



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 February 2026

by P Terceiro BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 MARCH 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/25/3376689

Finns Farm, Small Hills Road, Horley, Surrey RH6 0HR

- 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 Finn (Finns Farm Ltd) against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00972/RET.
 - The development proposed is the erection of steel-framed shelter and extension of hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form. I have however deleted the word 'retrospective' as it is not an act of development.
3. The evidence submitted by the appellant states that the development has been completed. I saw during my site visit that the shelter and hardstanding were in place. I have considered the appeal on the basis that permission is being sought retrospectively for their construction. The Council assessed the planning application in the same manner.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and relevant development plan policies, including its effect on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt; and
 - whether any 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 development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

5. Policy NHE5 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 (DMP) is supportive of development in the Green Belt in certain

circumstances, but it is silent on agricultural development. Policy CS3 of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan: Core Strategy 2014 (CS) seeks to protect the Metropolitan Green Belt against inappropriate development in accordance with the Framework.

6. The Framework establishes that development in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions set out in paragraphs 154 and 155. This includes, at paragraph 154a), buildings for agriculture and forestry and, at paragraph 154h) ii. engineering operations, provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
7. The appeal site comprises an open-sided structure single storey steel-framed shelter and an area of hardstanding. The appellant states that the steel framed shelter is used for the storage of agriculture equipment and machinery in association with Finns Farm. However, the evidence provided to substantiate this claim is extremely limited and therefore it is unclear what agricultural activities the development supports and where they take place.
8. During my site visit I observed that the wider area near the site is used for various commercial and storage purposes. While there are paddocks on the land to the north of the site, there is no compelling evidence before me to demonstrate the keeping of horses in this location falls under an agricultural use. Moreover, the machinery and equipment stored within the shelter at the time of my site visit generally comprised items commensurate with construction activities other than with agriculture. Overall, I saw very little to suggest that this is a place of agriculture.
9. Accordingly, I am not satisfied that the appellant has demonstrated that the development is required for the purposes of agriculture. On this basis, the shelter does not meet the exception listed in Paragraph 154a) of the Framework.
10. The Framework advises that openness and permanence are the essential characteristics of the Green Belt. Openness is the absence of development, and it has both spatial and visual aspects. Although the appeal site has limited visibility from public vantage points, the absence of public views does not in itself mean that there is no impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
11. The shelter is a large structure due to its overall width and depth. In addition, the development includes a substantial extension to the existing hardstanding. Visually, the development is perceived against the backdrop of existing trees and existing built form within Finns Farm. Although this limits the visual effects of the development, the effect on the spatial aspect of openness is significant. Consequently, the development considerably harms the openness of the Green Belt.
12. One of the five purposes of the Green Belt identified by paragraph 143 of the Framework is relevant to the development, which is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The Council's evidence indicates that the development is located on what was a field. The appellant has not produced compelling evidence to the contrary and, as such, the development encroaches onto the countryside.

13. Accordingly, the development does not meet the requirements of paragraphs 154a) and 154h) ii. of the Framework, nor there is any suggestion that the development accords with any of the other exceptions. The development also conflicts with CS Policy CS3 and DMP Policy NHE5 which seek to control inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
14. The Council's reason for refusal refers to CS Policy CS2. This policy concerns valued landscapes and the natural environment. Based on the information before me I do not find this policy to be relevant in the context of this appeal.

Other considerations

15. The appellant asserts that the appeal scheme supports employment development outside of employment areas. However, given the limited details provided, I can only attribute limited weight to this consideration.
16. The development is acceptable in relation to other aspects, including its effect on the character and appearance of the area and living conditions of the nearest neighbours. However, the absence of harm is a neutral factor that does not weigh in favour or against the development.

Green Belt Balance

17. The appeal development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which the Framework establishes is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved, except in very special circumstances (VSC). The Framework sets out that for VSC to exist, the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the development must be clearly outweighed by other considerations.
18. In addition to the harm by reason of inappropriateness, the development causes considerable harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The Framework requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Accordingly, the harm to openness, in addition to the harm by reason of inappropriateness, each carry substantial weight against the appeal development.
19. The other considerations presented in this appeal carry no more than limited weight. Therefore, very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the development's harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, do not exist.

Conclusion

20. The development conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

P Terceiro

INSPECTOR