

Officer Report - Chigwell Parish Council Planning Committee

Application: EPF/0929/26

Site: Land at Pudding Lane / Gravel Lane, Chigwell, IG7 6BZ

Proposal: Retrospective application for two outbuildings as built in a temporary yard, with temporary permission sought for 18 months.

Recommendation: Object

Summary

This is a retrospective application for two outbuildings in a yard at Pudding Lane / Gravel Lane. The site is within the Green Belt and extends to about 2,438 sq.m.

The application form states that the outbuildings themselves were put in place between October and November 2025. Those dates relate to the installation of the buildings, not to the wider infrastructure works which the applicant says the buildings are needed to support.

The applicant seeks permission for 18 months. The Planning Statement describes the buildings as single-storey, removable structures, around 2.6m high, required to support local and London-based statutory infrastructure projects.

Main Planning Issues

The main issue is the impact on the Green Belt. National policy says that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to openness. Inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

The proposal introduces additional buildings into a Green Belt yard. The submitted plans show that the two outbuildings sit within a wider compound which also includes hardstanding, fencing, containers, a cabin, decking, a skip and an arched storage tent.

Although the buildings are described as temporary, they still have an impact while they remain on site. Temporary buildings can still reduce openness and add to the built-up appearance of the land. The site is seen in the submitted elevation in the context of open fields, and the photographs also show a yard with a distinctly commercial character.

The applicant says the site is screened by hedgerows and mature trees. This may reduce some public views, but it does not remove the Green Belt harm. Screening is not the same as preserving openness.

There is also limited justification for why this site is needed. The Planning Statement refers to statutory infrastructure projects, but it does not give enough detail about what those projects are, how long they will last, why this Green Belt location is necessary, or why another site outside the Green Belt could not be used. The requested 18-month period is therefore not clearly linked to a defined works programme.

The Parish Council should also be concerned that approval could further consolidate the wider yard use. The application is described as being for two outbuildings, but the plans show a wider storage compound with several other structures and operational features. The application form describes the existing use as "storage" and the commercial process as "storage purposes only".

The application also gives limited detail on how the site would be restored after 18 months. If the development is said to be temporary, there should be a clear removal and restoration scheme.

There is also little detail on external lighting, hours of operation, drainage, ecology or future limits on further containers and structures.

Recommendation

The Parish Council should object. The proposal appears to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, causing harm to openness and rural character. The applicant has not provided sufficient evidence to show very special circumstances, and the temporary nature of the buildings is not enough on its own to justify the development.

Suggested Resolution

Resolved:

Chigwell Parish Council objects to application EPF/0929/26 at Land at Pudding Lane / Gravel Lane, Chigwell.

The Parish Council considers that the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The two outbuildings form part of a wider storage compound with hardstanding, fencing, containers, a cabin and other structures. This harms the openness and rural character of the Green Belt.

The Parish Council is not satisfied that very special circumstances have been demonstrated. The application does not adequately explain the infrastructure projects said to require the buildings, why this Green Belt site is necessary, why no alternative site is available, or why an 18-month permission is justified.

The Parish Council is also concerned that approval would further consolidate a commercial storage yard in the Green Belt. Insufficient information has been provided on removal and restoration, drainage, biodiversity, lighting and future control of the site.

Reason:

The proposal would harm the openness and rural character of the Green Belt and no clear very special circumstances have been demonstrated.

If Epping Forest District Council is minded to approve the application, the Parish Council requests strict conditions requiring the removal of the two outbuildings after 18 months, full restoration of the land, no further buildings or containers, no expansion of the yard use, no external lighting unless agreed, and suitable drainage, landscape and biodiversity safeguards.