

LANGLEY BOTTOM FARM PLANNING APPEAL



What we need you to do

Please make representations to the planning inspectorate

BY 28th April 2022

at <https://scf.planninginspectorate.gov.uk> using reference APP/P3610/W/21/3280881

Text you can use is on Page 3

**The appeal documents can be viewed on the Council's web site at [Simple Search \(epsom-ewell.gov.uk\)](http://Simple Search (epsom-ewell.gov.uk))
By searching under the appeals tab with reference 21/00044/REF**

For more information attend the briefing at the Langley Vale Village Hall from 7-9 pm on 21st April 2022

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Background

On 22 February 2021 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Planning Committee refused a planning application from Fairfax Properties for the demolition of the existing farm buildings and the construction of 20 dwellings of which 8 would be affordable together with associated access, landscaping and parking.

The main reason for refusal was that the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and was in an unsustainable location outside the built-up area without good public transport links.

Grounds for Appeal

The key issue is whether the land in question is “Previously Developed Land”.

National planning guidance allows for “previously developed land” to be redeveloped if the proposal does not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. However, if the development delivers affordable housing, as is proposed here, a lower test of not causing substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt is specified in the national planning guidance.

A most important caveat to this is that land which is, or was last occupied, by agricultural buildings is excluded from the definition of “Previously Developed Land”

Case for Appeal

Fairfax Properties case is that:

-whilst the site was historically a working farm the site has not been use for farming purposes since 2014 and that the Woodland Trust ownership means that agricultural use could not continue on the surrounding land;

-there are commercial businesses already using part of the site and the site is therefore previously developed land

-the proposal would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt

Woodcote (Epsom) Residents Society (W(E)RS) position

W(E)RS and your Borough Councillors actively campaigned against the application on behalf of local residents, equestrian users, walkers and others who value and enjoy this special part of our Borough. Councillor Bernice Froud spoke against the proposal at the Planning Committee. It will be objecting strongly at the Appeal and representing local residents’ views at the hearing. In addition, the Society has recently submitted evidence to the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) boundary review to have this site and its surrounds included in the AONB.

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Local knowledge and opinion make a valuable addition to the evidence we provide so please submit your views in your own words if possible to the planning inspectorate. Also let us know if you would be interested in participating in the local hearing – this may be virtual or in person we are waiting to hear.

Information for you to include in your submission to the Planning Inspectorate

Please support us by using the information below to make your representations.

1. The proposal represents a serious departure from the statutory development plan for Epsom and Ewell which identifies the land as Green Belt and any change in status should be a matter for the new Local Plan and not for an individual planning appeal.
2. In order to inform the new Local Plan the 2018 Green Belt Study Stage 2 reviewed whether there were any Green Belt land parcels that could be released for development without undermining the role and purpose of the Green Belt. This included the field immediately to the north of Langley Bottom Farm and concluded that the overall integrity of the Green Belt would be compromised should this be removed from the Green Belt given the high landscape and visual sensitivity of this area.
3. The site is situated within an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) which stretches from the Surrey Hills AONB up to Langley Vale Road. It also provides one of the main pedestrian access points into the Centenary Woodland. All of this would be prejudiced by the proposed development as would the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
4. Many of the buildings and the fields within the curtilage of the site are still in agricultural use and fall outside the definition of previously developed land. The exemption to normal Green Belt rules as argued by the appellant does not therefore exist here. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
5. The Woodland Trust does not own all the land at Langley Bottom Farm and there is no reason why some agriculture use could not continue on that land including the grazing of sheep in adjacent fields.
6. The development would result in considerable harm to the purpose of the Green Belt and the benefits arising from housing units do not outweigh this harm. Consequently the 'Very special circumstances' required under the National Planning Guidance to justify inappropriate development of Green Belt land does not exist.
7. The housing estate would be a 44% increase in footprint above the existing 'previously developed land' buildings. This would have a significant adverse impact on openness and the character of the area. The impact of a residential development and associated activity is likely to be far greater than the current cluster of traditional agricultural buildings and structures used mainly for low-key agricultural and employment purposes which blends into its Green Belt setting. In addition, the lighting along the access road and the dwellings would blight the night-time rural area and have an associated impact on biodiversity.
8. The development would not support sustainable transport use and was therefore contrary to local and national planning policy.
9. If permitted the development would be likely to open the flood gates for subsequent applications for further residential development between the Village and the Farm. This would further undermine the purpose of this area of Green Belt.

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