



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2025

by David Cross BA(Hons) PgDip(Dist) TechIOA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/25/3358787

Land To South Of Hartford Drive, Hartford Bridge, Northumberland NE22 6AJ

- 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 Mr D Perry against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/03162/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of 12 stables and 5 barns.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the erection of 12 stables.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the erection of 5 barns, and planning permission is granted for the erection of 5 barns on Land To South Of Hartford Drive, Hartford Bridge, Northumberland NE22 6AJ in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 24/03162/FUL, so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted and subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appellant has submitted a revised proposed site plan with the appeal. This is materially different from plans on which the Council made its decision in that it does not include the block of 12 stables. The extent of the buildings on the revised plan also differs from that previously approved on appeal¹. The revised scheme therefore represents a material difference compared to that submitted with the application. Although interested parties have had the opportunity to comment on the revised drawings as part of the appeal process, such parties may not have been aware that amended plans have been submitted with the appeal. I have therefore proceeded to determine this appeal in respect of the proposed buildings on the basis of the plans which were submitted with the application and which were considered by the Council and interested parties at the application stage.
4. However, the appellant's Grounds of Appeal refer to the revised plan as showing a revised access layout, and the Council refers to the revised plan in relation to the access to the site in its suggested conditions. I have therefore had regard to the revised plan in respect of access only, and given the nature and scale of the amendments to the access and potential mitigation I do not consider that the interests of any party would be prejudiced by my determining the appeal on the basis of the revised plans in respect of access arrangements.

¹ Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/20/3264436 relating to "Change of use of application site to equestrian use with erection of 10no stables, paddock area and gates/fencing to site frontage".

5. On the planning application form it is stated that the development has already started, and I saw at my visit that the barns were in place but that the stables had not been constructed.

Background and Main Issues

6. The Council's 4th and 5th reasons for refusal relate to access and parking as well as the storage and handling of manure. However, in its Statement of Case, the Council has confirmed that objections from Highways and Environmental Protection consultees have been addressed and that the development is considered to be acceptable on these issues, subject to conditions.
7. On that basis, the main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - Whether the proposal is in a suitable location with regard to development plan policy; and
 - The effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development

8. Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of a number of exceptions applies.
9. This includes paragraph 154(g) which applies an exception to limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
10. The issue of whether the appeal site is PDL was raised with the parties, and the Council has confirmed that the land has previously been developed in part in relation to the previous appeal. This previous appeal included the erection of 10 stables, and also required the provision of a car parking area. I saw that stables and a car parking area were in place at the time of my visit which reflect the existing site plans.
11. The definition of PDL in the Framework includes land which has been lawfully developed and is occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land. The existing stables, car parking and associated curtilage therefore represent PDL.
12. Based on what I have seen and read, the proposed stables and barns would be located within the curtilage of the existing stables and car parking, and would therefore be built on PDL. Although the stables and barns in combination would have an extensive footprint, I do not consider that they would lead to 'substantial' harm to openness within the terms of paragraph 154(g) of the Framework. On that basis, the proposed buildings do not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and would therefore not conflict with Policies STP7 and STP8 of the Northumberland Local Plan 2022 (the Local Plan) with regard to

development in the Green Belt. The proposal would also not be contrary to the Framework in respect of protecting Green Belt land.

Location

14. The appeal site is in the open countryside within the terms of the Local Plan. Policy STP1 of the Local Plan sets out that development in the open countryside will be supported in certain circumstances.
15. This includes Policy STP1(1)(g)(i) which relates to supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of existing business. However, the appellant has confirmed that the stables are for their own personal use and not a business. Although horses of people known to the appellant may be stabled on the site this does not include a financial gain for the appellant. Foals may be sold from the site, but the evidence suggests that this is an occasional feature ancillary to the equestrian use rather than being a business operation. Based on the evidence before me, the proposal does not relate to a business and therefore does not fall within the remit of Policy STP1(1)(g)(i).
16. As an equestrian use, the proposal may fall within the scope of Policy STP1(1)(g)(iii) which relates to development to support sustainable rural leisure developments. Whilst the stables may primarily relate to the appellant's personal use of the site, it is reasonable to consider this to be a leisure development within the terms of Policy STP1(1)(g)(iii). However, when combined with the previous approval on the site, the appeal proposal would lead to a total of 22 stables on the site in buildings with a combined significant footprint. Given the evidence of the form and extent of equestrian use on the site, it has not been demonstrated that the total number of proposed stables are required to support this leisure use.
17. I note the comments made in support of the proposal, including from a veterinary surgeon who refers to the accommodation of mares and foals. However, given the limited scale of the equestrian use it has not been demonstrated that ancillary horse-breeding justifies the scale of the proposed stables.
18. In respect of the barns, the appellant sets out that these would be used for the storage of feed and equestrian equipment. Within the context of the equestrian use, the barns are of a scale which would reasonably support the use of the site. On that basis, I consider that the barns are acceptable development within the terms of Policy STP1(1)(g)(iii).
19. I therefore conclude that the appeal site is not an appropriate location for the proposed stables as it has not been demonstrated that they are required to support a sustainable rural leisure development in the open countryside, and would therefore conflict with Policy STP1(1)(g)(iii) as well as the other criteria of that policy. However, the proposed barns are appropriate to support the equestrian use of the site, and they therefore comply with Policy STP1(1)(g)(iii).

