



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 February 2026

by N Unwin BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/W/25/3376270

43 Acrefield, Glanleam Road, Harrow, Stanmore HA7 4NW

- 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 Gerard Lee against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application ref is PL/268/25.
 - The development proposed is for: Full planning application for the erection of five detached two-storey dwellings with basement level, associated access, parking, landscaping, and boundary treatment, following partial redevelopment of the residential curtilage at 43 Glanleam Road, Stanmore.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for Costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Gerard Lee against the Council of the London Borough of Harrow. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. Since the determination of this application, the London Borough of Harrow Local Plan 2021-2041 (2026) (the Local Plan) has been adopted and now forms part of the development plan. As such, the Harrow Core Strategy (2012), Development Management Policies (2013), and the Garden Land Development Supplementary Planning Document (2013) have been superseded, and I have determined the appeal on this basis. The main parties were given the opportunity to comment on this and the Council have provided a list of Local Plan Policies that it considers relevant to this appeal. I am satisfied that no party's interests have been prejudiced.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would constitute 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 proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with specific regard to trees;
 - the effect of the proposal on biodiversity;

- whether the site is suitable for the proposed development, having regard to relevant policies for the location of housing and the Council's spatial strategy; and
- whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Inappropriate development

5. Policy GI1 of the Local Plan states that any proposals for development in the Green Belt will be considered in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
6. The Framework sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
7. Paragraph 154 of the framework sets out exceptions where development in the Green Belt is not inappropriate. The Council contend that the proposal would not meet any of the exceptions within Paragraph 154 of the framework and the appellant does not dispute this. There is nothing before me indicating I should take an alternative view.
8. Framework paragraph 155 sets out an alternative route to the exceptions under Paragraph 154, for schemes to not be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This route requires the development to be carried out on land found to be grey belt, and to comply with the following:
 - a. 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;
 - b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
 - c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework; and
 - d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 of the Framework.
9. The Framework defines grey belt land as land that does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. These are: (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, (b) prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, and (d) preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
10. The appeal site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and forms an elongated section of garden associated with 43 Acrefield (No 43). It extends along the edge of a housing estate to the east with properties along Glanleam Road to the south. The north and west of the appeal site includes mature trees with the western boundary adjoining Stanmore Country Park.

11. The appeal site would not extend the settlement beyond the garden area associated with No 43 with the site well contained by existing development and woodland including the Country Park marking a clear transition between the built-up settlement of which the appeal site appears a part, and the countryside beyond. Further, the separation of Stanmore from the settlements of Borehamwood and Bushey is made of a large gap, of which the appeal site comprises only a relatively small portion. As such, the appeal site does not strongly contribute to the prevention of urban sprawl, the merging of neighbouring towns, nor the preservation of the setting and special character of a historic town. The appeal site does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) of paragraph 143 of the Framework and so qualifies as grey belt land.
12. The proposal may have some impact on the purposes of the Green Belt, however given the small scale of the appeal site and proposed development in relation to the Green Belt as a whole, it would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt within the plan area. The proposal therefore complies with requirement (a) of Framework Paragraph 155.
13. In relation to part (b) of paragraph 155 of the Framework, footnote 56 defines the demonstrable unmet need in relation to developments for the provision of housing as the lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, or where the Housing Delivery Test was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years. Whilst the appellant raises the delivery of family-sized homes referencing extracts from the Harrow Local Housing Needs Assessment, this does not form part of the above unambiguous definition of demonstrable unmet need. The appellant additionally refers to extracts from the London Plan Review and the significant shortfall in London's housing delivery. Nonetheless, the Council contend that they can demonstrate 6.4 years of deliverable sites and 101% of its latest housing requirement, there is nothing before me to indicate this is not the case. As such, there is not a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed and it fails to meet part (b) of paragraph 155 of the framework.
14. For the above reasons, the proposal would comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt as it would not meet the exceptions set out within Framework paragraphs 154 or 155. It would also conflict with Policy GI1 of the Local Plan which, insofar as it is relevant to this appeal, seeks to follow the Framework's approach to development within the green belt.

Openness

15. Paragraph 142 of the Framework states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Openness has both a spatial and visual aspect, and an adverse impact to either can harm the openness of the Green Belt.
16. With respect to spatial openness, the appeal site primarily comprises a grassed area interspersed with trees and other vegetation giving it an open character. The proposed five dwellings and associated development would notably increase the existing built form of the appeal site with the appellant's Green Belt Analysis (GBA) acknowledging that a level of spatial harm would occur as a result of development.
17. With respect to visual openness, the appeal site is surrounded by residential development, Stanmore Country Park, and Cleopatra Close Park. The appellant's

Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) identifies a number of viewpoints at varying distances from the site, selected to represent potential views seen by the most sensitive receptors. Whilst the site is visually contained by vegetation and surrounding properties, the proposal will be perceptible from surrounding land with the LVA identifying a number of viewpoints that would offer partial views of the proposal. Further, the appeal development would be perceptible from the rear of the properties adjacent to the eastern site boundary. As such, the proposal would harm the visual openness of the green belt.

18. The appeal site contains limited built form with the proposal representing a substantial increase in this. Therefore, whilst views of the proposal may be limited, the level of development in comparison to the existing site would have a harmful effect on the openness of the Green Belt which carries substantial weight as per paragraph 153 of the Framework.

