



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2025

by **J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/D/25/3371407

Watling Cottage, London Road, Flamstead, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 8HQ

- 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 Dritan Vreto against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00875/FHA.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing front boundary wall with London Road. Construction of new brickwork boundary wall on London Road boundary with steel PPC gates.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. 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 relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; 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

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development

3. The appeal property is a detached dwelling set back from the busy A5183 London Road, with sporadic, predominantly commercial development on the same side of the road frontage and open countryside opposite.
4. Policy CS5 of the Dacorum Core Strategy 2006-2031 (2013) indicates that the Council will apply national Green Belt policy. While the policy also includes a number of criteria relating to small-scale development, these do not fully reflect the most recent version of the Framework. Consequently, I have had regard to the Framework in considering this issue.
5. The proposal is for the replacement of the existing front boundary wall with a new wall. One of the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt included in the Framework is the replacement of a building, provided the new

building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces¹.

Given that the existing and proposed walls are substantive and permanent fixed structures, I consider them to be buildings for the purposes of considering whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development. As the existing and proposed structures are for the same use, the principal consideration is whether the new wall would be materially larger than the one it would replace.

6. The existing boundary treatment comprises two short sections of brick wall either side of the central vehicular entrance, with the majority of the frontage enclosed by trees and shrubs. The proposed brick wall would be built across the full width of the frontage, resulting in a wall nearly 90 metres in length, with pillars at regular intervals that would be taller than the pillars in the existing wall. Therefore, due to the extent, height and presence of the proposed wall it would be materially larger than the one it would replace.
7. Accordingly, based on these findings, I conclude that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt in accordance with both Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy and the Framework.
8. Openness is one of the essential characteristics of the Green Belt. To the extent that the proposal would result in a materially larger, bulkier front boundary feature compared to the much shorter wall and natural boundary treatment, openness in this location would be reduced in both spatial and visual terms. Due to the presence of the host dwelling and other development nearby and the limited height of the wall compared to these other built forms, the proposal would result in moderate harm.

Character and appearance

9. The A5183 is a busy main road, but in the vicinity of the appeal site its character is informed by the largely open, undeveloped surrounding rural area. This is particularly apparent from the trees and hedgerows that form the boundary to either side of the road. These are interrupted only by the entrance to the appeal property and the entrances to the neighbouring detached dwelling, Hillside View, and to the restaurant on the other side of Watling Cottage. Other commercial development is situated further to the east and is not readily visible.
10. The entrance to Hillside View is similar to the appeal property, with short sections of wall either side of a gated entrance. As such, it is a discreet feature in the largely natural roadside frontage. The proposed wall to the appeal property would, by contrast, introduce a hard, urbanising effect to the street scene due to its overall extent, its prominence and its design with a considerable number of pillars adding to the bulk and height of the wall. As such, it would be an incongruous and uncharacteristic feature.
11. I acknowledge that the restaurant to the west of the appeal property has an 'in and out' entrance to the car park that interrupts the natural boundary features. However, the height and extent of the boundary wall to this commercial property is limited and is not comparable to the effect of the proposed wall.
12. Therefore, for these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding

¹ Paragraph 154d).

area. Consequently, it is contrary to Policies CS5, CS11 and CS12 of the Dacorum Core Strategy 2006-2031 and to Appendix 7 of the Dacorum Local Plan 1991-2011 (2004) all of which include the requirement for development to respect and not harm local character.

Other considerations and whether very special circumstances exist

13. A principal purpose of the front boundary wall is to provide enhanced security for the appeal property, particularly in the light of a recent burglary. Moreover, it is contended that it would provide a safer form of enclosure for the property in terms of preventing children or animals gaining access to the road with relatively high vehicle speeds.
14. While I acknowledge the desire for greater security and safety, it is not clear that the proposed wall is the only form of boundary treatment that might achieve this objective. As such, I accord this consideration moderate weight. There is little evidence to suggest that the proposed replacement wall would make a material difference in terms of noise reduction or privacy to the property; or that the site's setting is particularly commercial in terms of other nearby development. These considerations therefore attract limited weight. The fact that the proposal would provide the necessary visibility splays is to be expected as a requirement of highway safety standards. This is, therefore, a neutral factor.
15. The proposal would represent inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It would also result in moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The Framework requires that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. The proposal would also result in unacceptable harm to character and appearance. Based on the evidence presented, the other considerations raised in support of the development do not outweigh the harm identified to the Green Belt and the other harm and, therefore, very special circumstances do not exist.

Conclusion

16. The proposal is contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. Accordingly, for the reasons given, it is concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR