



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 August 2025 by Elizabeth Davies BSc (Hons) MIEMA, CEnv

Decision by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/D/25/3369664

West Lodge, Windsor Road, Winkfield, Bracknell Forest, Windsor SL4 2DE

- 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 Winsper against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00119/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the retention of black gloss iron effect traditional lanterns over pier caps to existing boundary wall treatment abutting public highway.
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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.

Preliminary Matters

3. On my site visit I observed that some of the lanterns had been removed and some remain. I have therefore taken the description of development from the decision notice and appeal form which refers to the retention of the lanterns. I have based my recommendation on the submitted plans and the description of development set out above.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework);
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area;
 - The effect of the proposed development on biodiversity; and
 - If the development is inappropriate, whether the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Whether it would be inappropriate development

5. The appeal property is a detached bungalow located on Windsor Road (A332). The front and side of the property adjacent to Windsor Road is bound by a masonry and bath stone wall. The wall has 17 structural piers with pier caps, the development is for a traditional lantern to feature atop each pier cap.
6. The appeal site is in the Green Belt. LP Policy 34 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2020-2037) (the Local Plan) sets out that proposals for development in the Green Belt should be determined in accordance with relevant national Green Belt policy.
7. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states that new buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt unless they fall within the given list of exceptions. One exception is 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.
8. In this case, there is an existing masonry and stone wall, which constitutes a building in planning terms. I can see from the evidence before me that the wall was recently built to replace a smaller timber fence, a further planning approval was then granted for a slight increase in height of the wall's piers and pier caps which has resulted in a more substantial structure.
9. Whilst adding lanterns to the boundary wall does not necessitate the existing wall being viewed as new development, it must be considered whether the lanterns are a disproportionate addition to the wall. I do not agree with the appellant that lanterns of this scale and design can be viewed as merely decorative or a minor architectural embellishment.
10. I note that the Council's decision was based on the lanterns measuring 1m in height and the manufacturing specification provided in the appellants evidence confirms that the lanterns are smaller than this, measuring circa 81cm. However, this is still a considerable increase in the overall height of the boundary wall and coupled with the actual number of lanterns proposed, represents a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building contrary to LP Policy 34.
11. The appellant suggests that the lighting does not constitute development. This is not, however a matter within the confines of this planning appeal, and there are other legal mechanisms available to the appellant to make this case. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt.

Openness

12. The Framework states that "the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence". Openness can be determined by visual and spatial aspects.
13. The location of the wall means there are clear views of the lanterns available from Windsor Road and the access road in front of the property. Due to their prominent siting, overall size and number, the proposed installations would be clearly visible and cause harm to the visual openness of the Green Belt. Given the extent of the impact, I find that the level of harm would be moderate.

14. In terms of spatial aspects, the proposal has introduced built form above the existing wall and as such inevitably affects the spatial openness of the site. The impact in spatial terms is however fairly limited given they are atop an existing boundary wall.
15. Overall, therefore, the proposal has a harmful effect on openness. This harmful impact on openness, and the inappropriateness of the proposal in principle, both carry substantial weight.

Character and appearance

16. The appeal site is located on a busy A road. The approach to the property from both directions has a rural feel, with a scattering of dwellings and areas of woodland on both sides of the road. There is no street lighting on this section of the A332 or on the access road in front of the appeal property.
17. A currently unoccupied former restaurant premises with a large car park neighbours the appeal property on one side. I note from the evidence before me and from my site visit that some external lighting exists at this premises. However, the building is currently unoccupied, and it is not clear if external lighting is still in use. Nevertheless, the premises is commercial in nature and whilst it forms part of the context of the appeal site, it is not appropriate to compare external lighting of a commercial premises to that of a residential dwelling.
18. It is noted that the lanterns will utilise a low-wattage bulb with a capped design to direct light downward and will be programmed to operate on automatic timers, switching off at 11pm. Despite the appellant's assertion that the lanterns are mounted discreetly to align with the wall's rhythm and detailing, they are highly visible from the public highway. Positioning a lantern on each pier cap would result in a large number of lights that would appear dense and clutter the appearance of the front and side elevation of the appeal property, giving an over lit appearance.
19. I agree with the appellant's comments, and comments in letters of support for the proposal that dark sky policies do not mean no external lighting whatsoever. However, notwithstanding the nearby former restaurant premises, the lanterns introduce residential lighting along a currently unlit section of highway which in this case given the woodland context appears incongruous.
20. On this basis, the lanterns unacceptably affect the character and appearance of the dwelling and surrounding area and would not accord with Local Plan policy LP 28 which seeks to ensure a high standard of design and LP 50 which seeks to ensure, amongst other things that lighting proposals are sensitive to the impacts on the character of the area.

Biodiversity

21. In terms of the potential impact on biodiversity, I note the Council's biodiversity officer's comments on the proximity of ancient woodland and records of protected and notable species in the area, including nocturnal species such as bats, badgers and owls. However, the lanterns are capped to direct light downwards and have a very low wattage. Although numerous, they are located very close to the dwelling and highway which are lit to some extent by internal lights and vehicle headlights and light spill beyond the immediate vicinity of the boundary wall would be very limited. On this basis I do not consider the lanterns are likely to have a material

impact on biodiversity and would accord with Local Plan policy LP 53 which seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity and Local Plan policy LP 58 which seeks, amongst other things, to minimise pollution and maintain the quality of the natural environment. The proposals would also accord with Policy W10 of the Winkfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037 (July 2022) which seeks to ensure outdoor lighting impacts are limited in relation to the environment and wildlife; and paragraph 198c of the Framework which seeks, amongst other things to limit the impact of light pollution on nature conservation.

Other Considerations

22. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the Green Belt and requires very special circumstances to be demonstrated to clearly outweigh any harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness, or any other harm.
23. The lanterns offer a private benefit to the appellant by introducing lighting at the entrance to the appellant's property and close to a short section of pavement and access road that is currently unlit. Given the rural nature of the area the pavement and access road is unlikely to be well used at night by pedestrians, but some limited public benefits may arise. I note the letters of support for the development that refer to feelings of improved safety due to the presence of the lanterns. I also note that no adverse impacts on human health, wellbeing and safety and amenity have been identified. These matters in favour of the development are weighed in the planning balance below.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

24. The development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and harms its openness, to which I must attribute substantial weight against the development. Added to which is the harm relating to character and appearance. Balanced against that are the other considerations identified above. The appellant's and the public benefits from the proposed development attract only limited weight, the lack of harm to biodiversity, human health, wellbeing and safety and amenity are neutral factors in the planning balance. I conclude that the other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and therefore there are no very special circumstances to justify the proposal.
25. Therefore, the proposed development would be contrary to the Framework and Policies LP Policy 34, LP 28 and LP 50 of the Local Plan as described above.
26. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elizabeth Davies

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR