



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2026 by Elizabeth Davies BSc (Hons) MISEP, CEnv

Decision by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/D/25/3376337

Webbs, The Green, Englefield Green, Surrey TW20 0YX

- 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 and Mrs David Clark against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is RU.25/0814.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear conservatory extension.
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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.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - Whether the proposal would be 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.
 - If the proposed development is inappropriate development, whether the 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 proposed development.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Whether it would be inappropriate development

4. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence, and the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate development, other than for the specific exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the Framework.
5. Paragraph 154 c) of the Framework allows for 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. Policy EE14 of the Runnymede 2030 Local

Plan (2020) (LP) deals specifically with extensions and alterations and replacement of buildings in the Green Belt. The policy is broadly consistent with the Framework, stating that the extension of a building is not inappropriate development provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

6. The term 'disproportionate additions' is not defined in the Framework and is a matter for the decision maker to determine whether the extension is disproportionate. Policy EE14 of the LP provides considerations to be taken into account when assessing extensions to buildings in the Green Belt.
7. The appeal dwelling has been formed from the conversion, extension and alteration of a number of former farm buildings. The Council consider that cumulatively taking into account previous extensions, the dwelling has already been extended by more than 100%. However, the appellant has contended that much of the current dwelling is made up of converted original buildings and their calculations indicate that the total increase, including the previous extensions and the appeal proposal would be in the region of 88%.
8. Even if I take the appellants lower number, this would still amount to a substantial cumulative increase in the size of the dwelling to the extent that it would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. As such the proposed extension would be inappropriate development when considered under this exception.
9. Notwithstanding the above, the appellants consider that the proposal should also be considered under Paragraph 154 g) of the Framework. This exception allows for limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use, provided that the building such as the extension proposed, would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
10. The appellants state that the appeal proposal can be described as limited infilling because the extension is small scale and fills the L-shaped space between the existing rear and side elevations of the dwelling. The terms 'limited' and 'infilling' are not defined in the Framework, but it is generally accepted that infilling involves the development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings. The proposed development is modest in scale and I agree, given the positioning of the proposed extension, it could be described as an infill extension in the context of the appeal site.
11. The Framework defines previously developed land (PDL) as land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land. It excludes, amongst other types of land, land in built up areas such as private residential gardens. Although the appeal site is situated at the edge of the settlement where the grain of development softens and becomes more rural in character, it is nevertheless in very close proximity to the rest of the settlement and is contiguous with its built form. Having observed the site and its surroundings on the ground, as a matter of planning judgement, I consider that the site is within a built-up area. Therefore, it is excluded from the definition of PDL in the Framework and the proposed development would therefore not meet with the exception contained in paragraph 154 g).

12. As such, I conclude that the proposed development is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is contrary to the Framework and Policy EE14 of the LP.

Openness

13. Policy EE14 of the LP states that development proposals should maintain the openness of the Green Belt. It also states that development should also not materially increase the prominence of the development on the site.
14. Openness can be determined by visual and spatial aspects. Whilst of a fairly modest size in the context of the appeal property and garden, spatially, the proposed extension would add built development in a previously undeveloped part of the appeal site, within the Green Belt. It would therefore reduce its openness, albeit with only a minor degree of harm.
15. The proposed extension is located at the rear of the property. The large garden and orientation of the existing buildings mean the location is secluded from views from outside the appeal property. The impact on visual openness would therefore be limited.
16. Overall, when the spatial and visual effects are taken together, there would be minor harm to openness. The proposal would be contrary to the protection aims of Policy EE14 of the LP and the Framework as set out above.

Other Considerations

17. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful. 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.
18. The appellants have suggested that an outbuilding of the same size as the appeal proposal could be built in the garden under permitted development rights. The outbuilding would provide the appellants with a garden room, although it is noted an extension to the house would be their preference. However, the appellants have stated that the detached garden room would be built if the appeal scheme is dismissed. Whilst there is every likelihood a detached outbuilding could be built, I have not considered the implications of this further because were I to allow the appeal there is nothing before me to prevent the appellants also constructing a detached garden room. I therefore give this matter limited weight.
19. The proposed conservatory extension would improve natural light in the property and provide an accessible room with some welfare benefits to the retired appellants. I have had regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty includes having regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and advance equality of opportunity between those sharing relevant protected characteristics and those who do not. Whilst I am mindful of the needs of the appellants, it has not been demonstrated that the scale and location of the proposal would be specific to their needs, or that they could not be met by a less harmful scheme. Therefore, I afford these considerations limited weight.

Other Matters

20. The appeal site is located within the Englefield Green Conservation Area (CA). I have therefore had regard to Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) which places a duty upon the decision-maker, in the exercise of planning functions, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The Framework further advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
21. The CA has a semi-rural village character, centred on the open part of the nearby Green. The area historically consisted of farmsteads and small cottages. The appeal property is made up of a number of former farm buildings which have been altered and extended over time. Whilst the appeal property features some modern design elements, the overall form and design of the appeal property makes a positive contribution to the CA. The proposal is for a modest rear conservatory extension that would be subservient to the host dwelling. The Council have found that it would retain the historic grain of development to the west of The Green. Built development would not be spread across the appeal property. I agree with these conclusions and on this basis find that the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the CA and accord with Section 72 of the Act.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

22. The development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and harms its openness, to which I must attribute substantial weight against the development. Balanced against that are the other considerations identified above. I cannot attach any substantial weight to the option to build an outbuilding as a fallback position. The appellants need for the proposed development, including the PSED considerations, and the improvement of natural light to the property attract only limited weight. The preservation of the character and appearance of the CA is a neutral factor 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.
23. Therefore, the proposed development would be contrary to the Framework and Policy EE14 of the LP as described above.
24. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elizabeth Davies

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR