



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2026

by Timothy Parton BA(Hons) MPLAN MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/26/3377249

2 Sunnyside Cottages, Rushett Common, Bramley, GUILDFORD GU5 0LG

- 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 Gary Cramp against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PIP/2025/01354.
 - The development proposed is the erection of dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two 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 two stages, and so my scope is limited to matters relevant to location, land use, and the amount of development proposed. The appeal proceeds on this basis.
3. A location plan showing the proposed site layout has been submitted. This is treated as illustrative only.
4. The Council's Decision reason for refusal 2 makes reference to Policy DM4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2 (2023) (the Part 2 Plan). This Policy relates to high quality design and is not therefore relevant for this appeal.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, land use, and the amount of development, with particular regard to:
 - whether the proposal is grey belt land and whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - accessibility to services and facilities;

- access to the site; and
- 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 necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

6. Policy RE2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1 (2018) (the Part 1 Plan) and Policy DM14 of the Part 2 Plan broadly reflect the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (the Framework) in seeking to maintain the openness of the Green Belt. The Policies require that very special circumstances be demonstrated, or exceptions listed in the Framework apply, for development in the Green Belt to be regarded as not inappropriate.
7. The Framework sets out at paragraph 155 criteria where the development of homes in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate. I consider these in turn. Criterion a) relates to grey belt and the purposes of the Green Belt. As the appeal site is within the curtilage of an existing dwelling and is not within a built-up area, I concur with the appellant's view that the site constitutes previously developed land as defined by the Framework.
8. Considering the purposes of the Green Belt outlined within paragraph 143 a), b) and d) of the Framework, the site does not check the sprawl of a large built-up area, prevent neighbouring towns from merging, or preserve the setting and special character of a historic town. With the exception of Green Belt, the site is not within an area or asset of particular importance listed within footnote 7 of the Framework. I therefore concur with the appellant's view that the appeal site is grey belt as defined by the Framework.
9. Furthermore, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that the proposed development would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt in the area. The proposal therefore satisfies criterion a) of paragraph 155.
10. The Council confirms that it cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with 1.28 years' of supply identified within the Council's five-year housing land supply position published in April 2024. Accordingly, for the purposes of criterion b) of paragraph 155, there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed, which would provide a positive contribution to housing supply in the area. As the appeal proposal does not meet the definition of 'major development', criterion d) of paragraph 155 is not applicable here.
11. Criterion c) of paragraph 155 requires development to be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework. There are limited services and facilities within walking distance from the site. There is no footpath or street lighting on Run Common Road and the A281 heading towards the village of Grafham. There is a footpath on the A281 heading towards Bramley, however it is a significant distance to any services and facilities in that direction.
12. The Downs Link is accessible from the appeal site. While this provides an off-road cycle and pedestrian route to surrounding settlements with a range of services and facilities, the path nearby the appeal site is unsurfaced with no streetlighting. The

distances to surrounding settlements, and the quality of the path, would not therefore enable the Downs Link to be a viable regular means of accessing services and facilities.

13. While there is a bus stop within walking distance from the appeal site which provides access to larger settlements with a good provision of services and facilities, the frequency of buses serving the area is limited. The presence of public transport and footpaths would provide opportunities for future occupiers to travel using sustainable modes. Furthermore, some occupiers may work from home or rely on online services. However, the limited frequency of bus services, the poor quality of the available paths, and the distances involved to reach services and facilities, are likely to result in most day-to-day journeys being made by car. Consequently, the appeal site would not be a sustainable location for development.
14. While paragraph 110 of the Framework notes that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, the distances to services and facilities from the appeal site would make utilising sustainable transport options on a regular basis extremely challenging for future occupiers. The location of the proposed development would not allow sustainable transport modes to be prioritised. The proposal would therefore conflict with paragraph 115 of the Framework.
15. For the reasons outlined above, the appeal site would not be a sustainable location as required within paragraph 155 c) of the Framework. The proposal therefore fails to meet all of the exceptions in paragraph 155 and consequently constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In that regard, the proposal would therefore conflict with Local Plan (LP) Policies RE2 and DM14.
16. I have also considered whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development having regard to the exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the Framework and LP Policy RE2. I have already concluded that the appeal site comprises previously developed land. Consideration of any harm to the openness of the Green Belt is addressed below.

