



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 August 2025

by F P Tinsley MA (Hons) MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W1905/W/25/3366662

Land to the rear of 21 to 32 Doverfield, Goffs Oak, Waltham Cross, EN7 5EL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Doverfield Goffs Oak Ltd against the decision of Broxbourne Borough Council.
 - The application reference is Ref: 07/25/0232/PIP.
 - The development proposed is 'Permission in Principle: Erection of four detached dwellings.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for a residential development comprising a minimum of four and a maximum of four dwellings at Land to the rear of 21 to 32 Doverfield, Goffs Oak, Waltham Cross EN7 5EL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 07/25/0232/PIP.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal seeks planning permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative route for obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle process comprises two stages: the first stage, known as the permission in principle stage, establishes whether a site is suitable in principle; the second stage, referred to as technical details consent, involves the assessment of the detailed development proposals. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages only.
3. The PPG also states that the scope of considerations at the permission in principle stage is limited to location, land use, and the amount of development proposed. All other matters are addressed during the subsequent technical details consent application, should permission in principle be granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. In addition to the location plan, the appeal documents include an indicative site plan showing four detached dwellings with access from an existing roadway to the west of 27 Doverfield. This layout and access arrangement formed the basis of the Council's consideration, and I have assessed the appeal on the same basis.
5. Article 5A(3)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017, as amended by Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017, requires that any grant of permission in principle must specify the minimum and maximum number of dwellings permitted in principle. In this case, the range is between four and four dwellings.

6. The appeal site was previously subject to an appeal decision which was dismissed¹. The current scheme proposes a reduced quantum of development and seeks permission in principle rather than full planning permission. Since that earlier decision, national policy regarding development in the Green Belt has changed. As such, the context of the previous appeal is not directly comparable to the current proposal.
7. Additional documentation was submitted by an interested party following the Final Comments stage of the appeal process. This material was shared with both the appellant and the Council for comment and has been taken into account in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

9. The appeal site is located within the designated Metropolitan Green Belt. The five purposes of the Green Belt (a–e) are defined in paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Council does not dispute the appellant's position that the site constitutes "grey belt" land within the Green Belt. This term refers to land that is previously developed and/or land that does not significantly contribute to purposes (a), (b), or (d) of paragraph 143. These purposes are: (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; (b) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; and (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. The site does not play a role in checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, nor does it relate to a town, as Goffs Oak is a village. I am therefore satisfied that the site qualifies as Grey Belt land.
10. The site is broadly rectangular in shape and is enclosed by suburban development to the west and north, with allotments to the east and fields to the south. The field is currently overgrown with vegetation but contains several mature trees on its eastern side, as well as hedging and groups of smaller trees along the western and southern boundaries. The site has an urban fringe character rather than being wholly rural, and it is distinct from the open countryside to the south. I do not consider that the proposal would result in encroachment into the countryside, given the level of enclosure of the site on three sides.
11. Paragraph 155 of the Framework provides guidance on when the development of homes, such as those proposed, should not be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
12. The only criteria of paragraph 155 that is contested by the Council is that the proposal fails to demonstrate that it is not inappropriate development, as it does not address requirement (c) in paragraph 155, which requires that development be located in a sustainable location. This is with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework.

¹ APP/W1905/W/23/3319979

13. I am mindful that the appeal relates to an application for permission in principle, which is limited to consideration of location, land use, and the amount of development proposed at Stage 1. Paragraph 155(c) of the Framework requires that the sustainability of the location be addressed. This includes establishing whether suitable and safe access can be provided, in order to determine whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
14. Whilst future occupants may be likely to rely on private motor vehicles for travel beyond the village, the evidence before me indicates that there is a regular bus service to neighbouring towns. This would enable future residents to access a wider range of services, facilities, and onward transport connections. The site is within reasonable walking distance of amenities in the village centre, including local shops, a library, a community centre, and a health centre. The development would not be in a materially less sustainable location than the existing residential development to the immediate north and west.
15. The Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and that this should be taken into account in decision-making. Having regard to these considerations, I find no compelling evidence to suggest that the appeal site is not in a sustainable location in terms of criterion (c) of paragraph 155.
16. Specific concerns relating to potential on-site parking and footpath access to a nearby school fall outside the scope of this application and would be addressed through a future technical details consent application.
17. For these reasons, I find that the proposal satisfies all requirements of paragraph 155 of the Framework necessary to demonstrate that it does not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, insofar as is relevant to a Stage 1 application for planning permission in principle.
18. Notwithstanding the Council's Statement of Case, which highlights concerns regarding the suitability of the access, including for waste collection vehicles, the Highway Authority's consultation response dated 27 March 2025 did not raise any objection to the proposal on highways grounds. The appellant has submitted a detailed Technical Note addressing access-related matters, including those raised by the Council in its grounds of appeal. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I conclude that suitable and safe access to the appeal site could be provided. I am unable to conclude that visibility splays from the rear parking area of No. 27 Doverfield are inadequate, as the precise access arrangements are not the subject of this application and would be considered as part of a future technical details consent application. In the context of an application seeking permission in principle, I am satisfied that there is a reasonable prospect that technical matters relating to site access could be appropriately addressed at the subsequent stage.
19. The proposed development would utilise Grey Belt land, would be located in a sustainable location, and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the Green Belt. Furthermore, there is a demonstrable unmet need for housing within the district. The proposal accords with the approach to development in the Green Belt as set out in the updated Framework.

20. As I have determined that the proposal does not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it is not necessary to consider its impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
21. The proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and it is therefore not necessary to demonstrate very special circumstances. Accordingly, the proposal complies with Part 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy GB1 of the Broxbourne Local Plan 2020.
22. I have found that the appeal site is located in a sustainable location with convenient access to local services and facilities. There is a realistic prospect of providing appropriate and safe access to the site. Its development for residential use would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The site is not located within open countryside, and residential development exists on two sides of the site. As such, its development for residential use would represent a logical extension of the settlement of Goffs Oak.
23. The scale of development proposed at four dwellings would be appropriate given the constraints of the likely access from Doverfield. It would also allow sufficient space to incorporate protected trees within a landscaping scheme. Remaining trees would form part of private gardens or site landscaping, with most located along property boundaries and set away from building roofs. The amount of development proposed would also likely enable the scheme to integrate with the wider area and address matters relating to the living conditions of both surrounding occupiers and future residents, including issues such as overlooking and privacy. Consideration of technical matters relating to these issues would be addressed through subsequent applications.

Other Matters

24. I have had regard to the concerns raised by interested parties, including but not limited to: the availability of alternative sites for development, infrastructure capacity to serve the development, the impact on living conditions, effect on protected trees, disruption to existing footpaths, increased flood risk, traffic generation, reduced parking availability, and potential harm to wildlife. I also note that interested parties have highlighted recent evidence of initial development works taking place on the site.
25. The current application is a Stage 1 Planning Permission in Principle application. The scope of considerations at this stage is limited to location, land use, and the amount of development proposed. Technical matters such as layout, amenity impacts, parking, flood risk, and others will be assessed in greater detail at Stage 2 of the process. Therefore, objections relating to issues that fall within the scope of technical details cannot be considered at this stage.
26. The grant of permission in principle does not fall within the scope of the biodiversity net gain requirement, as it is not a grant of full planning permission. However, the subsequent technical details consent, which constitutes a grant of planning permission, will likely address this matter.
27. I acknowledge the evolution of the proposal from a previously refused scheme. It has also been brought to my attention that two further planning applications under Ref: 07/025/0485/PIP and Ref: 07/025/0548/PIP have been submitted relating to the site. However, I have considered this appeal proposal on its own merits,

based on the evidence before me and within the context of updated national planning policy.

Conclusion

28. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed and permission in principle granted.

F P Tinsley

INSPECTOR