



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 December 2025

by **E Dade BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/W/25/3375082

Holiday Let Cottages, Eastfield Stables, Elsenham Road, Stansted 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 on behalf of NB Investments UK Limited against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/25/2145/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of 3-bay cartlodge ancillary to the approved holiday lets and associated development.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 16 December 2025, government published a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Whilst broad changes are proposed, these could be subject to further change and can only be given very limited weight. It has not been necessary to consult the parties on the proposals, and in my decision, I have had regard to the December 2024 Framework version.
3. The wider Eastfield Stables complex has an extensive planning history, including S62A and S78 appeal decisions. Of particular significance is a recently dismissed appeal decision¹ which also sought erection of a three-bay cartlodge. An appeal decision is capable of being a material consideration where the previous decision is sufficiently closely related to the issues that regard should be had to it.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether the development would be in a suitable location, having regard to the local development strategy; and
 - The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether in a suitable location

5. The appeal site comprises undeveloped land to the immediate north of an area with planning permission for the erection of three holiday-let cottages. At time of my site visit, the cottages appeared to be at an early stage of construction.

¹ Appeal decision ref: APP/C1570/W/25/3361367

6. The appeal site is within the Eastfield Stables complex which, in addition to units of holiday accommodation, comprises commercial leisure uses under construction, and existing residential development. The complex is distinct from the settlement of Elsenham, being separated from the built area of the village by a park and ride facility and the M11 motorway. Beyond the complex to the west, north, and south are paddocks, agricultural fields, and pockets of woodland. The site is therefore within a rural location and is in the countryside for planning purposes.
7. Policy S7 of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 (ULP) protects the countryside for its own sake, only permitting development that needs to take place there or is appropriate to a rural area.
8. The proposed cartlodge would have an ancillary function to the holiday accommodation, providing additional parking bays, plant room, and storage. However, the Uttlesford District-Wide Design Code 2024 (Design Code), at M3.1C, advises that development which excessively over-provides parking will be refused.
9. In the appeal decision which granted planning permission for the three holiday cottages², at paragraph 12 the Inspector concluded “a parking space is shown for each unit which is considered acceptable given the modest size of the proposed holiday lets”. Therefore, the holiday cottages would have adequate parking provision, and the proposal would increase the number of spaces beyond what is necessary to meet the needs of the development.
10. The appellant asserts that through the provision of additional parking and turning for cars, caravans, and caravanettes, the proposal would enhance the attractiveness of the holiday lets as a holiday destination and provide a more well-used facility. However, since the holiday cottages are not presently operational, I have no substantive reason to consider additional provision of parking and turning would be necessary to ensure the viable operation of the prospective holiday accommodation business.
11. The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate that it needs to take place in this location. The proposal would result in an over-provision of parking which would not be appropriate in this rural area. Therefore, having regard to the local development strategy, the proposed development would not be in a suitable location, and in this regard would conflict with ULP Policy S7.

Character and appearance

12. As discussed above, the site abuts a development site for holiday cottages. The northern section of the Eastfield Stables complex comprises a group of existing dwellings. To the southwest of the appeal site, a building is being constructed to provide a “Wellness Hub”, and planning permission has recently been granted for changing rooms, tennis courts, swimming pool, parking areas, and other associated commercial uses. Once implemented, the Eastfield Stables complex would comprise a mix of residential, holiday accommodation, and commercial leisure uses.
13. At the centre of the Eastfield Stables complex is a large, open area of mown grassland, which is not in active agriculture use. The appeal site comprises a small part of this open “paddock” area.

² Appeal decision ref: APP/C1570/W/23/3333029

14. The open character of the paddock provides a visual relationship between the housing cluster to the north and proposed commercial/holiday uses to the south. An informal access road traverses the paddock, providing physical connectivity between these two areas of development. In an appeal decision relating to a self-build dwelling scheme at Eastfield Stables³, the Inspector concluded the paddock area at the middle of the complex has “a strong open appearance that positively adds to the rural character of the area”.
15. In the previous dismissed appeal decision for a cartlodge scheme⁴, at paragraph 10 the Inspector concluded that, if implemented, other approved development within the open central area, including tennis courts and swimming pool, would remain largely free of vertical development thereby preserving the “relatively open and rural character to the site as a whole and an appearance of being within the countryside”. Conversely, the Inspector concluded the proposed cartlodge would “encroach into the comparatively large, central part of the site, harmfully eroding its existing character”.
16. The appeal proposal would site the proposed cartlodge closer to the holiday cottages than the previous dismissed scheme. However, the building would be 17m from the end elevation of the proposed holiday cottages, separated by an area of hardstanding turning area. The proposed development would therefore harmfully encroach into the open, central part of the site.
17. As illustrated on the floor plan and elevation drawings, the proposed cartlodge building would be significantly reduced in scale from the previous scheme, with a smaller volume and lower roof height. The form, materials, and appearance of the building would complement the design of the proposed holiday cottages, and other buildings within the complex.
18. However, the proposed cartlodge would be a substantial building, with a footprint of approximately 131sqm. Notably, the area of each proposed parking bay would significantly exceed the minimum dimensions for cartlodge parking bays set out by the *Essex Parking Guidance – Part 1: Parking Standards Design and Good Practice, September 2024*, and therefore would be excessive in scale. The proposal would contribute significant additional built form, and the building would appear large and prominent within the central and most open part of the site.
19. There are other garage buildings associated with the existing dwellings to the north, which sit within established plots as part of the dwelling cluster and do not reduce the openness of the central paddock. Likewise, the unimplemented planning permission for the changing rooms would be sited close to the rear elevation of the Wellness Hub and would not project beyond the built form of the proposed holiday cottages.
20. Whilst there is a commercial building set back within the adjoining site at New Farm, this is beyond a dense, established, hedgerow boundary, and has a neutral effect on the openness of Eastfield Stable’s paddock.
21. The Eastfield Stables complex is enclosed by a contiguous, mature hedgerow boundary treatment, providing clear separation from the neighbouring park and ride business, public highway, and surrounding open countryside, with a high

³ Appeal decision ref: APP/C1570/W/25/3368007

⁴ Appeal decision ref: APP/C1570/W/25/3361367

degree of visual containment from the surrounding landscape. The complex is therefore well-screened and the proposed cartlodge would not be visually prominent within longer distance views, such as from the public highway. Views of the development would therefore generally be experienced within the complex.

22. Paragraph ID1.1C of the Design Code requires proposals demonstrate a relationship to their area's history, culture and local character. As set out above, it is established that the open appearance of the paddock contributes positively to the area's rural character. The proposal would extend substantial built volume beyond the built form of the proposed holiday cottages and commercial uses, and would encroach into the central paddock, appearing prominent and eroding the site's open character.
23. For these reasons, the appeal proposal would fail to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and would harm the character and appearance of the area.
24. The proposal would conflict with ULP Policy S7 which supports development only where its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set.

Other Matters

25. The ULP pre-dates the Framework. Paragraph 232 of the Framework advises that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the Framework. Rather, due weight should be given to them according to their degree of consistency with the Framework, with the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given.
26. At paragraph 187(b), the Framework requires decisions contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. In addition, Framework paragraph 135(c) requires development be sympathetic to local character, including the landscape setting. However, at paragraph 88(c), the Framework requires decisions enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. Consequently, ULP Policy S7 is inconsistent with the Framework as, by seeking to protect the countryside for its own sake, it does not fully acknowledge the importance of a prosperous rural economy.
27. The policy that is most important for determining the appeal is out-of-date and in this circumstance paragraph 11(d)(ii) is engaged, whereby planning permission should be granted unless (i) policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development, and (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
28. The proposal would not conflict with the Framework's policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance. Therefore, Framework paragraph 11(d)(i) does not provide a strong reason for refusing the development.

29. As set out above, the proposal does not demonstrate the development needs to take place in this location. However, Framework paragraph 88(c) does not require a need for the tourism use be demonstrated, and therefore I afford only limited weight to this specific conflict with Policy S7.
30. Rather, the relevant test of Framework paragraph 88(c) is whether the proposal would respect the character of the countryside. As set out above, I have found the proposal would fail to conserve or enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The proposal would therefore be counter to the requirements of Framework paragraphs 88(c), 187(b), and 135(c). Consequently, I afford significant weight to the conflict with ULP Policy S7's requirement to protect or enhance the particular character of the part of the countryside.
31. Set against this harm, the appellant asserts the proposal would have the potential to increase use of the holiday lets, with an associated increase in the local economy. However, any such increase is unquantified and likely to be small scale. There would be small economic benefits associated with construction, and the provision of solar panels and electric vehicle charging would represent small environmental benefits. Reflecting their overall small scale, I attach modest weight to the scheme's benefits.
32. Consequently, the harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development would not apply.

Conclusion

33. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. For the reasons given the appeal should be dismissed.

E Dade

INSPECTOR