



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2025

by **Andreea Spataru BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/W/25/3372571

Street Record, Sand Lane, Nether Alderley, Cheshire East SK10 4TT

- 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 STERLING PROPERTY CO. LIMITED against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/3554M.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of haybarn adjacent to stables for the storage of haylage.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of haybarn adjacent to stables for the storage of haylage at Street Record, Sand Lane, Nether Alderley, Cheshire East SK10 4TT in accordance with the terms of application ref 23/3554M, and subject to the conditions outlined in the schedule at the end of this decision.

Preliminary Matter

2. There are discrepancies in the submitted documents regarding the appellant's name. To resolve this, I obtained confirmation from the appellant on the correct name. The name shown in the banner above was verified by the appellant as accurate and matches the registration with Companies House.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policy.

Reasons

4. Paragraph 154 of the Framework lists the types of development that are not considered inappropriate in the Green Belt. These include, for the purposes of the appeal scheme, b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
5. Policy PG 3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 adopted 2017 (LP) seeks to protect the Green Belt. It states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development, except in very special circumstances, in accordance with national policy. One of the outlined exceptions is for the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as

long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

6. The Council indicates that the appeal site is in lawful equestrian use. During my site visit, I observed that the stables approved under a previous application¹ were in place. I also observed three horses grazing on the land. The appeal scheme seeks to erect a haybarn next to the stables. The Council does not dispute that the proposal falls to be assessed under paragraph 154 b) of the Framework and based on the evidence before me, I agree. Its concerns relate instead to whether the haybarn would constitute an appropriate facility within the meaning of that exception.
7. As acknowledged by the Council, the paragraph 154 b) test does not require absolute necessity; rather, it considers whether the proposal is appropriate, reasonable, and proportionate to the use of the land. Ultimately, this is a matter of judgement based on the evidence presented in any given case.
8. I understand that the hay storage building is necessary to maintain a consistent supply of hay for the horses, with bulk purchasing (such as 30 bales) being a standard practice. It is argued that the existing stables do not have the required capacity for hay storage. While the Council questions the scale of the proposed structure, as it would provide more storage space than the stables that were originally proposed and subsequently amended under a previous application, I have not been provided with substantive evidence to demonstrate that the appeal development is excessive in scale for its intended use.
9. My observations of equestrian activity on the site differ from those of the Council. The presence of horses and stables demonstrates active equestrian use. Although the Council raises concerns about the site's suitability for the proposed number of horses, I note that there is no policy or national guidance prescribing a minimum land area per horse. Generic advice suggesting one acre per horse is not a statutory standard and does not form part of the policies relevant to the appeal proposal. In this context, the condition of the land, whether uneven or overgrown, does not, in itself, render the proposal unacceptable.
10. The haybarn would be positioned to the side of the existing stables. It would be open-sided, with a simple rectangular footprint and pitched roof, giving it a lightweight, utilitarian form typical of rural storage buildings. Although its height would exceed that of the stables, its open sides would allow views through to the stables, particularly from Welsh Row/Sand Lane. When filled with haylage such views may be partially obstructed. However, the presence of hay is common in rural areas and would not appear incongruous. While the haybarn would introduce an additional structure, its siting and lightweight design would limit its visual and spatial effect. The openness of the Green Belt would therefore be preserved, and there is no evidence before me of any conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
11. For these reasons, and having had regard to the evidence before me, including my site visit observations, I conclude that the proposal is appropriate, reasonable, and proportionate to the use of the land. It would therefore not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would accord with LP Policy PG 3 and the provisions of the Framework.

¹ LPA ref: 19/0752M

Other Matters

12. I have had regard to the third-party objections. The Council found the proposal acceptable in all other respects, including living conditions and character and appearance of the area, apart from the issue assessed above. The Council has also outlined the planning history of the site and the established lawful use. Given the evidence before me, I have no reasons to disagree with the Council's findings. There is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that consultation was inadequate or that the proposal details were unclear. It was asserted that the proposal forms part of a process to secure residential development in the Green Belt. However, I have assessed the proposal as submitted, not hypothetical future developments. Any future proposal it is likely to require planning permission and would be considered on its own merits. Accordingly, the third-party objections do not alter my conclusion above.

Conditions

13. In the interest of proper planning and to provide certainty, I have imposed the standard time limit condition and specified that the development should be carried out in accordance with the approved plans. In order to protect the character and appearance of the area, a condition to secure the proposed materials is necessary. A condition is also necessary to secure the proposed visibility splays, in the interest of highway safety.
14. Based on the evidence before me, including the application form dated September 2023, I note that the appeal proposal was submitted prior to the statutory introduction of the biodiversity net gain requirement. In addition to the conditions suggested by the Council, its Nature Conservation Officer recommended a condition to secure ecological enhancements. Given the rural setting of the appeal site and the nature of the development, I consider such a condition both reasonable and necessary to ensure the scheme contributes positively to biodiversity. This approach accords with LP Policy SE 3 and the objectives of the Framework.
15. I have revised the Council's suggested conditions, including the condition recommended by the Nature Conservation Officer, where necessary, to better reflect the requirements of the Planning Practice Guidance.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above I conclude that the proposal does not conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations which indicate that a decision be taken other than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be allowed.

Andreea Spataru

INSPECTOR

Schedule of conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawings numbers: 7026_PL01, 7026_PL02, 7026_PL03, 7026_PL04, 7026_PL05, 7026_PL06, 2615-01-D01 Rev B.
- 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in the materials specified in the application form.
- 4) Prior to first use of the development hereby permitted, site access visibility splays shall be provided in accordance with the details illustrated in drawing number 2615-01-D01 revision B. Any vegetation or obstruction within the visibility splays shall be cut back/re planted/positioned behind the visibility splays or maintained at/not exceeding 1.0 metre in height relative to the level of the site access.
- 5) No development above ground level shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include details of at least one swallow cup to be installed within the haybarn, and a timetable for its implementation. The approved measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and retained and maintained for the lifetime of the development.

End of schedule