



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 January 2026

by Alison Scott (BA Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/A0665/W/25/3374836

1 Hoofield Cottages, Hoofield, Huxley, Chester CH3 9BJ

- 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 Peter Thomasson against the decision of Cheshire West and Chester Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00151/FUL.
 - The development proposed is Erection of building for storage of agricultural equipment.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any other relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - Whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal; and
 - The effect of the proposal on the character of the countryside

Reasons

Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt

3. It is common ground between the parties that the site is located within the Green Belt. Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies seven exceptions for built development that may, in certain circumstances, be regarded as being not inappropriate in the Green Belt. One such exception are buildings for agriculture and forestry.
4. The proposed building is intended to function as storage for agricultural equipment. The schedule of equipment consists of tractors, hay cutting mower and trailer amongst other things. I could see some of which was currently stationed on the appeal site together with various other machinery effects. The equipment to be stored in the building is, as the appellant explains, necessary to maintain the land he owns and other agricultural land rented for the grazing of horses and managed

by the appellant. Within his evidence, he has included a plan illustrating the land he owns.

5. I must turn to the definition of agriculture as defined in Section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990: *“agriculture” includes horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, the breeding and keeping of livestock (including any creature kept for the production of food, wool, skins or fur, or for the purpose of its use in the farming of land), the use of land as grazing land, meadow land, osier land, market gardens and nursery grounds, and the use of land for woodlands where that use is ancillary to the farming of land for other agricultural purposes, and “agricultural” shall be construed accordingly*’. Therefore, the use of land as grazing land as an agricultural use may include the use of the land for grazing of horses.
6. Whilst the Council assert that as the land would be used to graze horses, there is nothing before me to indicate that the appellant cannot grow grass on the land for hay, and mow and bail the hay thereafter using the various forms of equipment required to carry out these activities.
7. The area where the building would be located would be positioned in close quarters to the land he maintains and the building used as an operational need to store his equipment in connection with the agricultural use.
8. Without evidence on the contrary, the building as development would fall as an exception within paragraph 154 of the Framework. On this basis there is no requirement for me to consider the effect of it on the openness of the Green Belt, and whether or not very special circumstances apply.
9. In conclusion, the development would be closely associated with an agricultural use and would not conflict with the aspirations of Policy STRAT 9 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) and the Green Belt safeguarding aims of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Effect upon the countryside

10. The site is located within the countryside and in accordance with the Framework, one of the five purposes of the Green Belt is to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. The Framework goes on to emphasise within chapter 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised.
11. The local plan for the area expressly permits development within the countryside where it meets the following criteria, inter alia; an operational need for a countryside location such as agricultural or forestry operations; replacement buildings; small scale and low impact rural/farm diversification; the reuse of existing rural buildings; the expansion of existing buildings to facilitate the growth of established businesses.
12. I have explained earlier that there is nothing before me to indicate that the building would not be used to serve an operational need in connection with an agricultural purpose. I observed much of the appellant’s tractors and various machinery within the site as listed in his schedule of equipment, to be used for the appellant to maintain his land.
13. The proposed building would however be of a large scale and massing and of a utilitarian design akin to a typical storage building seen in an industrial estate.

Although there are other buildings and structures on site, these other structures are smaller in scale and more akin to domestic outhouses. They are contained amongst themselves and set close to the dwellinghouse and largely absorbed as part and parcel of the dwellinghouse. The rural character of the countryside is still experienced.

14. In this location it would extend built paraphernalia away from these existing buildings and further into the countryside. Its character is one of a large shed that would be visually strident outside the site given the flat land levels, and nature and extent of boundary treatments to the perimeter with Hoofield Lane. It would push development away from the containment of the other structures and therefore its scale, massing and design would appear visually intrusive and result in an adverse effect, detracting from the character of the rural landscape.
15. Even if I were to agree that the building may be commensurate with the size of the land as a whole, that does not justify why this building of the scale proposed should be positioned in this precise and visually exposed location. As a valuable commodity, the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside would not be safeguarded.
16. To conclude on this main issue, the proposal would be contrary to Policy STRAT9 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) with regard to development to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, Policy DM6 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) and Clotton Hoofield Neighbourhood Plan Policy D1 in their aims for development to be designed and sited to protect the character of the countryside.

Other Matters

17. As I am refusing the proposal, there is no requirement for me to consider placing conditions on the use of the building to ensure it remains associated with that of agricultural purposes.

Conclusion

18. I have found the proposal to meet the exception of a building for agriculture in accordance with the Framework. However, the proposal fails on the grounds of its impact on the countryside. Its intrinsic character and beauty would be eroded.
19. The proposed development would lead to conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Alison Scott

INSPECTOR