



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 March 2026

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 April 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1825/W/25/3375587

Land Adj. to Dingleside, Featherbed Lane, Redditch, B97 5QL

- 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 P Alekna against the decision of Redditch Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00754/PIP.
 - The development proposed is described as “permission in principle for the erection of 1 new dwelling.”
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural 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. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second (‘technical details consent’) stage 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 permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this appeal is whether the appeal site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on the edge of Hunt End, a suburb of Redditch, not far from the settlement boundary. Although it may be possible to walk and cycle from the appeal site into Hunt End and Crabbs Cross, the Council considers these local facilities and services to be some distance away. The evidence before me does not demonstrate the range of services and facilities available at these locations, nor the length or quality of the routes to access them.

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

6. Day-to-day services and facilities can be accessed via the bus services on Windmill Drive. I saw on my visit that the route to the bus stops is not unattractive for pedestrians or cyclists, including the stretches along Featherbed Lane and Tippings Lane. While these rural lanes are narrow, and lack footways and street lighting, this is not uncommon in more rural settings. Featherbed Lane is a Public Right of Way (PROW), and I observed several pedestrians and a cyclist using the lanes.
7. During my visit, vehicle movements along the lanes were low. Featherbed Lane and most of the section of Tippings Lane that would be used to access the bus stops are subject to a 30-mph speed limit, with vehicle speeds correspondingly modest. Along the short length of Tippings Lane where a 60-mph limit applies, vehicles were either accelerating or decelerating in response to the change in limit, with actual speeds notably below the maximum permitted. In these circumstances, I am not persuaded that the proposal would give rise to an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
8. Notwithstanding this, given the undulating nature of the route, I acknowledge that it may be more challenging for those with pushchairs and mobility issues. Critically, while the walking distance to the bus stops did not feel unreasonable on an occasional basis, it was greater than desirable for regular use. I observed no other services or facilities along the route to the bus stops or nearby.
9. I am mindful that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. In this case, while future occupiers would not be wholly dependent on the private car, the distances involved in accessing bus services by foot would mean they are unlikely to rely on the bus as a daily or regular mode of travel. They would, therefore, be reliant on the private car to meet everyday needs. As a result, based on the evidence before me, the proposal would fail to provide a genuine choice of transport modes, and would not sufficiently limit the need to travel or prioritise sustainable transport.
10. For these reasons the proposal would conflict with Policies 2, 19 and 20 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 (2017) (Local Plan). These seek to deliver sustainable patterns of development by, among other things, ensuring that sustainable means of travel, reducing the need to travel by car and increasing public transport use, cycling and walking are maximised, and that all proposals are accessible to local services and a public transport link.
11. The appellant has drawn my attention to two other sites within Redditch where permission in principle has recently been granted by the Council², contending that they have a similar or worse level of accessibility than the appeal site. I visited the site at Alder's Court, Green Lane, which is perhaps the closest comparison to the appeal site in terms of the length and quality of the walking route to bus stops. However, while there are some similarities, the circumstances and merits of the approved schemes are not directly comparable. In particular, unlike the appeal proposal, they involved the conversion of existing buildings. I therefore attach them only limited weight, and they do not lead me to a different conclusion. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
12. Policy 8 of the Local Plan sets out that applications for development in the Green Belt will be determined in line with national planning guidance on Green Belts and other relevant policies within the development plan.

² Application References: 25/00939/PIP and 25/00527/PIP

13. Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of a closed list of exceptions apply. These exceptions include e) limited infilling in villages and g) limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. I consider each in turn below.
14. The Council considers the proposal not to comply with exception 154(e), as the appeal site is not located within a village. From the evidence before me and my observations on site, I can find no reason to disagree. The appeal site has a historical association with Hunt End. However, whether or not it would form part of this settlement, Hunt End is a suburb of Redditch and not a village.
15. Moving on to Paragraph 154 (e), the appeal site currently comprises an open paddock. It would therefore not meet the definition of previously developed land set out in Appendix 2 of the Framework. Consequently, the proposal would not comply with this exception.
16. Paragraph 155 of the Framework states the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where a list of criteria applies. There is no dispute between the parties that the proposal meets the definition of grey belt, nonetheless criterion 3 of Paragraph 155 requires the development to be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework.
17. For the reasons set out above, while I appreciate that, given the modest scale of the proposal, any additional vehicle movements would be limited, the proposal would not be in a sustainable location. It would therefore not comply with criterion 3 of Paragraph 155 of the Framework.
18. Accordingly, the proposal would be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt.

Openness

19. The proposed dwelling would unavoidably take up an appreciable amount of space, which is currently open. This would result in significant harm to the spatial openness of the Green Belt.
20. I saw on my visit that the front of the appeal site is largely open to Featherbed Lane with only a short hedge running along the front boundary. Although the appeal site is positioned between two existing dwellings and is reasonably well contained from the wider area, the loss of openness resulting from the introduction of built form onto the appeal site would be experienced by the users of the PROW. Therefore, while localised, the harm to the visual openness of the Green Belt would be significant.
21. Accordingly, the proposal would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt contrary to the fundamental aim of the Framework.

Other Considerations

22. In terms of benefits, the proposal would provide a new dwelling, which would support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing. Also, as a small site, it could be built out relatively quickly.
23. The Council does not currently have a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. It has been put to me by the appellant that the latest position is around 2.8 years. This is a significant shortfall, which is not disputed by the Council. The provision of any additional housing therefore carries significant weight. Nonetheless, although a meaningful benefit, the single dwelling would only make a modest contribution towards the Borough's housing supply.
24. The proposal would have modest social and economic benefits arising from the spending associated with its construction and subsequent occupation.

Green Belt Balance

25. Paragraph 153 of the Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
26. The proposal would be an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt, which would harm its openness. In line with Paragraph 153 of the Framework, I afford this harm substantial weight. I have also found that the proposal would not offer genuinely sustainable travel choices.
27. Overall, the benefits of the proposal would not clearly outweigh this harm. Thus, there are not the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policy 8 of the Local Plan and the aims of the Framework with regards to Green Belt.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

28. Given the shortfall in housing supply, paragraph 11d) of the Framework falls to be considered. In this case, I have found that the proposal would be an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt and would significantly harm its openness. The application of policies in the Framework that protect the Green Belt therefore provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.
29. In conclusion, the appeal site would not be in a suitable location for the type and amount of development proposed when applying the development strategy set out in the Local Plan and national policy on the Green Belt.
30. The proposal would conflict with the development plan, read as a whole. Having had regard to all relevant material considerations, it has not been demonstrated that there are any of sufficient weight to indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR