
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 September 2025

by **S Wilkinson BA, BPI, Dip LA, MBA, MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/W/25/3367332

Sawmills, Green Lane, Outwood, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 5QP

- 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 Green Lane Goose Limited against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref is TA/2024/356.
 - The development proposed is part change of use of land and buildings from Class E, B2 and B8 use and sawmill use, to use of land and buildings for Class E, B2 and B8, sawmill and a car repair, restoration and sales area, together with the removal of hardstanding (1062 sqm), construction of a car park and the erection of fencing.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application is made for car repairs, restoration and sales with the proposed parking area required for the storage and sales of classic cars; the Planning Statement submitted with the application is consistent with this intent. The site visit confirmed that the proposed parking area appears to have been completed.
3. In additional information, the appellant states that the intended use of the parking area is actually required for visitor and staff parking for the wider commercial site. However, Guidance¹ advises that the appeal process should not be used to re-engineer a scheme and for this reason this decision is made on the plans and evidence as originally submitted.
4. The appeal site is identified as a central portion of a large commercial site. A detailed plan identifies the proposed parking area and the 'replacement' land.
5. References in this decision to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) relate to that adopted after the Council's decision.

Main Issues

6. Whilst the proposal involves a change of use of land and an existing building the only matter of dispute is the location of the proposed car parking/sales area. This gives rise to the following issue:
 - Whether or not the scheme is inappropriate development and the effect of the proposal on the openness and the purposes of including land in the Green Belt, and

¹ Procedural Guide Planning Appeals – England – updated 30 June 2025

- Whether other considerations clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm so as to amount to the very special circumstances.

Reasons

Whether the appeal scheme represent inappropriate development

7. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is the prevention of urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and its essential characteristics are openness and permanence. Paragraph 153 of the Framework requires that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Although there is no definition of 'openness' within the Framework, the Guidance², refers to assessments of openness as being informed through consideration of spatial and volumetric aspects, the duration of the development and the degree of activity likely to be generated. Whilst only a suggested framework for consideration it is useful for the issues involved in this appeal.
8. The Council's adopted policies DP10 and DP13 of the Tandridge Local Plan: Part 2 do not refer to Grey Belt land but are broadly consistent with the Framework in resisting inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances exist. Policy DP13 specifically refers to previously developed land.
9. The appeal site lies in a rural area which forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. However, its immediate surroundings comprise a commercial site with a planning history of commercial uses having been occupied by a sawmill but now used for uses within Classes B1, B2 and B8. The wider site is characterised by large commercial buildings with extensive areas used for parking, open storage and servicing and surfaced in hardstanding. The entire site is surrounded by tree belts.
10. It is understood that no physical changes are proposed to the site other than the creation of the parking area and the reinstatement of land. The proposed car park comprising around 50 spaces is open on three sides but with a low boarded fence on its western edge beyond which is an area of open and despoiled land. The site lies outside the area of the site which is recognised through the granting³ of a Certificate of Existing Use and Development (CLEUD) on 4 December 2020 as previously developed land.
11. Paragraph 143 of the Framework identifies that there are five purposes to the Green Belt. These are the prevention of the unrestricted sprawl of built-up areas, prevention of neighbouring towns merging, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, preservation of the setting of historic towns and assisting regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict land. The Council identifies that the site makes a contribution to Paragraph 143c) in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
12. Historic aerial photographs from 2015, identify that the proposed parking area occupied an area of open green space which extends out from the woodland belt on the northern edge of the site. It was contiguous with the woodland and did not lie in the curtilage of the access road as the appellant suggests. For this reason, the site cannot be regarded as previously developed or grey belt land as defined in the Glossary to the Framework. Paragraphs 154g) and 155a) of the Framework are not applicable.

² Planning Practice Guidance 001 reference ID:64-001-020190722

³ TA/2020/1598

13. Given that the proposed parking area is required for parking and sales of the proposed use, this does not there is no demonstrable unmet demand; Paragraph 155b) of the Framework is not applicable. The site cannot be accessed by a change of transport modes and whilst the Framework acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas the site can only be accessed by a road which is unlit and does not include pedestrian footways. Even accounting for Paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework the site is not in a sustainable location; Paragraph 155c) does not allow an exception.
14. Due to the extent of the appeal site the proposed parking/sales area does not represent an exception under Paragraph 154h) ii as an engineering operation. The appeal scheme represents inappropriate development.
15. In part to address the loss of open land, the appeal scheme includes an irregular shaped area of land currently used as part of a servicing area lying to the south of the site and partially surrounding the building from where the car sales would be managed from. However, there are no specific proposals for this.
16. It is acknowledged that the appeal site's location in the middle of a commercial area makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purpose as defined under Paragraph 143c) of the Framework. However, the inclusion of the parking/sales area within what was an undeveloped part of the site, by its very nature would have spatial impacts and is inappropriate development leading to definitional harm with an adverse impact on openness. I accord this matter substantial weight.
17. For these reasons I conclude that the appeal scheme conflicts with policies DP10 and DP13.

Whether very special circumstances exist

18. In their original planning statement, the appellant makes the case that the car restoration business requires a parking/sales area. However, this does not fully explain why this is required to be located beyond the extensive area of previously developed land identified in the CLEUD.
19. I recognise, however, that the application includes replacement land for that proposed for the parking/sales area. However, this area of land does not have the coherence of the appeal site and wraps around the proposed office included in this scheme. In the absence of sufficient detail, it is unclear how this could be considered as adequate replacement land for the impact on openness of the parking/sales area.
20. I conclude that other considerations do not amount to the very special circumstances warranting an exception which could allow inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Conclusions

21. The appeal scheme represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt and conflicts with policies DP10 and DP13. Whilst the harm arising from the scheme is limited, I accord this substantial weight. Evidence on very special circumstances is not sufficient to outweigh the harm arising from inappropriateness. The appeal is dismissed.

S Wilkinson,

INSPECTOR

