
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2025

by **L Reid BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1515/W/25/3368476

Land Adjacent to the Acorns, Wrights Lane, Wyatts Green, Brentwood

Grid Reference Easting: 559842, Grid Reference Northing: 199108

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Luke Brooks Laura Cord against the decision of Brentwood Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00441/OUT.
 - The development proposed is erection of self build single storey dwelling with all matters reserved.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has corrected the ownership certificate during the appeal. Notice of the proposal has been served, allowing for representations. I am satisfied that all interested parties have had the opportunity to comment.
3. The application is in outline with matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for future consideration. I have therefore dealt with the appeal on this basis.
4. The appellant has confirmed that access to the appeal site would be from Wrights Lane. The Council comments were invited in this regard.

Main Issues

5. The appeal site is within the Green Belt, accordingly 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 proposal on openness; and,
 - Whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Inappropriate development

6. Policy MG02 of the Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033 (the Local Plan) broadly reflects the approach of the Framework in that it requires the Green Belt to be

protected from inappropriate development. The Framework sets out certain exceptions where development in the Green Belt is not inappropriate development. I have considered each exception put forward by the appellant.

Limited infilling in villages

7. The exception at part e) of paragraph 154 of the Framework allows for the limited infilling in villages. The Framework does not define the terms 'limited infilling' or 'villages'. The appeal site is outside the settlement boundary. As detailed in the Land at Royalty Avenue¹ and 21 Wood Lane² appeal decisions, a defined village boundary in a Development Plan is not conclusive in determining whether a site is within a village or not. The physical circumstances of a site and its relationship to a settlement are relevant.
8. The appeal site is an undeveloped plot of land, covered with vegetation and trees. It is between the curtilage of a house and a gated access. At my site visit, I observed Wyatts Green to have very limited services. However, the settlement is built up with many residential properties dispersed over the area. When heading along Wyatt's Green Road from Church Lane, buildings generally display closer spacing and follow a regular pattern of development along both sides of the road, which gives this part of the area a village-like character. This is also reflected along Plovers Mead.
9. Near the junction with Wyatt's Green Road, the housing on Wrights Lane is relatively continuous on both sides of the lane. As such, this part of the lane still feels part of the village. However, when travelling along Wrights Lane towards the appeal site, there is a noticeable change in character. The dense vegetation lining the lane and tree coverage, combined with the large gaps in visible built form, give the immediate area a semi-rural character. These features provide a physical separation and visual distinction between the appeal site and the village. Buildings near the appeal site are typically on one side of the lane in very large plots, adjacent to undeveloped areas. This contrasts with the more built-up continuous ribbon of road-facing buildings along Wyatt's Green Road and Plovers Mead.
10. The appeal site falls within the less built-up semi-rural area that is characterised by loose-grained development. Although the site address includes Wyatts Green, the appeal site does not have a physical or visual relationship with the village. Based on my observations on the ground, it does not fall within a village for the purposes of the Framework. Given this, it is not necessary for me to go on and consider whether the proposal would amount to 'limited infilling'. The proposal would therefore not meet the exception listed at part e) of paragraph 154 of the Framework and would be inappropriate development.

Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land

11. Part g) of paragraph 154 of the Framework allows for limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. This exception hinges on the site being PDL. There is no substantive evidence before me that the appeal site has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure

¹ Appeal Ref: APP/F2360/W/22/3306867

² Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/23/3331078

and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it. As it has not been demonstrated that the appeal site is PDL, the proposal would not meet the exception listed at part g) of paragraph 154 of the Framework and would therefore be inappropriate development.

Grey Belt

12. Paragraph 155 of the Framework states that the development of homes in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply: a) the development would utilise grey belt land and would 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 proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157.
13. Both main parties agree that the appeal site falls within grey belt and meets part a). I have no reason to reach a contrary view.
14. The Council confirms that they can demonstrate a 5.01 years housing land supply and a housing delivery of 129% per the Housing Delivery Test 2023. Although the Inspector in the Land West of Mill Lane³ case found that the housing supply could fall below five years before a development plan would be in place, this relates to a different local authority, and I am not party to the evidence that was before the Inspector. Nevertheless, even if I were to find a demonstrable unmet need in respect of housing supply, all criteria in paragraph 155 must still be met.
15. Access to the nearest bus stop requires walking along Wrights Lane, which lacks a footpath and is narrow and uneven. This poses safety concerns, especially in poor weather conditions and outside daylight hours. Whilst the walk to the bus stop is relatively short, accessing Wyatt's Green Road safely on foot would be difficult for future residents, making them reliant on private vehicles.
16. Although transport options vary between urban and rural areas, this does not negate the requirement to offer a genuine choice of transport modes and ensure that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users, as required by paragraph 115 of the Framework. The proposal would therefore not be in a sustainable location and would not accord with part c). Consequently, the proposal would not meet the exception listed at paragraph 155 of the Framework and would be inappropriate development.
17. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would conflict with Policy MG02 of the Local Plan, the purpose of which has been set out above.

Openness

18. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt; it can be perceived both spatially and visually. Although landscaping, layout and scale would be reserved for future consideration, the proposal would introduce built form on a currently undeveloped site, resulting in a clear loss of spatial openness. The introduction of such a permanent built form would also be visible from some of the surrounding

³ Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/W/24/3357015

buildings, and this would lead to a visual loss of openness. As the effect on openness would be localised, the degree of harm would be moderate.

19. The appeal site is relatively contained by the surrounding development and does not exhibit the characteristics typically associated with the countryside. Consequently, the proposal would not constitute encroachment into the countryside and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. However, this does not diminish my overall conclusion that the development would cause moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
20. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would conflict with the objectives of the Framework in keeping Green Belt land permanently open.

Other considerations

21. The proposal would provide a new home and as this is a small site, it could also be delivered quickly. Mindful of the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, I give this limited weight on account of the quantum of development proposed.
22. Economic and social benefits associated with the proposal, including employment as well as spending and support for services by future occupiers, would be limited on account of the scale and nature of the proposal. These considerations are therefore of limited weight.
23. While the proposal is described as 'self-build', this consideration can only be given limited weight as there is no mechanism before me to secure it as such.
24. I have had regard to the representations of support received at the planning application stage. There are very limited details regarding the appellant's personal circumstances, the reasoning for developing the site and the benefit to the village. Even if the appeal site is in a poor condition and is underutilised, there is no compelling evidence before me to demonstrate that less harmful measures have been considered to address this. I therefore give these considerations minimal weight.
25. Whilst the application was not refused on grounds relating to the impact on neighbouring properties, traffic and local infrastructure, compliance with relevant national and local planning policies on these matters would be required in any case. The design of the dwelling is also reserved for future consideration. These matters are therefore neutral considerations and do not weigh in favour nor against the proposal.

Other Matters

26. Although the Council Delegated Report references harm to the character and appearance of the area and the special landscape, this was not part of the refusal reason nor is it addressed by the main parties. I have therefore not considered it further. Nevertheless, even if I were to find no harm on these grounds, such a finding would be a neutral matter.

Green Belt Balance

27. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 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.

28. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the terms set out by the Framework and would result in the loss of openness of the Green Belt. As required by the Framework, substantial weight is given to this harm.
29. Against this harm, the other considerations I have identified are of limited weight in favour of the proposal. As such, the weight afforded to other considerations in support of the appeal would not, either individually or collectively, clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.

Conclusion

30. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

L Reid

INSPECTOR