



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2025

by **Jonathan Price BA(Hons) DipTP DMS MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/W/25/3361367

Eastfield Stables, May Walk, Elsenham Road, Stansted, Essex CM24 8SS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Stuart Richardson (NB Investments UK limited) against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/24/2938/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of three-bay cartlodge ancillary to the recently approved holiday lets.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application form stated the proposal to be the erection of garaging building. The appeal form provided a slightly more detailed description, which reflects the case made for the building, so it is that used in the heading above.
3. In the light of further advice provided with the appeal, the Council is satisfied there is sufficient ecological information over protected species and is no longer defending the related part of its third reason for refusal.

Main Issues

4. Whether the proposal would be an appropriate form of development in this location, its effects on the character and appearance of the area and the adequacy of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) information.

Reasons

Whether appropriate form of development in this location

5. The proposal comprises part of the larger Eastfield Stables site, which contains various buildings and is located within countryside near to the M11 motorway. The scheme is for a single cartlodge containing three separate units of garaging and storage, fronting a turning and additional car parking area of rolled gravel. The development would have its own access from the spine road that runs through the site. The block of three, two-bed holiday cottages, which the proposal is to be ancillary to, is to be on land adjacent. However, work to provide this had not begun at the time of my visit.

6. Policy S7 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (ULP), which was adopted in 2005, imposes strict control on new building in the countryside, limiting this to development that needs to take place there or is appropriate to a rural area. I find there to be no reasonable case for providing garaging for the cars of holiday makers staying at the proposed cottages, whose presence will be temporary, especially of such a large volume. Each unit would provide well in excess of the space required to garage a conventionally sized car, even allowing for that shown for bicycles and to provide a landlord's secure store. Given there is no need for holiday visitor garaging, then the units are far in excess of what might reasonably be necessary for storage. Items such as bicycles, cleaning materials and highchairs for infants could be conveniently kept within the holiday units themselves. The winter storage of garden furniture and spare mattresses could be provided for elsewhere on the site and would not justify a development of such a large scale.
7. The holiday lets were granted on appeal on 1 August 2024¹, with the Council having recently allowed a variation providing revised ground floor layouts and first floor bedrooms. Despite this, the amount of accommodation within each holiday let is still quite modest and the single external parking space per unit remains adequate. There is no justification for the large amount of external parking space provided in association with the proposed three-bay cartlodge. It would be exceptional for those staying at the small two-bed holiday units to arrive in more than one vehicle or with caravans and trailers, and so there is no reasonable need to provide the more expansive parking, turning and manoeuvring area to accommodate such eventualities. In the infrequent event of the holiday lets generating more cars than the allocated parking available, there is ample grassed space within adjacent parts of the site that could be used. The recently completed building on the site opposite the holiday lets was approved as a Wellness Hub. Should this become operational and be provided its own car parking, then it is likely this would offer some overflow spaces for the holiday visitors were these needed.
8. Should any ancillary development at all be necessary for these yet to be built holiday lets, then what is proposed is excessive in respect of both volume and the amount of associated parking and turning space. As a consequence, there is no reasonable need for what is proposed, which would therefore be in conflict with ULP Policy S7, and the strict control this imposes on new building within the countryside.

Character and appearance

9. The cartlodge would be of a complementary design and materials to the other buildings at Eastfield Stables, all of which have a rural vernacular appearance. However, the buildings present are concentrated at two ends of the site. Most are to the northern end. The forthcoming holiday let block would be to the south, aligning with the recently built Wellness Hub. These existing and proposed buildings then leave the larger, central part of the site free of development.
10. Should the approved tennis courts and a swimming pool be provided to the rear of the Wellness Hub, these would occupy part of this open central area, which would still remain largely free of vertical development. This preserves a relatively open and rural character to the site as a whole, and an appearance of being within the

¹ APP/C1570/W/23/3333029

countryside. This proposal would encroach into the comparatively large, central part of the site, harmfully eroding its existing character.

11. The site is surrounded by thick vegetation and so the proposed cartlodge, like the existing and approved development, would not feature in external views. This means this proposal would cause little harm to the appearance of the wider countryside. Despite this scheme not being visible from surrounding public vantage points, it would nonetheless detract from the rural character of the Eastfield Stable site itself, by intruding into its undeveloped and open parts.
12. The boundary vegetation also insulates the site from views of adjacent land, which serves to preserve its rural character. Much of the surrounding area remains undeveloped countryside. However, I noted the emerging commercial use of the adjacent land at New Farm, between Eastfield Stables and the M11. In this area the earth bunds adjacent the motorway have been removed and the material spread over the site. The single commercial building here, adjacent to this proposal, was not prominent in views from the appeal site. It remains to be seen whether this site becomes more developed in the future. For the time being, this next door site does not detract significantly from the strongly rural character of Eastfield Stables and neither does it lend any support for this further development.
13. For the reasons explained, this proposal would be inappropriate to a rural area due to its large and prominent appearance within the central and most open part of the site. Coupled with the surrounding parking and turning area, this building would fail to protect and enhance the particular character of the countryside within which it is proposed. As covered in my first main issue, there are no special reasons a development of this form needs to be located here and so the proposal sits squarely in conflict with ULP Policy S7. Such policy conflict is given significant weight as this reflects the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). This includes its requirement in paragraph 135 c) which, whilst not precluding change, seeks developments that are sympathetic to local character and the surrounding landscape setting. Policy S7 also continues to reflect the requirement of Framework paragraph 187 b) for planning decisions to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

BNG

14. The Council's third reason for refusal has narrowed to a lack of sufficient ecological information, in terms of the site's pre-development biodiversity value. With further time it is likely this could have been calculated to show the statutory BNG condition capable of being discharged. However, this eventuality would not alter the harm already found from the preceding two main issues. Therefore, the absence of information over the site's biodiversity value is not a determinative issue in this appeal and further discussion of this matter becomes unnecessary.

Balance and conclusion

15. Allowing the three parking spaces approved for the holiday lets to remain as grassland, with tree planting to soften the appearance of the Wellness Hub parking, hardly amounts to a benefit, given the large cartlodge and wider amount of parking and turning space that would be provided instead. The limited amount of development at Eastfield Stables, and the unmade nature of the track running through the site, means it generates only a very small amount of slow moving vehicular traffic internally. Therefore, moving the car parking and bin storage area

for the holiday lets to the same side of the central track provides negligible benefits in terms of improved road safety.

16. Unlike the approved three holiday lets, I do not find that the ancillary garaging and storage proposed would provide the same moderate benefits to the rural economy. Only quite modest economic benefits would accrue from the construction period.
17. I consider that a moderate degree of overall harm would derive from the conflict with Policy S7, and the ULP as a whole. Remaining unrevised for over 20 years, the ULP is plainly out-of-date. In this case, it is most notably through Policy S7 not fully reflecting the Framework by seeking to protect the countryside for its own sake and not acknowledging the importance of a prosperous rural economy. Because this policy is that most important for determining this appeal and out-of-date, the Framework's paragraph 11 d) ii becomes engaged as a material consideration of significant weight. However, the adverse impacts of allowing this proposal, whilst moderate in degree, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its minor benefits, with particular regard to the conflict with aforementioned paragraph 135.
18. Therefore, the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development would not indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. As a consequence, I conclude the appeal fails.

Jonathan Price

INSPECTOR