



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 November 2025

by **Helen Hockenhull BA (Hons) B.PI MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/W/25/3368739

Saltersley Hall Farm, Saltersley Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5LS

- 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 Terence Cummins against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/5127/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of domestic stables including landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As Saltersley Hall Farmhouse forms a Grade II listed building, I have a statutory duty under Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies, taking into account its effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - Whether the proposal preserves the setting of the Grade II listed Saltersley Hall Farmhouse;
 - if the development is inappropriate, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. The Framework in paragraph 154 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the stated exceptions apply. Relevant to the appeal proposal is the second criterion relating to the provision of facilities including buildings for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, subject to the facilities

preserving the openness of the Green Belt and not conflicting with the purposes of including land within it. Policy PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) 2017 reiterates this national policy.

5. It is agreed by the parties that a domestic stables facility can be described as appropriate for outdoor sport and recreation. I concur with that view. I must therefore consider the impact on openness.
6. The Framework states that the fundamental aim of Green Belts is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristic of Green Belts is their openness and permanence. The Planning Practice Guidance explains that assessing impacts on openness requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case taking into account factors including spatial and visual aspects.
7. The appeal site forms undeveloped land in an area of open countryside, and it contributes to the openness of the Green Belt in this location. The proposed building would provide three stables, a tack room and hay store. The footprint of the stables would be approximately 117 square metres, and the associated hardstanding area would be approximately 458 square metres.
8. I note that a previous proposal for stabling on the appeal site was dismissed at appeal¹. This proposed nine stables with tack and hay store, a significantly larger facility. The hardstanding area proposed alongside the stables in the appeal submission, remains the same size as that associated with the previous scheme. The appellant has not provided any justification for the extent of this area. By virtue of the building's footprint and the extent of hardstanding, there would be a marked spatial loss of openness of the Green Belt.
9. Landscaping is proposed to the perimeter of the appeal site. A wildflower margin is also proposed with secondary equine fencing to prevent horses eating the vegetation. Whilst these measures would to some extent screen the development from the access road and public right of way to the south, there would still be a loss of visual openness.
10. I observed on my site visit a number of containers and storage sheds within the wider farm and a storage container on the appeal site. There was also outside storage of hay for the horses present. I understand that the storage container on site would be removed should the appeal be allowed. The evidence accompanying the previous appeal suggested there were four containers and a field shelter on the wider site which would be removed should the development proceed. This has not been confirmed in this case. The removal of the container on the appeal site itself, would have only a limited benefit to the visual amenity of the rural area and the openness of the Green Belt.
11. In conclusion, the proposed development, and the area of hardstanding in particular, which appears to be greater than reasonably required to serve three stables, would result in harm to the visual and spatial dimensions of openness. Having regard to the purposes of the Green Belt, the proposal would also result in the encroachment of built/urban form into the countryside.

¹ APP/R0660/W/24/3347880

12. For the reasons set out above, I find that the proposal would therefore form inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is by definition harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Substantial weight should be given to such harm in accordance with Framework paragraph 153.

Other considerations

13. The current proposal is substantially reduced in scale when compared to the previous refused scheme. At the time of my site visit, there were two horses on the appeal site though I understand the appellant has more horses being kept off site accommodated in rented stabling. I appreciate that the appellant requires a permanent solution and that renting stables elsewhere is less convenient and unsustainable long term. However, the appeal is supported by very limited information about the number of horses owned, their size, and stabling needs. I have no information about whether the number of horses in the appellant's ownership has reduced from the nine previously owned. It is also unclear if the appeal proposal would provide for just some of the horses, the remainder being kept outside or using shelters.
14. Policy RUR6 of the CELPS permits development in the open countryside that is essential for the purposes of outdoor recreation. Policy RUR7 relates to grazing and equestrian enterprises and sets out a number of criteria to be met.
15. There is no dispute that the proposal requires a countryside location or that it forms an outdoor recreation use. In favour of the proposal, the stables would be constructed with shiplap cladding, natural slate roof and timber doors. These materials would be appropriate to the rural area. Furthermore, screening and landscaping are to be provided. Should lighting be required, this could be controlled through the imposition of an appropriate condition on any approval. The Policy RUR7 requirement for a waste management scheme could be controlled in the same way. The lack of harm in these respects, however, forms a neutral factor in the appeal.
16. Whilst the site access makes use of existing infrastructure, it has not been shown whether the best use is being made of existing buildings or that ancillary development is kept to a minimum, for example the provision of hardstanding. For these reasons, the proposal fails to comply with Policy RUR7.

Heritage matters

17. Saltersley Hall Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building. The farmhouse dates from the 17th century with 19th and 20th century additions. It is constructed of part sandstone and white washed brick with a slate roof. Ridge beam and purlin ends are exposed at the gables and there is a prominent chimney stack. The significance of the heritage asset is derived from its historic interest as a farmhouse of its age and its architectural interest.
18. I agree with the Council that the proposed stable building, due to its separation distance from the listed farmhouse, would preserve its setting. This forms a neutral matter in the overall planning balance.

Very special circumstances/Green Belt Balance

19. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by

definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Stating that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

20. I have found that the development amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the Framework requires that substantial weight be attached to the harm in that regard. It would also cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt, due to the extent of hardstanding proposed. The removal of an existing container provides only a limited improvement to visual amenity and openness and attracts only limited weight.
21. Given the above and taking account of the other considerations in this case, I conclude that the harm to the Green Belt as a result of inappropriateness is not clearly outweighed. The very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not therefore exist. The proposed development would not accord with the Green Belt aims of the Framework or the Local Plan.

Other matters

22. The Council have set out that the application was not accompanied by the statutory mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain Information. This has also not been provided as part of this appeal. There appears to have been a misunderstanding on the appellant's part as to whether this applied in this case and the Council did not request such information at validation stage. The Council state that should the development have been acceptable in the Green Belt; the application would have been refused on these grounds. The appellant suggests a planning condition could be imposed on any approval to address this.
23. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land is deemed to have been granted subject to the biodiversity gain condition. Development cannot commence until a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and the planning authority has approved the plan.
24. In the absence of information at this stage, I am unable to determine whether the above mandatory biodiversity gain condition is capable of being discharged. This weighs against the proposal.

Conclusion

25. Whilst I have found that the proposal would cause no harm to the setting of the listed farmhouse, it would form inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would also fail to comply with Policy RUR7 of the CELPS. The material considerations in this case, do not indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.
26. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I dismiss this appeal.

Helen Hockenfull

INSPECTOR