



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 August 2025

by **J Heppell BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V1505/W/25/3362436

RNW Group Willow Park, Wash Road, Basildon SS15 4AZ

- 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 Darren Townshend against the decision of Basildon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01160/FULL.
 - The development proposed is a single storey side extension to existing commercial unit and reconfiguration of front elevation fenestration.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey side extension to existing commercial unit and reconfiguration of front elevation fenestration at RNW Group, Willow Park, Wash Road, Basildon SS15 4AZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/01160/FULL, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and drawings:

Location Plan	Drawing No SO1
Proposed Floor Plans	Drawing No LO1 Revision A
Proposed Elevations and Site Plan	Drawing No LO2 Revision A

Preliminary Matter

2. Since determining the application the subject of this appeal, the Council has granted planning permission for a single storey side extension to existing commercial unit and reconfiguration of front elevation fenestration on the appeal site¹. I have noted and had regard to the details of the approved scheme.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is whether the appeal site is grey belt land and whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and development plan policies.

¹ LPA reference 25/00263/FULL

Reasons

4. The appeal site contains a number of buildings and hard surfaced areas which are occupied by a facilities maintenance company. The proposal is to extend the main office building. The site lies within the Green Belt.
5. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, whose essential characteristics are their openness and their permanence. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
6. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Framework further established that development in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions set out in paragraphs 154 and 155. There are no relevant policies within the Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies September 2007.
7. Paragraph 155 of the Framework advises that commercial development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where: (a) the development would utilise grey belt land and not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan; (b) there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed; (c) the development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework; and (d) where applicable the development meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in Paragraphs 156-157.
8. The Framework's Golden Rules relate to housing development. Therefore, criterion (d) of paragraph 155 is not relevant to this case.

Grey Belt

9. Grey belt is defined in the Glossary to the Framework as *"land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. Grey belt excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development"*.
10. Having undertaken a further assessment, the Council now considers that the site meets the definition of 'grey belt'. It is also common ground between the parties that the site does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d) of paragraph 143 of the Framework. From the evidence before me, I agree with this assessment. Furthermore, the site does not include any of the areas or assets listed in footnote 7 of the Framework.
11. Consequently, I find that the appeal site is grey belt land as defined in the Framework, and it does not strongly contribute to any of the purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143 of the Framework.
12. Furthermore, the appeal site comprises previously developed land and is small in scale in relation to the size of the Green Belt in Basildon. Consequently, I do not consider that developing the site as proposed would fundamentally undermine the purposes, taken together, of the remaining Green Belt land across the area of the

plan, a conclusion which the Council does not dispute. Therefore, the proposal meets criterion (a) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.

Demonstrable unmet need

13. The appellant states that they need to accommodate 15 new staff members to meet the requirements of a new facilities maintenance contract which the company has been awarded. The development would accommodate these staff and therefore satisfy this need.
14. The Council has highlighted the availability of numerous offices of different sizes in the Basildon area, but this does not take into account that the appellant has an existing facility where all its functions, including administration, are located. The appellant's requirement is therefore for additional office space at this location.
15. The Council's Employment Land Needs Assessment 2025 (the ELNA) indicates a decline in need for new office space due to current working trends and a focus on high-quality accommodation. Furthermore, the ELNA identifies a requirement for 8 hectares of additional office space. Even with proposed employment land allocations a shortfall is identified, indicating that there is a demonstrable unmet need for office space in Basildon.
16. The Council is concerned that some of the other buildings at the appeal site may not be authorised and are currently subject to ongoing enforcement investigations. However, this is a separate matter that is of little relevance to the appeal before me.
17. For all these reasons, I conclude that there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. Therefore, the proposal would accord with criterion (b) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.

Sustainable location

18. Among other things, the Framework, at paragraphs 110 and 115, seeks to manage patterns of growth to account for the environmental impacts of transport, and promote sustainable transport options including walking, cycling, and the use of public transport. Development should therefore be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is recognised that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account for decision-making.
19. The Council advise that the No. 10 bus service, which connects Basildon with Wickford six days a week, provides a two hourly service between 8.20am and 6.40pm. It passes the appeal site and offers staff and visitors a practical alternative to the car. The proposal therefore offers a genuine choice of transport modes, commensurate with the site's rural location.
20. On this matter, I conclude that, in accordance with paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework, the development would be in a sustainable location, by offering opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions commensurate with the rural nature of the site. Therefore, the proposal satisfies criterion (c) of paragraph 155.

21. To conclude on this main issue, the appeal site is grey belt land and the proposal complies with criteria (a)-(c) of paragraph 155 of the Framework. Consequently, the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the policies of the Framework.
22. Given my conclusion on this issue, it is not necessary to consider whether the proposal would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, because I have already found that the development meets the exception set out in paragraph 155 of the Framework. Therefore, the criteria contained in paragraph 154 of the Framework are not relevant.
23. The Council has referred me to a previous appeal decision for an extension to the building². The decision dates from 2007 and predates the introduction of the Framework. Although, in that case, the Inspector concluded that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, this was assessed against a very different policy context. Therefore, I afford the appeal decision very limited weight.

Conditions

24. The Framework sets out that conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. I have assessed the suggested list of conditions on this basis and made amendments where necessary to meet these tests.
25. It is necessary to confirm the standard time limit for the development, and to specify the approved plans and drawings, for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of certainty.
26. It is not necessary to attach a condition requiring that the extension be constructed as detailed in the application, since the detail is listed in the approved plans.
27. The Council has confirmed that the statutory biodiversity net gain requirements do not apply to the proposal, and consequently there is no policy basis for a condition requiring biodiversity enhancements.

Conclusion

28. The proposed extension comprises commercial development on land which is grey belt for the purposes of the Framework. Therefore, I have found that the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as defined by the Framework.
29. For the above reasons, the proposal would not conflict with policies of the development plan or the Framework, and therefore the appeal should be allowed.

J Heppell

INSPECTOR

² PINS reference APP/V1505/A/08/2076972