
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2025 by S Wilson LL.B. MSc MRTPI

Decision by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/25/3366286

Gores Farm Suffield Lane, Puttenham, Guildford GU3 1BQ

- 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 and Mrs Southon against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/P/01808.
 - The development proposed is described as extensions and alterations to Gores Farm.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The appeal site is within the Green Belt and so the main issues are:
 - Whether or not the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies.
 - The effect of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt.
 - If the proposed development is inappropriate development, 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 proposed development.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Site and Proposed Development

4. The appeal site contains a two storey detached residential dwelling house set within generous grounds. On the appeal site there is a large U-shaped stable block formed of two buildings, a sand school, a shed and a shipping container all clustered together and located a significant distance away from the dwelling house and separated from the dwelling by post and rail fencing and a track, so as to appear as a spatially separate area. The remaining land beyond appears to be used for the keeping of horses and is separated into grazing blocks by fencing. The

area has a distinct rural feel, and the property is located within the Green Belt. There is a bridleway running along the northern boundary of the site.

5. The proposed development comprises the erection of a single storey extension to the west side of the dwelling house and the demolition of a three bay stable block, a shed, and a container.

Whether or Not Inappropriate Development

6. The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (the Framework) identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The Framework outlines that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt subject to a number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 154. One of the exceptions cited is 154 c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the 'original building'. The term 'original building' is defined in the glossary of the Framework as 'a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after that date, as it was built originally'.
7. The Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites (adopted by Council on 25 April 2019) (the Local Plan) Policy P2 is consistent with the Green Belt aims of the Framework in terms of acknowledging that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt will constitute inappropriate development, unless the buildings fall within the list of exceptions identified by the Framework.
8. In this case, the existing dwelling is a replacement of a previous building on the site. However, the Framework does not explicitly address how replacement buildings should be treated in this context. This ambiguity leaves room for interpretation, which Policy P2 seeks to resolve. The Council contends that the 'original building' for the purposes of assessing proportionality is not the replacement dwelling currently on site, but the building that originally existed — either as it stood on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after that date, as it was first built.
9. This interpretation is consistent with Policy P2 of the Guildford Local Plan, which defines the 'original building' as either: the building as it existed on 1 July 1948; or if no building existed on that date, then the first building as it was originally built after that date.
10. The Council set out that the Inspector's Report accompanying the adoption of the Local Plan confirmed that this definition was appropriate and aligned with the Framework. Furthermore, the Courts have held that such applications should be decided on the basis of local circumstances, rather than setting a universal approach to the matter. It therefore follows that in this case; the replacement dwelling should not be used as the baseline for assessing proportionality.
11. This approach is not only more precise but also more robust in safeguarding the Green Belt. It ensures that replacement dwellings do not become the baseline through which substantial and cumulative extensions are permitted, thereby undermining the policy objective of preventing disproportionate additions.
12. The Council's undisputed evidence sets out that the 'original' (that is previous) building was 169.19 square metres (sqm). The existing building is 260.17sqm and the building including the proposal would be 318.77sqm. The Council calculate that the proposal percentage increase in floorspace from the original dwelling equates

to 89.53%. The appellants acknowledge the extensive planning history of the appeal site and the fact that the existing dwelling replaced the 'original building' and is 55% larger. Therefore, the appellants acknowledge that any further extensions would be a disproportionate addition. This is not in dispute between the parties.

13. The proposed extension would add to the footprint and volume of the appeal building and add additional size and scale, which when taken with the replacement of the 'original building' would result in a disproportionate addition over the size of the original building in the terms of Policy P2 and the Framework.
14. For these reasons, the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This is a matter to which I afford substantial weight in the planning balance.

Openness

15. The Framework outlines that one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness. Openness has both a spatial and a visual aspect. By its very nature of placing built development where there is currently none, the proposed development cannot fail but to have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt in spatial terms.
16. The appellants propose to demolish a 3 block stable building, a shed, and a container to offset the proposal. The proposal would add 58.6 square metres (sqm) whilst the cumulative reduction of the 3 block stable, shed and container would be 70.5sqm, leading to a 11.9sqm reduction in floor area of development on the site. The Council does not dispute the figures.
17. Whilst I acknowledge there would be a factual reduction of the floor area of development on the appeal site overall, which would weigh in favour of the proposal, the buildings proposed to be demolished are of a different use and are in a spatially different area. Both aspects reduce the weight to be given to this aspect. Furthermore, given the application for and resulting reinstatement of permitted development rights under Class E¹, I cannot be certain that the buildings proposed to be demolished would not be replaced, in the future, by development without the need for planning permission. There is no mechanism before me to restrict the spread of such development.
18. Taking all the above factors into account, I find that in light of the overall size and scale of the development, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt from a spatial aspect would be limited.
19. The proposed development would be a large 6m wide single storey side extension at a location where there are no significant screening features. Despite being set back from the road and set within its own generous grounds, it would be clearly visible from the public bridleway and would introduce additional width, size and scale to the dwelling house that would increase the overall extent of its visual perception.
20. The proposed demolition of the 3 block stable, shed and container would provide a benefit by removing buildings close to the bridleway; however, it would further open the line of sight from the public bridleway directly to the dwelling, making it more visible from the bridleway than the existing situation. Despite its complementary design using similar high quality materials, the proposed extension would be highly

¹ Planning application reference 23/P/00674

prominent and would appear to encroach further into the open countryside, a scenario which would be more harmful than already exists. I therefore find that there would be moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt from a visual point of view.

21. Overall, I consider that the effect on the openness of the Green Belt would be moderate, and I therefore give this harm moderate weight.

Other Considerations

22. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Stating that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
23. The development in this case amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the Framework requires that substantial weight be attached to the harm in that regard. It would also cause moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt, even if this harm is lessened through the removal of existing buildings.
24. The appellants maintain that the existing development is a fallback position that is a realistic alternative due to the fact that it already exists. A fallback position is an indication of what might be done with the land without the express grant of planning permission if the appeal proposal does not go ahead. This may include previous extant planning permissions, the exercising of permitted development rights, the resumption of lawful use or the long use of land where enforcement would now be time barred. It does not include existing development and on the evidence before me I conclude that there is no genuine fallback position with a real prospect of being implemented.
25. The fact that the development would not cause harm to trees, ecology, or the living conditions of the occupants of any surrounding residential properties, is a neutral factor in the appeal.
26. I acknowledge that the development would provide additional living accommodation for the occupants of the property. However, such personal circumstances seldom outweigh general planning considerations, and I therefore give them limited weight in the appeal.

Planning Balance

27. The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. When considered as a whole, moderate harm would be caused to the openness of the Green Belt. The substantial weight to be given to the cumulative Green Belt harm arising from the proposal would not be clearly outweighed by the other considerations as outlined above, including the demolition of existing buildings. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. Therefore, the proposed development would not accord with the Green Belt aims of the Framework, the Local Plan, the Puttenham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2033, and the guidance in the Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document.

Conclusion and Recommendation

28. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Wilson

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

29. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR