
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 April 2026

by **C Billings BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 June 2026

Appeal Ref: 6004316

1 Ash Bank Road, Werrington, Staffordshire ST2 9DS

- 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 Chris Cooper against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
 - The application Ref is SMD/2025/0472.
 - The development proposed is erection of a detached 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 (PPG) 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 (permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in principle and the second stage ('technical details consent') is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted, as set out in the PPG. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent technical details consent application if permission in principle is granted.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are whether the appeal site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, land use, and amount of development, with particular regard to:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and relevant development plan policies;
 - the effects of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt; and,
 - if inappropriate development, 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

5. The appeal site is within the Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 153 of the Framework advises that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness

Whether inappropriate development

6. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Furthermore, very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
7. Paragraphs 154 and 155 of the Framework set out exceptions to and what should not be regarded as inappropriate development. It is undisputed by the main parties that the appeal proposal would not meet one of the exceptions under paragraph 154 of the Framework. Furthermore, the appeal site does not meet the definition of previously developed land¹ because it is a garden in a built-up area. However, the appellant sets out that, in their view, the land is grey belt because it does not strongly contribute to purposes (a), (b), or (d) of paragraph 143 of the Framework.
8. The appeal site is outside any settlement and is part of a residential garden, located between the edge of the rural village of Werrington and edge of Stoke-on-Trent and the Potteries. It is a fairly small, triangular piece of land, generally free of development, with a tranquil, verdant character, enclosed by a stream to one side and road to another, with trees and other vegetation around and adjacent much of its boundaries. It is principally grassed lawn area, with part set at a lower ground level than surrounding land. Furthermore, it forms part of a wider green swathe of open, verdant land that continues on the opposite side of the road and leads out into open agricultural land at the rear, beyond the stream.
9. The proposal would extend the existing linear pattern of development along the main road out from the rural village towards the built up area of Stoke-on-Trent and the Potteries. From my site observations, there are some public views of the appeal site, from surrounding higher ground, including along the footpath that leads from the opposite side of the road and from Brookhouse Lane, looking across adjoining agricultural land. Visually and spatially, the appeal site, together with the small area of woodland nearby, provides a welcome break in the otherwise continuous run of roadside development. Its absence of built form and attractive, verdant open character contributing positively to a clear green gap, albeit relatively narrow, between the edge of Werrington village and wider Stoke-on-Trent built up area.
10. Consequently, although there would be other areas of remaining Green Belt land to the north and south and remain a dividing line between Council jurisdiction areas, due to its location, absence of built development, and relationship with nearby open land, visually and spatially, the appeal site makes a strong contribution to Green Belt purpose a), to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. Therefore, the proposal would not constitute grey belt land and so, would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In view of this conflict with purpose a), it is not

¹ Annex 2: Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework.

necessary to go on and consider purposes b) or d) of paragraph 143 of the Framework.

11. In conclusion on this main issue, having regard to its location, land use, and the amount of development, the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, conflicting with the Framework and policies SS10 and H1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020) (SMLP). These policies restrict inappropriate development in the Green Belt, allowing only defined exceptions, in compliance with national Green Belt policy.

Openness of the Green Belt

12. Even if the proposed dwelling were to be a single storey dormer bungalow, it would introduce permanent built form into what is otherwise predominately open, verdant land. It would close the gap between existing development at the edge of the rural village and the built-up edge of Stoke-on-Trent, thereby reducing the existing open, green gap of which the site forms part. Furthermore, as the site is visible from certain public vantage points, including from the road frontage and higher surrounding land, with views across open fields from Brookhouse Lane, the proposal would diminish the land's open character. Consequently, it would erode the visual openness of this part of the Green Belt.
13. In view of the above, having regard to its location, land use and amount of development, the proposal would harmfully reduce the openness of the Green Belt. This would conflict with the Framework and Policies SS10 and H1 of the SMLP, which require compliance with national Green Belt policy, including that substantial weight be given to any harm to its openness.

Other Considerations

14. It is undisputed that the Council does not have a five year supply of housing land, stated to be 2.95 years². Therefore, the proposal would deliver an additional dwelling in an area where there is a demonstrated housing shortfall, although a single dwelling would make only a limited contribution to such.
15. Given the small scale of the development, any associated social and economic benefits arising from its construction and occupation would be modest. Therefore, I give limited weight to these considerations.
16. No substantive evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the appeal site is in an unsustainable location. Also, during my site visit, I observed there are bus stops within reasonable walking distance from the appeal site, with bus services along the main road providing links to a large conurbation and services and facilities. While I give this moderate positive weight, sustainable development is a core objective of the planning system and therefore expected of most proposals.
17. Furthermore, although the proposal would likely meet parts b) and c) of paragraph 155 of the Framework, it would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it fails to satisfy part a).
18. The underutilised garden and its separate access from Ash Bank Road do not affect my findings on the main issues. Even if the new dwelling would be of a high quality design, reflecting the character of nearby development and utilising local

² As set out in appeal decision ref. APP/B3438/W/24/3351035

materials, it would nonetheless remain to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Furthermore, such matters would not ensure the openness of the Green Belt would be preserved. Therefore, I give neutral weight to these considerations.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

19. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would cause harm to its openness, conflicting with Policies SS10 and H1 of the SMLP. The moderate and limited weight I give to the aforementioned benefits of the appeal scheme, do not clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt. Consequently, the very special circumstances do not exist and the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole.
20. The Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land. However, paragraph 11 d) i of the Framework sets out that the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing proposed development. As the appeal site is not grey belt land, footnote 7 applies to this designated Green Belt land. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply in this case.
21. The proposal conflicts with national policy in the Framework that seeks to protect the Green Belt, and there are no other considerations that outweigh that conflict. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Billings

INSPECTOR