Character and Appearance

19. The application site contains a number of trees and vegetation throughout, identified within the pre-planning arboricultural report (2024) (Tree report), the majority of these identified as Category B and C trees within the included Tree Constraints Plan.
20. Section 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows local planning authorities to make provision for the preservation of trees or woodlands in their area in the interests of amenity.
21. The Tree Report additionally identifies trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) along the eastern boundary of the appeal site and a cluster of six trees in the south-west of the appeal site. However, these are not identified within the Tree Constraints Plan. The Proposed Block Plan includes trees for removal and root protection areas, and the Soft Landscape Concept Proposals includes existing trees and vegetation to be retained. However, neither of these documents indicate the category of the trees to be retained and those removed, nor which are the subject of a TPO. Further, the group of trees subject to a TPO within the south-west of the appeal site appear to be within or close to the proposed access road and would therefore potentially be impacted by it.
22. I note the appellant contends that the proposal would retain all trees subject to a TPO and that an Arboricultural Impact Assessment could be secured by the imposition of a condition. Without such a document before me, which the Tree report recommends be carried out prior to the submission of the planning application, I am not satisfied that there would not be harm to existing trees, including those subject to a TPO.
23. As such, based on the information before me I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area through harm or loss of existing trees, including those subject to a TPO. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies G1, G6, and G7 of the London Plan: the Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (2021) (the London Plan) and Policy GI4 of the Local Plan. When read together these require development to retain and integrate existing trees of value into the site layout, and for development to be refused where it would result in the loss of or harm to Trees subject to a TPO.

Biodiversity

24. The appeal is accompanied by a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment calculating a baseline total of approximately 3.58 habitat units. The proposal would result in the loss of approximately all of the existing biodiversity units. The Council contend that even with the proposed landscaping, the proposal would result in a 5% loss in habitat units including a lack of green infrastructure and wildlife corridors.
25. The appellant contends that a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of at least 10% could be achieved on site through a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS). Further, the blue line of the appeal site extends further to the north of the proposed dwellings offering an opportunity for ecological enhancement, green infrastructure, and wildlife corridors. Details of which could be secured through condition were I minded to allow the appeal.
26. If the appeal were to succeed, it would be subject to the statutory pre-commencement biodiversity gain condition ('the condition') as set out in Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). In this scenario, guidance contained in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that it would generally be inappropriate, when determining a planning application for a development subject to BNG, to be refused on the grounds that the biodiversity gain objective will not be met.
27. The condition sets out that development cannot begin until the Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) has been approved. It would be for the Council to consider the BGP, and whether or not the measures are acceptable and secured. I see no reason why an appropriate agreement could not be entered into at BGP stage, given the opportunities for BNG through SuDS and the area to the north within the blue line boundary. In any event, off-site provision could still be achieved through an appropriate conservation covenant, which is separate to the planning process, or through the purchase of biodiversity credits as a last resort. As such, I am satisfied that 'the condition' is capable of being discharged, broadly following the hierarchy.
28. Therefore, I find the development is capable of meeting the mandatory requirements for BNG, in accordance with the statutory framework. In respect to this main issue, I have found no conflict with Policies G1, G2, G6, and G7 of the London Plan and Policy G13 of the Local Plan. When read together these require development to manage impacts on biodiversity and aim to secure net biodiversity gain.

Site Suitability

29. Policy GR10 of the Local Plan relates in part to Garden Land development, setting out criteria on which garden land development would be assessed. Local Plan Policy GR10 requires proposals on garden land to be of a high-quality design, of a scale and intensity appropriate within the context it is located in, and make a comprehensive use of land.
30. With respect to comprehensive use of land, Policy GR10 states that housing on individual plots will not generally be considered to be comprehensive. Nonetheless, the supporting text says that what constitutes a comprehensive development will be determined on a case-by-case basis. It goes on to say that this will be assessed by the scale of development and the overall site size.

31. The proposal would comprise five detached dwellings forming a linear development running parallel with the housing estate to the east, not continuing north of the existing estate boundary.
32. The Council's submissions conclude that the density of the proposal would overall be consistent with the established pattern of development in this suburban area. It goes on to say that the proposed dwellings are of a comparable scale and massing to the surrounding residential typology, and that the overall proportions, fenestrations, and roof lines are appropriate in the wider suburban context. I see no reason to disagree with the Council's analysis in this respect. The scale of the development and the size of the site reflect the pattern of development of the adjoining housing estate, representing a continuation to the west. Therefore, in these specific circumstances, I consider the proposal to represent a comprehensive use of land.
33. For the above reasons, the site is suitable for the proposed development having specific regard to relevant policies for the location of housing and the Council's spatial strategy. It would therefore not conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies GR1 and GR10 and of the Local Plan. When read together these require development to be of a high-quality design, of an appropriate scale within its context, and to make a comprehensive use of land.

Other Considerations

34. The proposal would create five well-designed family-sized dwellings, making an effective use of land and a positive contribution to the provision of the identified need for family-sized housing, which Policy HO1 of the Local Plan supports. The appeal site is close to facilities and services, would make more efficient use of land, and forms a small sized site that can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement, supported by the Framework. The appellant additionally contends that the proposal could achieve a net gain in biodiversity, native planting, and green corridors. Given the relatively small scale of the proposal, these combined benefits carry moderate weight.
35. The appellant references the weight given to the delivery of housing within a Court of Appeal decision and two appeal decisions. Nevertheless, these developments were for a substantially higher number of dwellings and in the cases of the appeal decisions, the Councils were unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Therefore, the weight attached to the housing delivery in these cases is not comparable to the appeal before me.

Conclusion

36. I have found the site is suitable for the proposed development having specific regard to relevant policies for the location of housing and the Council's spatial strategy and I have not found harm in terms of biodiversity. However, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt which would also cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework, I must ascribe substantial weight to the associated Green Belt harm. Furthermore, I cannot conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area through harm or loss of existing trees, including those subject to a TPO, to which I have assigned significant weight.

37. The other considerations in this case do not clearly outweigh the harm identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist.
38. The proposal 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.

N Unwin

INSPECTOR