



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2026

by **D Ellis MPlan MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W1525/W/25/3372796

Land rear of Doylands Farm, West Hanningfield, Chelmsford CM2 8UW

- 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 John Cooper against the decision of Chelmsford City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00113/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of stables for equestrian use with associated hardstanding for vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of stables for equestrian use with associated hardstanding for vehicular access at Land rear of Doylands Farm, Chelmsford CM2 8UW in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00113/FUL, subject to the following 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 drawing nos 24.7958/M002, 24.7958/P201, 24.7958/P202.
 - 3) No development above ground level shall take place until details of all external facing materials and details of the materials for the hardstanding have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved sample details.

Preliminary Matters

2. A Landscape and Visual Statement was provided by the appellant with their appeal submission. The statement does not fundamentally alter the appeal scheme and the Council and interested parties have had the opportunity to comment on this document. I am therefore satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by my consideration of the Landscape and Visual Statement in this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of development plan policy and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), including the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt.

Reasons

4. Paragraphs 154 and 155 of the Framework establish that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate except in certain circumstances. Two such exceptions involve the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) including buildings, for outdoor sport or recreation, and for engineering operations. In both cases, the proposal must preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
5. Policies DM6, DM10 and S11 of the Chelmsford Local Plan (2020) (LP) are consistent with the Framework, in that they seek to prevent inappropriate development in the Green Belt and include the exceptions for buildings for outdoor sport or recreation and engineering operations.
6. The proposal is for the erection of a stable building for equine animals, including donkeys which currently graze the land, and an area of hardstanding. The Council accepts that the development would constitute appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and that the hardstanding would constitute an engineering operation. Based on the evidence before me I have no reason to disagree.
7. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The Planning Practice Guidance states that openness is capable of having both spatial and visible aspects, so that both the visual impact of the proposal and its size may be relevant¹. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Furthermore, one of the purposes of the Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
8. The field is currently used for the grazing of donkeys so there would not be a significant increase in vehicles at the site following the construction of the stable building and hardstanding. The appeal site is currently free of buildings however the site is adjacent to the built-up area of West Hanningfield with a row of houses on Helmons Lane to the west and the buildings and area of hardstanding at Doylands Farm to the east. Even if the landscape sensitivity to change is moderate, the proposed stable building would be positioned next to existing boundary trees and hedging and would be on a part of the site which is at a lower land level than most of the site. This would lessen the visual impact of the building and, furthermore, the stable building would not be out of proportion with the field. Moreover, stable buildings are commonly found in the countryside and the proposed building would not be out of place in its rural setting.
9. For these reasons, the stable building would not cause a significant reduction in openness, and as such the proposal would preserve the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal would also not result in urban sprawl or the encroachment of the countryside and thus would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
10. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would meet the exceptions in the Framework for the provision of appropriate facilities, including buildings, for outdoor sport or recreation and for engineering operations. The proposal would therefore not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. As such, the

¹ Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 64-013-20250225

proposal would satisfy LP Policies DM6, DM10 and S11 and the requirements of the Framework.

Other Matters

11. I have had regard to representations from local residents which were received during the planning application stage.
12. The existing track serves Doylands Farm, and it has not been demonstrated that the track would be unsuitable for the vehicle movements associated with the appeal proposal. I also note that the Council has not objected on highways grounds and based on the evidence before me I have no reason to disagree. Vehicular access rights and the maintenance of the private road are private matters between the relevant parties.
13. I have taken into account the comments regarding the need or necessity of the proposed stables. However, the test in the Framework is whether the proposal would provide 'appropriate facilities' for outdoor sport or recreation, and there is no test based on need or necessity.
14. The proposal is unlikely to result in a significant increase in vehicle movements using the private road. The stable building would be a sufficient distance from nearby dwellings to prevent any harm to the living conditions of these dwellings, including through privacy, odour, lighting, noise and disturbance. Furthermore, I have no evidence before me to suggest that the use of the land for the grazing of donkeys would cease should the appeal for the stable building be dismissed.
15. The stable building would be sited near other buildings and adjacent to vegetation. The building would be visible from the private road however views of it from public vantage points would be limited. As such it would not have a significant effect on the character and appearance of the village.
16. The scale of the development and the appeal site would ensure that no significant additional strain is placed on local services including veterinary support. Waste management and whether or not the stables would have a supply of running water or electricity are matters for the appellant. The welfare of the donkeys is not a planning matter. I have no substantive evidence before me that the development would cause harm to wildlife or habitats.
17. Where proposals for future development would require a planning application, these would be subject to an assessment on their own merits. In the event that the development is not constructed or used in accordance with the approved drawings, then this would be a matter for the Council's planning enforcement team in the first instance.

Conditions

18. The Council has suggested a series of conditions, which I have considered against the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. In some cases, I have edited the suggested condition for precision and enforceability.
19. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have attached a condition specifying the approved plans to provide certainty. In the interests of the character and appearance of the area, a condition requiring the submission and approval of

details of the external materials of the stables and the hardstanding would be necessary.

20. The planning permission would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), which would require the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan. As such, a separate condition requiring the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan is not necessary.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

D Ellis

INSPECTOR