



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 October 2025

by **M Aqbal BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/W/25/3364115

Land southside of Chalfont Road, Seer Green, Buckinghamshire

- 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 and Mrs J Faircloth, Manor Farm Equestrian against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - East Area (Chiltern).
 - The application Ref is PL/24/2997/FA.
 - The development proposed is removal of field shelters and replacement of existing stabling and associated storage facilities and extension to existing outdoor Manège.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of the development and the submissions refer to the removal of field shelters. However, these structures are located outside the defined appeal site ('red line'). Furthermore, they are illustrated on the 'Proposed Site Plan,' and no mechanism has been provided through the application to secure their removal. Consequently, I cannot consider their removal as part of the proposal before me.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - i) Whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - ii) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - iii) If the proposal would be inappropriate development, whether or not the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Inappropriate development in the Green Belt

4. The appeal site comprises an established equestrian facility within a countryside location. This site accommodates an existing stable block and a manège.
5. Policy GB2 of The Chiltern Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) Consolidated September 2007 & November

2011 ('LP') says that there is a general presumption against development in the Green Belt, as most forms are considered inappropriate. However, exceptions exist for certain categories, including: Essential facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries, or other uses that preserve openness and do not conflict with Green Belt purposes.

6. Policy GB2 of the LP is broadly consistent with the Framework, which under paragraph 154 says that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies, this includes: 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.
7. While LP Policy GB2 refers only to "essential facilities," the Framework adopts a broader approach by recognising "appropriate facilities," including buildings, for outdoor sport and recreation. As the Framework represents more recent national Green Belt policy, this is a consideration of significant weight.
8. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. The openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect.
9. The proposed increase in size to the existing manège would be modest and remains within the standard dimensions typically associated with non-competition and livery yard facilities. Importantly, the extension would not introduce any built form of a scale or mass that could materially erode the sense of spatial openness. The enclosure will continue to be defined by low-level post-and-rail fencing of approximately 1.2m in height, which is visually permeable. On the information before me, this modest extension would not conflict with the fundamental purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Accordingly, the extension to the manège preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not amount to inappropriate development.
10. Although the proposed stable block would be sited broadly in the location of the existing facility, the site currently accommodates only a modest structure with a limited footprint, height and volume, resulting in minimal impact on the openness of the Green Belt. In contrast, the new stable block would represent a significant increase in both footprint and volume, with an appreciable increase in height, including an extensive overhang to its roof. This scale of new building would reduce spatial openness by enlarging the physical extent of built development at the appeal site, while the significant increase in volume would diminish visual openness. Overall, and despite the existence of the nearby modest field shelters, the proposed stable block would be a sizeable building which would substantially erode the openness of the Green Belt, even if this is limited to views from within the site.
11. I acknowledge that the proposed stable block would provide the same number of loose boxes as the existing facility, and that the increased dimensions of these boxes are consistent with the DEFRA Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids. On this basis, the enlarged box sizes are appropriate.
12. However, the proposed stable block also incorporates tack rooms, feed stores, and other ancillary areas, which according to the submitted plans, would occupy

substantially more floorspace than the loose boxes themselves. The scale of these ancillary facilities appears disproportionate to the stabling provision, and while the appellants have provided some information relating to the use of these areas, there is limited justification as to why such extensive accommodation is required for these. In the absence of clear evidence demonstrating a genuine need for ancillary space of this magnitude, I am not persuaded that the stable block represents an appropriately scaled facility for outdoor sport and recreation within the Green Belt.

13. I have taken account of references made by the appellants to another appeal. The full details of this are not before me, and I cannot therefore assess the precise circumstances. However, I acknowledge that the general thrust of the appellants' argument is that any new building in the Green Belt will, by definition, have some impact on openness.
14. Paragraph 154(b) of the Framework recognises this, but it also makes clear that appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation may still be acceptable, provided that openness is preserved and that they do not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. This Policy therefore supports appropriate buildings where the impact is limited and proportionate.
15. As such, and for the reasons already given, which are matters of planning judgement and largely site-specific, I find that the stable block, by reason of the disproportionate scale of its ancillary elements, would fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
16. The existing field shelters are limited in number and scale. Therefore, even if the removal of these could be secured, on the information before me, I am unpersuaded that these would alter my findings in respect of harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
17. Accordingly, and irrespective of whether or not the stable block conflicts with any of the purposes of the Green Belt, it constitutes inappropriate development in the context of paragraph 154(b) of the Framework.
18. Paragraph 154(d) of the Framework allows for the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and is not materially larger than the one it replaces. In my view, the proposed building, by reason of its substantial increase in size compared with the existing structure, would be materially larger and therefore cannot be supported under this provision of the Framework.
19. Paragraph 154(g) of the Framework allows limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Because I have found that the proposal would result in substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, it cannot benefit from this exception.
20. Paragraph 155, of the Framework says that development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where this meets a number of requirements. In this case, it has not been clearly demonstrated that the proposal meets the requirements of Paragraph 155 of the Framework.

