
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2025

by **C Carpenter BA MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/24/3358096

Land north-west of Meadfields Farm, Three Gates Lane, Haslemere GU27 2LD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Nick and Jane Owen against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PIP/2024/01880.
The development proposed is a detached two-storey dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for residential development comprising a maximum of one dwelling at land north-west of Meadfields Farm, Three Gates Lane, Haslemere GU27 2LD in accordance with the terms of the application Ref PIP/2024/01880.

Application for Costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs Nick and Jane Owen against Waverley Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first stage (permission in principle) establishes whether a site is suitable in principle and the second stage (technical details consent) is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages.
4. The scope of considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent technical details consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
5. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated in December 2024 and the PPG on Green Belt was updated in February 2025. The appellant's final comments were submitted after publication of the revised PPG and referred to it in relation to grey belt land. In the interests of procedural fairness, I gave the Council an opportunity to comment on this additional matter.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons

7. The suitability of the site for residential development is disputed because the parties disagree over whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the Framework and relevant development plan policies.
8. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states development in the Green Belt is inappropriate subject to various exceptions. These include d) limited infilling in villages, and g) redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 155 also provides for an exception on grey belt land.
9. Policy RE2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (WLP) Part 1 2018 (WLP1) permits proposals in the Green Belt where they do not conflict with the exceptions listed in national planning policy. Consequently, although this Policy predates the recent changes to national Green Belt policy, it remains consistent with the Framework. Policy DM14 of the WLP Part 2 2023 (WLP2) reflects the exception for limited infilling in villages and sets out factors to be taken into account when assessing impacts on the openness of the Green Belt. The latter are broadly consistent with the PPG on this topic¹. I therefore give both Policies full weight for the purposes of this appeal.
10. Haslemere is identified in the WLP spatial strategy (Policy SP2) as one of four main settlements in the Borough, with villages listed separately. It has a Town Council, and I observed it to be a moderately large settlement with numerous shops and facilities and several features not usually found in a village, such as a railway station, superstore and leisure centre. I therefore find Haslemere is not a village. Consequently, whether or not the site is in Haslemere, and whether or not the proposal would comprise limited infilling, the exception at Framework paragraph 154d) does not apply.
11. The appeal site is part of the extensive grounds of the dwelling known as Meadfields Farm. It is laid to lawn and bordered by a mix of ornamental shrubs and trees, making it suitable for activities generally associated with a residential garden, such as gardening, sitting out and children's play. I am therefore satisfied the site is part of a residential garden, notwithstanding that it is separated from the host dwelling by the access road. The area surrounding the site is semi-rural, interspersed with occasional dwellings in relatively large plots. This is not consistent with the characteristics of a built-up area, such as a town or suburban area with a denser pattern of development. Whilst residential gardens in built-up areas are excluded from the definition of PDL in the glossary of the Framework, those outside built-up areas are not. As such, the site comprises PDL.
12. A new dwelling would introduce built form where there is none at present, which would detract from spatial openness on the site. That said, notwithstanding topographical variation in the area, the site is generally secluded from public view so the new house would not be easily seen from Three Gates Lane. In addition, dense vegetation surrounding the site would afford glimpses only of the new dwelling from the access road and neighbouring properties. Activity levels would increase, but to a limited degree given only one dwelling is proposed and the site is already part of a residential garden. Together, these factors would mitigate the

¹ Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 64-013-20250225

impact of the development on visual openness. Overall, whilst openness in this area of Green Belt would be harmed, the level of harm would not be substantial.

13. I therefore find the proposal satisfies Framework exception 154(g) and would thus not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. I also find no conflict with WLP1 Policy RE2 or WLP2 Policy DM14. In these circumstances, there is no need for me to consider whether the proposal would also satisfy the exception for grey belt land.
14. The appeal site falls within the 5km buffer zones of the Wealden Heaths II and East Hampshire Special Protection Areas, which are designated European sites protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. On the evidence before me, which includes advice from Natural England, the threshold at which proposals for new residential development would be expected to have a significant effect on the integrity of these sites is 20 dwellings. I am thus satisfied the proposed development of one dwelling, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the sites and no mitigation would be required.
15. For the above reasons, I conclude the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Other Matters

16. The site is within the 500m buffer zone of Surrey Ancient Woodland (AW). The Council is nevertheless satisfied the site is well separated from the AW such that the proposal would not have a materially harmful effect on it. On the evidence before me, I see no reason to reach a different conclusion.
17. The scale and design of the dwelling and its effects on biodiversity, highway safety and neighbouring occupiers are matters for the technical details consent stage.
18. I have considered the argument that allowing this appeal would set a precedent for other similar developments. However, no directly comparable sites to which this might apply have been put forward. Each application and appeal must be determined on its individual merits, and a generalised concern of this nature does not justify withholding permission in principle in this case.
19. I understand a previous appeal for development at the site was dismissed in 1992. That decision is not before me, and I am not aware of the development proposed or the reasons the appeal was dismissed. In any event, national and local policy and provision for permission in principle have since changed, so the context in which that appeal was determined is not directly comparable to that before me.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons set out above, I conclude the appeal should be allowed.
21. As the default duration for permission in principle is three years when granted on direct application, technical details consent would need to be determined within three years of the date of this decision.

C Carpenter INSPECTOR