Character and Appearance

20. The proposed stables would consist of a building with a significant footprint. Within the limited scale of the existing equestrian use, the scale and location of the stables would appear as excessive and an incongruous feature within this countryside setting. Although stables may be common features in the countryside, and the proposal would use appropriate materials, the scale of this element of the

proposal would be disproportionate to the extent of the equestrian use. Although the site is screened by boundary planting which could be enhanced by condition, the obtrusive scale of the stables would be apparent in glimpsed views of the site such as through the access as well as due to the sloping topography of the area.

21. The proposed barns are of a smaller scale and would not appear as being excessive within the context of this equestrian use. The barns would be a logical extension to the existing buildings on the site and would be sensitively located adjacent to the site boundary. Given their scale and location, I consider that the barns would complement the context of the equestrian use and would not harm the character and appearance of the area.
22. In conclusion on this issue, the proposed stables would be of a scale and location which would lead to significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, and they would therefore conflict with Policy QOP2 of the Local Plan and the Framework with regards to development which preserves the character of the area and which achieves well-designed places. However, the barns would not harm the character and appearance of the area and would therefore not conflict with the design considerations of Policy QOP2 and the Framework.
23. Policy STP1(1)(i) of the Local Plan encourages development in the open countryside on previously developed land where opportunities exist. However, this also sets out that it should be sensitive to its surroundings, and for the reasons given previously the stables would conflict with this.

Conditions

24. The Council has provided a list of suggested conditions, and the appellant has had the opportunity to comment on these. I have considered the suggested conditions against the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance, and as a result have reworded some of the conditions in the interests of effectiveness.
25. A condition in respect of the commencement of the development is not required as the development has commenced.
26. I have imposed a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans in the interests of certainty. A condition in respect of further planting to provide screening of the site is required in the interests of character and appearance as well as biodiversity. Further planting would also mitigate the loss of any established planting removed to provide visibility splays.
27. Conditions restricting the use of the buildings and premises are not necessary as the proposal does not include a change of use. Should other uses be introduced which do not fall within the permitted use of the land then there are more appropriate means for the Council to address this.
28. The provision of car parking, site access improvements and cycle parking are required in the interests of highway safety. The appellant contends that the site has been in operation for a number of years without any highways incidents. However, the barns may enable a more intense use of the site, and even though this would be to a limited degree, given the concerns raised in respect of the existing site access and the submission of a revised site plan I consider that conditions requiring details of the access are necessary and relevant to the development proposed.

29. Having regard to the comments of the Environmental Health Officer, a condition requiring a management plan in respect of manure is necessary in the interests of controlling pollution. I have amended the wording of the appellant's suggested condition to ensure implementation in accordance with a suitable timescale.
30. I note the comments raised locally in respect of the enforcement of conditions, but this is a matter for the local planning authority and does not fall within the remit of this appeal.

Conclusion

31. Notwithstanding my conclusions in respect of inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the proposed stables would not be in a suitable location with regard to development plan policy and would lead to significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed stables would therefore conflict with the development plan when read as a whole with regards to the location of development as well as design and the character of the area.
32. However, I have concluded that the proposed barns are acceptable and do not conflict with the development plan.
33. The relevant elements of the proposal are clearly severable, and I shall therefore issue a split decision to dismiss the appeal in respect of the 12 stables, but allow the appeal in respect of the 5 barns.
34. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed in part and dismissed in part.

David Cross

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following:
 - i. Location Plan, drawing no. C-00, date Sept 24
 - ii. Proposed Site Plan, drawing no. C-02, date Sept 24
 - iii. Proposed Stables Plans, Barn Plans and Elevation, drawing no. C-04, date Sept 24
- 2) Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, within 3 months of the date of this decision, details of a native mixed species hedge at the site shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The approved details shall be implemented within the next planting season following the Local Planning Authority's written approval. Any plants which within a period of 5 years from planting in that planting season die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.
- 3) Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, within 1 month of the date of this permission, details of the car parking area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved car parking shall then be implemented in accordance with the

approved details and marked out in bays within 1 month of the date of the approval of the Local Planning Authority and thereafter be retained in accordance with the approved details.

- 4) Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, within 3 months of the date of this permission, the existing vehicular access from the U6725 shall be re-constructed to a specification submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority; including the provision of visibility site lines and the setting back of the access gates, in accordance with the plan reference - APP-02. Thereafter the vehicular access, visibility sightlines and the access gates shall be retained in accordance with the approved specification and plans.
- 5) Within 1 month of date of this permission, the cycle parking shown on the approved plan referenced APP-02 shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the cycle parking shall be retained in accordance with the approved plan and shall be kept available for the parking of cycles at all times.
- 6) Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, within 1 month of the date of this permission, a management and site plan for the storage and handling of manure (including details of drainage) must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the site shall be operated in accordance with the approved plan and details.

End of Schedule