



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2025

by K Williams MTCP (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/W/25/3362956

66 Knutsford Road, Alderley Edge, SK9 7SF

- 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 Andrew Luker against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/4803M.
 - The development proposed is described as proposed siting of a mobile home and associated fencing, landscaping, new access and parking (retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I was able to see from my site visit sandstone piers and walling, vertical timber and mesh fencing, driveway and landscaped areas, decking and the mobile home were in situ, which reflected the plans submitted with the appeal. However, the parking spaces were enclosed. There are also no elevations of this or the decking. As such, the appeal is only partly retrospective. I have determined the appeal on this basis and on the submitted plans.
3. The existence of the mobile home and principle of development is not a matter that is in dispute. I have therefore focussed my decision on the matters referred to in the Council's reasons for refusal.

Main Issues

4. The site falls within the Green Belt. Accordingly, the main issues are:
 - whether or not the proposal is inappropriate development within the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and development plan policy, include the effect of the development on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt;
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - if the development is inappropriate, 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 the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

5. The appeal site lies within an attractive setting, accessed off a lane leading to an enclave of homes and rural buildings. It comprises a roughly triangular parcel of land. The prevailing land use surrounding the appeal site is mainly residential. The nearby residential homes and other buildings have an enclosing effect on the appeal site, which means that it does not appear to encroach into open countryside.
6. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is a material planning consideration of importance in matters pertaining to Green Belt, which cannot be set aside. At paragraph 142 it states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 143 lists the five purposes that Green Belt serves.
7. At paragraph 153 the Framework requires that in considering any planning application, substantial weight must be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. It identifies that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
8. Paragraph 154 of the Framework establishes that new buildings and certain other forms of development in the Green Belt are inappropriate except in certain circumstances. Policy PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, 2017 (CELPS) is consistent with the Framework in that it seeks to protect the Green Belt and lists similar exceptions.
9. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 refers to buildings as including any structure or erection. Given the height and extent of the fencing, extent and height of decking, height and expanse of wall, pillars and the span of the gates these elements of the development should be considered as a building. They do not fall within any of the exceptions listed in paragraph 154 of the Framework and, as such, these elements would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
10. The hardstanding for the access and landscaped areas can be considered as engineering operations and potentially fall within the paragraph 155 h) ii exception provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. I find that the physical works for hard surfacing shown on the site plan would have a similar spatial effect as the grass shown in the appellant's submitted photos. It would therefore meet this exception and would not be inappropriate development. Furthermore the Council has not advanced this as part of their case, and I have not substantive evidence to reach a different conclusion on these elements.

Openness

11. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Openness can have a spatial as well as a visual aspect. I have very little substantive evidence on the features or appearance of the site prior to the construction. However, the appellant provided a photograph of the mobile home

and two aerial photos of the site which show a mainly grassed site and mobile home.

12. The timber fence, the gate, walls and piers are solid, with no gaps allowing views through it. These comprise highly visible, extensive and substantially scaled elements. The decking also covers a large area. Accessed by steps its height is parallel with the raised floor level of the mobile home. The mesh fence is of considerable length and height runs along the length of the appeal site. Notwithstanding the presence of gaps between the mesh fence rails, these are relatively close together interspersed with larger support posts.
13. In terms of visible openness, the decking would be visually contained by the boundary treatment. The timber fence, gate and piers would be visible in close proximity and from the main road including longer views from the west from Knutsford Road. The mesh fence would be visible from nearby homes, and users of the lane.
14. Together, these elements comprise a significant presence. They prevent views across the site and result in a reduction of spatial openness of the Green Belt by infilling space. Given its rigid tall height, whilst not solid, the mesh fence would still result in a material presence, particularly if vegetation dies back or is not in leaf. Overall these are prominent features which erode spatial and visual openness.
15. As a matter of judgment, I do not find the proposed development would conflict with any of the five purposes of the Green Belt. However, the proposals would diminish the openness of the Green Belt spatially and visually. However, taking into account nearby homes and other development, I consider that the harm to the Green Belt openness would be limited in this respect.

Green Belt conclusion

16. The fences, walls, gates, piers and decking are inappropriate development. The scheme therefore conflicts with Policy PG3 of the CELPS insofar as this sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in Green Belt. For similar reasons, the proposal also conflicts with policies contained within chapter 13 of the Framework. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework I must attach substantial weight to this harm and the harm to openness.

Character and appearance

17. The appeal site lies within an attractive semi-rural setting. Towards the front of the site facing Knutsford Road, the area is characterised by open space, landscape features and red brick properties. The proposed gates and pillars, which are seen in the in the same views as this attractive context have a grander suburban appearance, than the gentle character in the immediate area. The use of the materials is at odds at with the traditional and more common place red brick displayed in the surrounding buildings in the immediate locality. Thus these features appear particularly incongruous and jarring in this setting. The visual prominence of these could not be mitigated due to the need to obtain access.
18. Whilst the mesh fencing would be less visible from Knutsford Road it would be visible from the public right of way and nearby homes. Users of the public right of way would be cognisant of this feature when using this route. As such I find that in

the context of the semi-rural area, even with the vegetation that it is particularly urban and stark. The incongruity would diminish the use of the public right of way along this section. The timber fencing utilises a natural material and although is less imposing at 2m in height and where vegetation softens the appearance, the overall extent and height is dominating.

19. The decking has limited visibility from public views because it well concealed by the fencing associated with the appeal. Neither the mobile home or the decking are particularly characteristic of the immediate area. However, the use of decking in association with mobile homes is not uncommon given they have raised floors. The decking and its appearance is therefore largely in keeping with the character and appearance of the mobile home. That being said, without suitable boundary treatments it would present as an extensive and dominant feature in the area.
20. The Council considers the proposal harms tranquillity of the countryside. However, given the surrounding and nearby residential uses and Knutsford Road, I have not been persuaded that the tranquillity of the countryside is harmed, or that it encroaches into open countryside.
21. Nevertheless, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with CELPS Policies SD2, SE1 and SE4. The proposal would also not accord with Policies GEN1, ENV3 and ENV5 of the Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Plan Document, 2022. Together and insofar as it is relevant to the proposal, these seek amongst other matters for development to be of a high quality of design and appropriate to the local context.

Other considerations

22. Although the proposal would not conflict with the five stated purposes of the Green Belt, I have found harm to the Green Belt in terms of its openness and by reason of the proposed development's inappropriateness, and harm to the character and appearance of the area. Although the level of harm to openness would be limited this harm carries substantial weight by definition against the proposal. I also attach significant weight to the character and appearance of the area.
23. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Even though the site may only just be within the Green Belt, this does not negate national or local Green Belt Policy. Consequently, I conclude the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.

Conclusion

24. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

K Williams

INSPECTOR