

Kent community loses High Court fight to stop 24-hour HGV lorry park on Green Belt

The parish council chairman referred to the battle to stop the 24-hour lorry park as a 'David v Goliath' fight.

Kent parish councillors' attempt to stop the building of a 24-hour lorry park in Green Belt for 200 HGVs has failed in the High Court. Wrotham Parish Council, supported by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, had called for a judicial review of a planning inspector's consent for the controversial plan for the facility close to the M26 and the Kent Downs National Landscape.

The site is 16 acres of farmland at Wrotham Water Farm, west of the A20 and north of the M26, Junction 2a in Wrotham Heath. Moto can now build the secure stop facility, with a fuel station, building, and new access to the A20 via a roundabout.



Objections came from the parish councils of Wrotham, Platt, Borough Green, Addington, Stansted and Ightham, and the borough council refused the plans in February 2024, saying the truck stop was "inappropriate development" in the Green Belt and would impact the character appearance of the area, and harm the national landscape through introduction of buildings and light.

But the planning inspectorate granted permission at appeal in February, finding the land "Grey Belt", and the development not inappropriate. And in the High Court last month, Wrotham Parish Council unsuccessfully challenged the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the inspector's decision.

The parish council chairman Pete Gillin said in part of its statement: "Just before the Inquiry started, and with just days to go, the government introduced the new concept of the Grey Belt, which removes all Green Belt protections. The Inspector justified her decision to consent to the proposal on Grey Belt grounds. The Grey Belt definition was qualified by a reference to the National Landscape and Heritage protections.

"It is clear to me that the current government is hell-bent on development growth at any cost, and certainly in the Green Belt. The permission is 'outline', so a detailed scheme will need consent before building out. As a community, we have fought the Truckstop every step of the way, but the government is all-powerful and determined. We did our best as 'David', but 'Goliath' won."

Borough council leader Matt Boughton said on his Facebook profile: "Who will consider this decision good news? HGV drivers for sure, as they will have a new lorry park in Wrotham Heath where they will be able to stop. **Who will consider this decision bad news? Anyone wishing to fight the Government over its 'grey belt' policy, which is now embedded into law and a consideration TMBC has to make on all relevant planning decisions."**