depart from that approach. The appeal proposal is effectively for continued siting and use of the mobile home as ancillary accommodation.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - i) Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, including assessment of the impact on openness and Green Belt purposes;
 - ii) The effect on the character and appearance of the local area; and
 - iii) If the development is inappropriate, whether the 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 necessary to justify the development.

¹ With reference to the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate in the Green Belt

4. The Bungalow is a sizeable chalet-style bungalow in a large plot, set within short row of properties in the countryside and the Green Belt, outside of any significant settlement. Paragraph 153 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 explains that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the listed exceptions applies. These exceptions include: (h)(v) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds) which would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Policy GB1 of the South Staffordshire Council Core Strategy (CS) makes much the same allowance for changes of use, including a similar exception at sub-paragraph (f).
5. The site adjoins open countryside and the existing siting of the mobile home extends development away from the house and its garden. Although not a building in planning terms, it is a significantly sized structure which is visible from the street, well to the rear of The Bungalow and neighbouring dwellings. It also spreads or intensifies domestic activity within the field. Although some views of the mobile home are screened by hedges and other features, I find that it does cause significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt. It furthermore conflicts with the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, as set out at Framework paragraph 143(c). The proposal therefore does not meet the exceptions allowed by Framework paragraph 154(h)(v) and CS policy GB(f).
6. The December 2024 revisions to the Framework introduce a further potential exemption to the generally restrictive Green Belt policies, through the concept of the 'grey belt'. This policy reference considerably post-dates the adoption of the CS, so is not mentioned in that document. The Framework is the more up-to-date policy document in this regard.
7. One limb of the definition of the grey belt set out in Annex 2 of the Framework refers to previously developed land (PDL). The appellant advises that the site was formerly a coal yard and argues that it is PDL. From my observations on site, however, there appears to be little remaining evidence of this use. I take the view that the remains of any permanent structures on site have now blended into the landscape sufficiently that the site does not meet the definition of PDL, as also set out in Annex 2 of the Framework.
8. The site does nevertheless meet the definition of the grey belt in Annex 2 because it does not strongly contribute to any of the Green Belt purposes (a), (b), or (d) in Framework paragraph 143: it does not assist in checking the sprawl of any large built-up area, does not help to prevent neighbouring towns from merging and does not help to preserve the setting and character of a historic town.
9. Framework paragraph 155 allows for the development of grey belt land subject to 4 criteria. The key criterion here is: (b) that there must be a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. I accept that there is a need for accommodation to meet the needs of the family, whether as an ancillary provision or as part of the dwellinghouse. This is a personal need, however, rather than a

wider public need. I furthermore see no clear need for the accommodation to be located in the field rather than within the garden area. There appears to be more than sufficient space for this to happen, and without necessarily causing any greater visual intrusion on the street scene. Utilities could presumably be reconnected to facilitate this.

10. The appellant refers to a serious shortage of deliverable housing sites within the District. With reference to Framework Footnote 8, however, this proposal does not involve the provision of any housing units so would not significantly affect the supply of housing. Also, this shortage of housing sites would not cause the relevant development plan policies for this proposal to be out-of-date (excepting in regard to the grey belt, as above). Again, there is not a demonstrable need for this proposal.
11. I therefore find that the proposal does not meet the exception for the development of grey belt land set out at Framework paragraph 155 either. As no exceptions apply, the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in conflict with the Framework and CS policy GB1.

Character and appearance

12. This part of the countryside contains a scattering of residential, commercial and other development, interspersed with areas of green, pastoral landscape. These green areas include the land immediately to the rear of The Bungalow and its neighbours. The mobile home stretches development to the rear, intruding into and urbanising this part of the countryside. It is a low structure of functional design, which helps it blend in to some extent, but it lacks any design quality and detracts from the general character of the area.
13. Overall, I conclude that the proposal causes minor but not insignificant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. It therefore also conflicts with CS policy EQ4, which aims to maintain and where possible enhance the intrinsic rural character and local distinctiveness of the landscape.

Whether very special circumstances exist

14. I have dealt with the need for the accommodation above. I recognise that there is very likely a fall-back position of moving the mobile home into the curtilage of The Bungalow. This would have the benefit of reducing encroachment into the countryside, so does not weigh strongly in favour of the proposed location outside of the curtilage.
15. Taking into account all matters raised, I find nothing that would that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and loss of openness, and the harm to local character and appearance. The very special circumstances required by Framework paragraph 153 therefore do not exist in this case.

Conclusion

16. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the Framework. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR