



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 August 2025

by **G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/25/3364649

Grandview House, 94 Broad Street, Surrey GU3 3BE

- 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 Evan Lieghton-Davis against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/P/01498.
 - The development is a proposed extension to driveway to serve Grandview House.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - 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 required to justify the development.

Reasons

Inappropriate Development

3. Policy P2 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites (2019) (LPSS) seeks to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development and is broadly consistent with the Framework. The Framework states in paragraph 154 that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of a number of listed exceptions applies. This does include engineering operations h)ii provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
4. The appeal property is set some distance back from Broad Street and is accessed via an existing driveway located between Nos. 92 and 96, and which terminates at a parking/turning area serving Grandview House and Stag Cottage. Stag Cottage was an annexe building to the appeal property but has subsequently become a self-contained dwelling and is immediately to the north of the parking area.

5. The proposed driveway would extend from the existing access, passing through a field in front of the property that is separated by landscaping. It would create a significant length of driveway with passing bays and wrap around to the western side of the house to form a parking area.
6. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy, as set out in the Framework, is to keep land permanently open, with the essential characteristics of Green Belts being their openness and permanence. Whilst within the same ownership, the majority of the land for the new driveway is not part of the residential curtilage but an area of paddock. The proposed development would result in a physical and visual incursion into that open land.
7. I acknowledge that the surface-level alterations would not be visually prominent, and the new access would not be visible from Broad Street. Planting is proposed along the edge of the driveway, and although no specific landscaping details are provided, it could potentially serve to screen the access, although this would also further define the development and add to its visual presence.
8. The development would result in a spatial loss of openness and create an encroachment onto land that is free from development. It would therefore be contrary to purpose C - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Accordingly, the development would not meet with the identified exception for engineering operations, as openness would not be preserved, and there would be a conflict with one of the Green Belt purposes.
9. Reference is also made to the grey belt exception, as set out at paragraph 155 of the Framework. The Council found that the site does not contribute to Green Belt purposes A, B, and D, that it would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area, and is within a sustainable location. I have no reason to disagree, and thereby it could be identified as grey belt land. Notwithstanding this, and while I consider the matter of the convenience of the existing access below, there is little compelling evidence that there is an identified unmet need for the type of development proposed. Therefore, the proposal does not meet all the requirements of paragraph 155.
10. The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there would be some, albeit limited and localised, loss of openness. In accordance with the Framework, such development is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Character and Appearance

11. Located between Grandview House and the rear gardens of properties fronting Broad Street, the site of the access and the field is effectively an enclosed area. The field is currently in a somewhat degraded state with weeds growing; nonetheless, it extends to a sizable area and provides an open buffer between the linear development to Broad Street and the individual sporadic development to the north.
12. While recognising the limited visual impact on the wider area, especially from public views, and that the materials and landscaping could be conditioned, it would introduce a long access route across a significant portion of open land. Offset from the boundary to the garden to Grandview House, the development would be a formal and urbanising feature and would dissect the field. This would be harmful to

the character of the area and would extend the spread of residential development. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with LPSS policy D1 and policies D4 and H4 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Development Management Policies March 2023 (LPDMP), which, together, seek to ensure that development, including extensions to properties, respects the character of the area and contributes to local distinctiveness.

Other Considerations

13. Permitted Development Rights (Class F, Part 1, GPDO 2015) do allow for the installation of hard surfaces within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse, provided permeable materials are used. It is also advised that the area to the side of the property was previously used as a tennis court, although this has been removed. This, however, only relates to the part of the site within the residential curtilage, which the appellant indicates is 30% of the proposed driveway.
14. It is suggested that an access route could be created through the field using a movable surface. There are no specific details before me, but considering the considerable distance across undulating ground and the temporary nature of any removable surfacing, it is unlikely to offer a very convenient solution for a prolonged period. The materials are less likely to be compatible with the rural environment, although they would not be permanent, and such temporary measures are subject to the limitations of the GPDO. As such, I am not persuaded that this offers a genuine fallback or would cause more harm to the Green Belt.
15. The proposal would allow vehicles to park closer to the property, thereby providing more direct access. I recognise that this would increase convenience, especially as the appellant highlights for their children and elderly visitors. The property's porch entrance is situated on the western side, with the current arrangements requiring pedestrians to walk through the grassed garden. I have not been directed to any policy or guidance that requires parking within a specific distance of the front of a property. However, the existing arrangement is not a significant distance, particularly to the eastern side of the property, and concerns about the route being unlit or the uneven surface could be addressed through other measures.
16. It is suggested that alternative arrangements to provide closer vehicular parking to the east of the house would require other changes to the layout of the property. It is not for me to consider alternatives as part of this proposal, but there is no technical or other evidence before me that the proposal is the only option to improve accessibility between the house and vehicular access.
17. While acknowledging the reference to the Human Rights Act and the Equalities Act, and that personal circumstances can be part of the considerations for very special circumstances, I have not been provided with evidence of any specific needs or mobility issues of the occupants.
18. The proposal would improve convenience for occupiers and visitors to the property. However, since the property has vehicular access and the proposed changes would primarily be a private benefit, I can only assign limited weight to this matter.
19. No highway concerns were raised with the proposed access arrangements, and the proposal would comply with other policy requirements in terms of residential amenity, parking standards and ecology. These are, however, neutral matters rather than benefits of the scheme.

Other Matters

20. The appellant has raised concerns regarding the extension of time in relation to the planning application. The Council's procedures and their handling of this application are outside the scope of this appeal.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

21. The development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt, causing some localised but limited harm to its openness. I attach substantial weight to the overall harm that would be caused to the Green Belt. There would also be harm to the character of the area through the encroachment into the paddock.
22. For the reasons given above, I find that the other considerations in this case do not, either individually or cumulatively, clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that I have identified and the substantial weight I must attribute to that harm. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
23. The development is contrary to the Framework and to the development plan, which seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development. The scheme consequently conflicts with Green Belt policy P2 and fails to accord with design policies D1, D4 and H4 as outlined above.
24. Material considerations do not indicate that this proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.
25. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR