

Secretary of State allows 295 homes on Greenbelt Land in Effingham

In a landmark decision which could have repercussions across Surrey the Secretary of State has allowed an appeal by developer Berkeley Homes to build 295 homes on green belt land.

The development will help to fund a £30 million rebuild of the Howard of Effingham school. The school's application to demolish its current site on Lower Road and rebuild on Effingham Lodge Farm was originally refused by Guildford Borough Council but this has been overturned on appeal.

Planning permission on green belt land can only be granted if there are "very special circumstances", which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Worryingly for other villages in the Green Belt such as Clandon, the Secretary of State's decision stated that "substantial weight" was given to the harm that could be done to the green belt however this is outweighed by the need for both affordable and market housing in the area, a criterion which could be considered relevant to any development in the surrounding area.

In this case however the need for additional school places and a desire to ensure that school buildings "meet modern educational and social need" are also listed as important factors in the decision.

Guildford Borough Council in regretting the outcome referred to the lack of a current Local Plan as a factor which limited their ability to resist such developments.

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