Openness of the Green Belt

17. The appeal site is visible from Run Common Road, the surrounding woodland and the agricultural field to the rear, presenting as an open area comprising predominantly lawn and trees, together with children's play equipment and domestic storage, including a shipping container. By reason of the proposed land use and the amount of development, the introduction of additional built form, boundary treatments, outdoor amenity space and areas of hardstanding for vehicle parking would inevitably result in a reduction in openness in visual terms.
18. Furthermore, the amount of development proposed would extend the built form of the existing cluster of dwellings into the open countryside, likely utilising much of the width of the appeal site. This encroachment of development into the open countryside would reduce the openness of the Green Belt in spatial terms.
19. The identified reduction in visual and spatial openness would be harmful to the Green Belt. This would be contrary to the aims of the Framework stated within paragraphs 142 and 143, which amongst other things, seek to keep land permanently open and safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

20. I have been referred to footnote 55 of the Framework as being applicable to this case. However, footnote 55 is relevant only where the proposed development is found to be not inappropriate, and therefore the impact on openness is no longer a determining issue. I have found that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Footnote 55 is therefore not applicable.
21. Accordingly, the proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt when assessed against paragraph 154 of the Framework and LP Policies RE2 and DM14, which together seek to maintain the openness of the Green Belt.

Accessibility to services and facilities

22. In relation to my earlier findings on paragraph 155 c) of the Framework, the appeal site would not constitute sustainable development, with particular regard to its accessibility to services and facilities. This is contrary to LP Policy SP2 which, among other things, seeks to ensure that development needs are met in a sustainable manner. There would also be conflict with Policy DM9 which seeks to promote sustainable transport modes and patterns.

Access to the site

23. The Council also refused the application on the grounds that access to the site, across common land owned by Waverley Borough Council, had not been demonstrated to be deliverable. While detailed access arrangements fall outside the scope of a permission in principle application, the general feasibility of achieving suitable access is a relevant consideration.
24. The appellant has submitted a legal opinion which sets out the process for securing a Deed of Easement in perpetuity and concludes that there are no legal impediments to such an agreement being granted. Moreover, the Council has not identified any substantive reasons why a Deed of Easement would not be forthcoming.
25. Where access to the appeal site is proposed via the existing access serving 2 Sunnyside Cottages, any agreement with the Council would relate to the extension of that established access. In these circumstances, there is no substantive reason why a Deed of Easement could not be granted, and access to the site could therefore be achieved. I therefore find no conflict with the Framework in respect of access to the site.

Other Considerations

26. The proposed development would deliver housing in an area with a significant deficit in housing land supply. I attribute substantial weight to this benefit.
27. The proposal would deliver some associated socio-economic benefits arising from the construction of the dwelling, and future occupants would be likely to use and support local services. Paragraph 85 of the Framework states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. However, in this instance any benefits would be limited to only that which could be reasonably expected from the construction of 1 dwelling. I therefore give them moderate weight.
28. It is possible that biodiversity improvements could be incorporated into the proposed development. However, in this case the level of potential biodiversity

benefits has not been clearly evidenced. Accordingly, this matter attracts limited weight.

29. The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. However, I have found that the potential harm to the Green Belt would not be clearly outweighed by other considerations, and this provides a strong reason for refusing the proposal. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 11d) of the Framework does not apply here.

Other Matters

30. I have been referred to an appeal decision (APP/R3650/W/24/3352222) as an example of development permitted in the Green Belt. However, that site is located some distance from the appeal site and differs significantly in terms of its proximity to existing settlements and access to services and facilities. It therefore does not provide a meaningful comparison. In any event, each scheme must be considered and determined on its individual merits.

Conclusion

31. The proposal would be in conflict with LP Policy SP2 in a location that would not genuinely support local travel options.
32. It would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the land use and amount of development proposed would be substantially harmful to its openness. This would be contrary to the Framework and LP Policies RE2 and DM14.
33. The proposal would deliver some benefits, it would provide an additional dwelling, no harm due to access, some socio-economic benefits and biodiversity gain. However, these other considerations do not clearly outweigh the totality of harm so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify development in the Green Belt. This would also be contrary to LP Policy RE2.
34. As such, the site is not suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, land use, and the amount of development. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole, as well as policies within the Framework, and there are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
35. For the above reasons, the appeal should be dismissed.

Timothy Parton

INSPECTOR