21. For the above reasons, the proposed stable block would result in substantial harm to openness and constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Therefore, this fails to accord with Policy GB2 of the LP and the Green Belt provisions of the Framework.
22. The Council's reason for refusal also cites Policy GB7 of the LP. Because this Policy relates to the rebuilding or replacement of an existing habitable dwelling, this is not relevant to the proposal.

Character and appearance

23. The general materiality and form of the proposed stable block is reflective of the design of equine buildings, including those within the area. The proposed stable block would incorporate a number of polycarbonate rooflights. The appellants advise that the inclusion of the rooflights is to ensure adequate natural light and safe shelter, delivering stabling that meets welfare standards and aligns with the above Code of Practice. I have no reason to dispute this.
24. The Council has referred me to The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide (2010), which is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Although the full details of this guidance are not before me, the Council indicates that it advises restricting the use of rooflights. Where rooflights are employed, they should be recessed and divided into small panes to minimise light reflection, kept low on the roof, and positioned on the rear elevation of buildings.
25. The proposed rooflights are positioned to correspond with the stabling and proposed ancillary areas, and their placement is clearly functional. Owing to the shallow pitch of the proposed roof, the rooflights would remain discreet and are unlikely to appear visually prominent.
26. The proposed roof finish would consist of metal profiled sheets. In this context, the use of polycarbonate sheeting for the rooflights would integrate appropriately with the overall design. Accordingly, the arrangement and design of the proposed rooflights are acceptable and accord with the objectives of the above guidance, which seeks to ensure that rooflights remain discreet, sympathetic to the building's character, and do not adversely affect the wider landscape or streetscape.
27. Given the countryside location of the appeal site, I appreciate the Council's concerns regarding potential light pollution in this intrinsically dark landscape. However, I am not aware of any proposal or requirement for internal lighting within the stables. Even if such lighting were introduced, it would be limited to short periods associated with the routine management of the horses. Consequently, any illumination would be modest in scale, intermittent in use, and confined to parts of the building, such that it would not have an unacceptable impact on the surrounding landscape.
28. Accordingly, and notwithstanding my findings in respect of openness, the proposed stable block is of an acceptable design and would not harm the character and appearance of the area. This accords with Policies GC1 and LSQ1 of the LP and Policies CS20 and CS22 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District - Adopted November 2011. Amongst other things, these policies seek to secure high quality design in new developments.

Other considerations

29. The Framework advises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in 'very special circumstances'. It is stated that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
30. I note the appellants' contention that the proposal would generate wider benefits to the rural community through the potential need for services such as a veterinary surgeon, farrier, equestrian tack supplier, and local feed merchant. However, these are routine services associated with the keeping of horses generally, and while the existing stable block may be in a deteriorated condition, it remains in use and is therefore likely to continue providing some benefits. In any event, there is nothing before me to suggest that the site could not accommodate replacement stables which would avoid constituting inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
31. Likewise, although the construction of the proposed stable block would generate some short-term economic activity during the build phase, such benefits could equally be achieved through a new stable block that does not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Accordingly, the community and economic benefits are limited in scope and attract only moderate weight in the overall planning balance.
32. I have been referred to Policy R13 of the LP, which concerns horse riding and equestrian activities across the district. Although this Policy does, in principle, support the type of facilities proposed, this support is conditional upon meeting a number of requirements, including compliance with other policies in the LP. In this instance, those requirements are not satisfied.

Green Belt Balance

33. Although I have found that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area and that the extension to the manège is acceptable, the proposed stables would result in substantial harm to openness and constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. By virtue of paragraph 153 of the Framework such harm attracts substantial weight.
34. In this case, the weight of the other considerations does not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm arising to the Green Belt. Consequently, the very special circumstances that are necessary to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist in this case.

Conclusion

35. Therefore, overall, the proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, to suggest the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Aqbal

INSPECTOR