
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2025

by Ryan Cowley MPlan (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/F2360/W/25/3366524

Land at Newgate Lane, Newgate, Whitestake, Lancashire PR4 4JU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Michael Cookson against the decision of South Ribble Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 07/2024/00840/PIP.
 - The development proposed is permission in principle for the erection of up to 3 dwellings.
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This decision is issued in accordance with section 56 (2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended and supersedes that issued on 9 October 2025.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first stage ('permission in principle') establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle, and the second stage ('technical details consent') is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of the subsequent technical details consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. Since the Council's decision, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been revised, including Chapter 13 in respect of Protecting Green Belt Land. Additionally, the standard method (SM) for assessing local housing need set out in the PPG has also been amended. The parties in the appeal have had an opportunity to provide representations in view of the revised Framework and PPG through the appeal process. I have thus had regard to these changes.
5. As part of its appeal submission, the Council has provided an updated Housing Land Supply (HLS) position statement¹, in light of the revisions to the SM. The appellant has had an opportunity to comment on this through the appeal process

¹ South Ribble Borough Council, Housing Land Supply Position Statement and update to Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Position at 1 April 2025

and so has not been prejudiced as a result. I have therefore had regard to the updated HLS position in this decision.

Main Issues

6. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for the proposed residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development, with particular regard to:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - If the proposal is inappropriate, 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 in the Green Belt

7. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. Policy G1 of the South Ribble Local Plan Adopted July 2015 (the Local Plan) states that planning permission will not be given for the construction of new buildings unless there are very special circumstances. This is broadly consistent with the provisions of the Framework.
8. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 143 sets out the five purposes of Green Belt, which are: (a) to check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
9. Paragraph 154 indicates that, other than in connection with a closed list of exceptions, development should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt. These exceptions include (e) limited infilling in villages. The main parties agree that Whitestake can be considered a village for the purposes of Paragraph 154, and there is no compelling reason before me to conclude otherwise.
10. Development along this part of Newgate Lane is however somewhat sporadic and unstructured. I saw on my site visit that there are numerous dwellings along the lane, however their positions and orientation relative to the road vary, and they are interspersed by fields and gaps in the frontage. On the appeal site's side of the road there are 2 traditional terraces and several detached dwellings, including a line of new detached houses set further back from the road.
11. The site forms part of a considerable gap between the large group of dwellings to the south and the collection of 3 dwellings to the north. The site frontage is lined by hedges that are a prominent feature in the street scene. Gaps in the hedgerow provide views across the site towards the field behind and the surrounding trees. While planning permission² has been granted for the erection of a detached

² Council Ref 07/2024/00736/FUL

dwelling on the adjoining site to the south, at the time of my site visit this remained undeveloped. Given the width of the site as a proportion of the built frontage, and the lack of coherence and structure to the development along the lane, I am not persuaded that the proposal would constitute limited infilling in a village.

12. The revised Framework has added additional policy provisions in respect of grey belt land. This is defined 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. This definition excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 of the Framework (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.
13. The PPG provides guidance on assessing the contribution that land makes to the relevant Green Belt purposes³. Purpose (a) relates to the sprawl of large built-up areas. Likewise, purpose (b) relates to the merging of towns, not villages. As it sits within a village, the appeal site does not strongly contribute to either of these purposes. In respect of purpose (d), there is no evidence that the appeal site contributes to the setting and special character of any historic towns. There is also no evidence that the policies in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. Accordingly, the site can be considered grey belt for the purposes of Paragraph 155 of the Framework.
14. Paragraph 155 of the Framework states that the development of homes in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where the development would (a) utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt; (b) there is a demonstrable unmet need for the development; and (c) the development would be in a sustainable location.
15. Newgate Lane is approximately 1km from New Longton and the closest school. A bypass road to the east leads into to Preston, Leyland and the surrounding motorway network. There are also bus stops along Chain House Lane, just a short walk away. Notably, the Council found in its Officer Report that the site is sustainable. From the available evidence I have no reason to disagree, and so the proposal would be compliant with Paragraph 155(c) of the Framework.
16. Nevertheless, footnote 56 of the Framework clarifies that, in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the development means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (HLS), including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Tests (HDT) was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.
17. The appellant maintains that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year HLS based on the revised SM, and I recognise that an Inspector in a previous decision in South Ribble⁴ reached the same conclusion based on the evidence in that case. However, the latest published HLS position as of 1 April 2025 is 5.53 years, including the relevant buffer. There is otherwise no substantiated evidence before me in this case to demonstrate that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year HLS. Moreover, the evidence indicates that the latest housing delivery figures for the Borough, measured by the HDT, was 326% of the housing requirement, and

³ Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225

⁴ Appeal Ref: APP/F2360/W/25/3359228

therefore there has been no under-delivery of housing. There is therefore no demonstrable unmet need for the development, and so the proposal would not comply with Paragraph 155(b) of the Framework.

18. Moreover, the proposal would contribute to the urbanisation of the lane, eroding the sporadic nature of existing development, gaps between buildings and intervening fields. This would fail to safeguard the countryside from encroachment, contrary to purpose (c). Permitting encroachment into the countryside by building on predominantly undeveloped land in the Green Belt would also fundamentally undermine purpose (e) which seeks to ensure that the Green Belt assists in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. The proposal would thus not comply with Paragraph 155(a).
19. In conclusion, the appeal proposal would not benefit from any of the exceptions set out in Paragraphs 154 or 155 of the Framework. It would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would also conflict with Policy G1 of the Local Plan for the same reason.

Effect on openness

20. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The word “openness” in this context is open textured, and several factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. The matters relevant to openness are therefore a matter of planning judgement, and the openness of the Green Belt can have a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect.
21. There is development to the north, west and south of the site, and the existing mature vegetation along the southern and western boundaries provides a degree of physical enclosure. Nevertheless, the site is predominantly devoid of development and retains a natural and open character. This positively contributes to the openness of the Green Belt in this location and can be appreciated in the partial views from Newgate Lane. Accordingly, it also contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt, as indicated above.
22. Details of the development are limited at this stage due to the nature of the application. However, the erection of 3 detached dwellings on this site would invariably erode its openness in both visual and spatial terms, and the contribution this makes to that of the wider Green Belt. Though this would be mitigated to some limited extent by the factors mentioned above, this would harm the Green Belt and conflict with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy.
23. I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Paragraph 153 of the Framework is clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. The harm identified above therefore weighs heavily against the proposal.

Other considerations

24. The proposal would contribute to the local housing supply, with a reasonable degree of access to local services and amenities. It would provide a temporary economic boost during construction, and the additional residents may contribute to the vitality and viability of the community. However, these benefits would be relatively modest given the scale and context of the development.

Conclusion

25. The proposal would be inappropriate development that would be harmful to the Green Belt. I give this harm substantial weight as required by the Framework. I have considered the matters put before me in favour of the scheme. However, I conclude that these other considerations taken together do not clearly outweigh the substantial weight I have afforded to the Green Belt harm arising from the proposal. Accordingly, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
26. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the Framework, taken as a whole, and I have found no material considerations that indicate it should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, I conclude that the site is not suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development, and the appeal should be dismissed.

Ryan Cowley

INSPECTOR