



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2025

by E Worley BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/W/25/3369593

**Land to the North of Allerds Farm, Crown Lane, Farnham Royal,
Buckinghamshire SL2 3SF**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Makenzie Homes Ltd against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - South Area (South Bucks).
 - The application Ref is PL/24/1720/PIP.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Application for Permission in Principle for residential development of 5 open market dwellings and 4 affordable dwellings'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development, which separates the consideration of matters of principle from the technical detail. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages. The first stage (permission in principle) establishes whether a site is suitable in principle. The second stage (technical details consent) is when detailed 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 a subsequent technical details consent application if permission in principle is granted¹. A 'Proposed Site Plan' was submitted as part of the application, but given the matters to be considered at this stage, I have treated this as being for illustrative purposes only.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development, with particular regard to:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect on the openness of the Green Belt; and

¹ PPG Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

- whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

5. 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. The Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 of the Framework sets out that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the specific exceptions listed apply, none of which are relevant to the appeal proposal.
6. Policy GB1 of the South Bucks District Local Plan, adopted March 1999 (SBDLP) permits certain forms of development within the Green Belt. As the appeal proposal is not one of those listed, it would therefore conflict with Policy GB1. However, Policy GB1 is not entirely consistent with the Framework as it does not include the further exceptions to inappropriate development set out in the Framework or refer to the very special circumstances that may mean that otherwise inappropriate development can be allowed in the Green Belt.
7. Paragraph 155 of the Framework states that the development of homes on grey belt land should not be regarded as inappropriate, where specific criteria are met. These include that 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; there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed; the development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework; and where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules'.
8. For the purposes of decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined in the Framework 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 the purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. There is no dispute between the parties that the site comprises grey belt land, and that the proposed development would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan. Given my observations on site, I have no reason to disagree.
9. In addition, the Council indicates that it is currently unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land, with a current supply of 0.91 years. Thus, in accordance with footnote 56 of the Framework, there is a demonstrable unmet need for the development proposed. The proposal would therefore satisfy part b) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.
10. Part c) of paragraph 155 requires the development to be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework. Manual for Streets indicates that walkable neighbourhoods are generally characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes' (about 800m) walking distance of residential areas which residents may access comfortably on foot, and that this is not an upper limit. There are a range of services and amenities within Farnham

Royal, which the appeal submissions indicate would be within this distance. In addition, the appellant's Transport Statement (TS)² indicates there are others within the maximum acceptable walking distances set out in Table 2 of the Institute of Highways and Transportation Guidelines in relation to journeys on foot. The TS also sets out that there are bus stops to the south of the site on Doddsfield Road and Farnham Lane between 700m and 1km from the site, which provide public transport access to larger settlements including Slough, Taplow and Maidenhead.

11. However, the most direct route to these services and amenities would require future residents of the proposed development, immediately upon leaving the site, to walk approximately 480m along Crown Lane to its junction with Farnham Road. This part of the route comprises a semi-rural road, without a dedicated pavement and streetlights, with only limited opportunities for pedestrians to take refuge from passing vehicles on verges. For these reasons, despite the 40mph speed limit and even if pedestrians may be visible to drivers, while it may be conducive for cycling, the route would fail to create a generally pleasant walking environment for pedestrians.
12. The alternative pedestrian routes to Farnham Royal suggested by the appellant would entail part of the journey to be carried out along the public footpaths between the site and Blackpond Lane (approximately 455m from the site). This would be followed by the necessity to walk along a section of Blackpond Lane which is, in part, narrow, largely unlit, and devoid of footpaths. Although it may be possible for future occupiers of the dwellings to use these routes to access Farnham Royal and the facilities therein, due to the lack of lighting and unmade surface, it is unlikely that they would be commonly and ordinarily used for such purposes. Moreover, given the nature of these routes it is unlikely that they would be appealing in inclement weather, by those less mobile, with small children or pushchairs. While I note the appellant's willingness to secure improvements to the condition of the public footpath, including the provision of appropriate lighting, such details are not before me. As such, I cannot be certain that any improvements would not compromise the character and appearance of the area.
13. The Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making. It also sets out that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in the interests of promoting sustainable transport and that sustainable transport modes should be prioritised. In relation to identifying sustainable locations, the PPG sets out that, when making decisions regarding planning applications on grey belt land, authorities should ensure that the development would be in a sustainable location, and where grey belt land is not in a location that is or can be made sustainable, development on this land is inappropriate. The PPG is clear that, whether locations are sustainable should be determined in light of local context and site or development-specific considerations.
14. For the reasons set out above, while the site is not a significant distance from amenities and facilities, including those in Farnham Royal, access on foot would necessitate walking along unlit stretches of carriageway with no pavements and/or public footpaths. It is likely that this would discourage trips by foot from the site to these, and despite the relatively modest distances in most instances, journeys

² Supporting Transport Statement Technical Report 31778/2A by Mark Baker Consulting Limited dated December 2023

would be undertaken by car. Consequently, while there may be opportunities to cycle to nearby facilities, this is not a realistic alternative for everyone, and in the absence of safe and convenience walking routes, occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be likely to be otherwise reliant on the use of private cars to access day-to-day services and amenities. While having regard to the location of the site, in a semi-rural location beyond the built-up area, the proposed development, in this location, would nonetheless fail to prioritise sustainable transport modes.

15. The appellant has referred to appeals at Woodside House and Broadheath Farm³ that were allowed for residential development, as both were found to be in a sustainable location. In the former, while the Inspector acknowledged that future occupants would be dependent on use of a private car to meet their day-to-day needs, as the proposal would result in a net increase of only one dwelling on the site, the volume of traffic movements associated with the proposed development was likely to be small. Moreover, in the case of Broadheath Farm, I note the appeal site is located within a settlement, and while there were limited services and facilities, did not give rise to conflict with development plan policies relating to accessibility/sustainability. Consequently, these situations are materially different to the appeal before me, including in relation to the quantum of development.
16. For the foregoing reasons, even if the proposed development could meet the 'Golden Rules', the development would not be in a sustainable location. As such, the proposal would not meet the exception at paragraph 155 c) of the Framework and would therefore constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In that regard it would conflict with Policy GB1 of the SBDLP and the aims of the Framework in relation to the protection of the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt

17. My assessment relates to the principle of residential development. While there are no detailed plans before me, an indicative proposed site plan has been submitted to show how 9 dwellings and access could be accommodated on the site. Given that the site comprises largely open land, the proposed development, by virtue of the amount of built form, associated boundary treatments, outdoor amenity space and areas of hardstanding for driveways, parking and vehicle manoeuvring, would inevitably lead to a loss of openness of the Green Belt in spatial terms.
18. The appeal site is part of a larger field which is enclosed by boundary hedgerows and trees, including mature vegetation to the front boundary adjacent to the highway, and the existing development at Allerd's Farm to the south. Notwithstanding this context, and while the existing and proposed soft landscaping may reduce the visual effects of the proposed development, it would nonetheless be visible, in part, in views from the access to the site from Crown Lane and the public footpath which runs along the side boundary of the site. Consequently, although such effects may be localised, the proposal would nonetheless result in a reduction in the visual openness of the Green Belt. The presence of the surrounding development in the vicinity of the site does not lessen the effect of the proposed development in terms of openness.
19. In light of these considerations, the proposal would result in moderate harm to the Green Belt through loss of openness, to which substantial weight is to be given.

³ APP/M3645/W/24/3347328 & APP/R0660/W/24/3354674

Other considerations

20. The proposed development would deliver market and affordable housing in an area with a significant deficit in housing land supply, which weighs heavily in favour of the scheme.
21. While the proposal may offer benefits in terms of biodiversity, such details would form part of a technical details consent and are therefore not before me at this stage. I therefore attribute this limited weight.
22. The proposal may be compliant with various other provisions of the development plan, including highway safety, flooding, character and appearance, and the living conditions of existing and future occupiers. However, the absence of harm or conflict with other relevant development plan policies is of neutral weight.
23. As the Council is unable to demonstrate an adequate supply of housing land, paragraph 11d) of the Framework falls to be considered. Nevertheless, on the basis that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. Thus, the proposal in this case does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Other Matters

24. My attention is drawn by the appellant to several appeal decisions for new residential development which were allowed, having regard to the Council's deficient housing land supply position. In the case of Land between Lodge Lane and Burtons Lane⁴ the Inspector acknowledged substantial benefits arising from the development. In addition to market and affordable housing, the scheme included retirement and care and custom/self-build homes, as well as a large contribution of BNG, to which substantial weight was attributed. Consequently, they concluded that there were other considerations which were considerable and clearly outweighed the identified harm to the Green Belt and other harm, such as to amount to the very special circumstances needed to justify the development.
25. The appeal proposals at Roundhouse Farm⁵ were also greater in scale than the appeal proposal before me. Accordingly, the Inspector in that case considered that, collectively, the very substantial weight to the provision of both market housing and affordable housing, together with the substantial weight to the provision of self-build housing, clearly outweighed the harm to the Green Belt. The site at Field Adjacent to Hawthorn House⁶ is not in the Green Belt, and as such is subject to different policy considerations.
26. Therefore, from the evidence before me, these decisions do not appear to be directly comparable to the appeal proposal and as such the weight to be attached to these is limited. In any case, I have determined the appeal on its own merits, based on the evidence before me.
27. Allerd's Farm Barn, a Grade II listed building, lies close to the site. I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed

⁴ Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/W/22/3303868

⁵ Appeal Refs: APP/B1930/W/20/3265925 & APP/C1950/W/20/3265926

⁶ Appeal Ref: APP/G1630/W/19/3233022

building. Given the scale and siting of the proposed development in relation to the listed building, together with the existing and proposed intervening built form and landscaping, I am satisfied that the setting and significance of the listed building would not be adversely affected.

28. East Burnham Park, a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA), is located on the opposite side of Crown Lane. The Council indicate that by virtue of the absence of any visual, functional and/or historic relationship between the site and the NDHA, the proposed development would not affect its setting. Considering my observations at my site visit, I have no reason to disagree.
29. The site is within the 5.6km Zone of Influence of the Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation. Had I been minded to allow the appeal, it would have been necessary to establish whether the proposal on its own or in combination with other projects would be likely to have significant effects on the integrity of the European Site. However, as I am dismissing the appeal, my decision would not result in any adverse impacts in that regard.
30. I understand that the appeal scheme is a revised scheme which sought to address concerns raised by the Council in relation to a previous proposal. However, I have determined the appeal on its own merits, based on the evidence before me.

Green Belt Balance and Conclusion

31. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which, by definition, is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It would also cause moderate harm to openness. I give this harm to the Green Belt substantial weight as required by the Framework. There are no other considerations that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and loss of openness. Therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal do not exist.
32. For the reasons set out above, 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. The proposal would conflict with the development plan, as well as policies within the Framework, and there are no material considerations, that indicate the appeal should be decided otherwise in accordance with to the development plan. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

E Worley

INSPECTOR