



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2026

by **F. Bradley BRP (NZ) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/W/25/3375562

Spencer House, King Street, High Ongar, Ongar, Essex CM5 9NR

- 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 & Mrs B Tappin against the decision of the Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application ref is EPF/1466/25.
 - The development proposed is described as “Proposed American barn style stables together with manage/arena and change of use to equine”.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs has been made by Mr and Mrs B Tappin against Epping Forest District Council. This is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - i. whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt (GB), including its effect on the openness and purposes of the GB;
 - ii. the effect of the proposal on pedestrian and highway safety; and
 - iii. if the proposal would be inappropriate development, whether 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 required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

4. The site lies within the Metropolitan GB. Policy DM4 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan (EFLP) sets out that within the GB, planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development, except in very special circumstances, in accordance with national policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) makes clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the GB and sets out that development should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of a list of exceptions applies.

5. One exception, in paragraph 154b) of the Framework, is for appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the GB and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This exception is also reflected in part C.(ii) of Policy DM4 of the EFLP.
6. The proposal includes the change of use of land to equine use, and the facilities proposed would be in connection with that use. The parties agree that the proposal is an appropriate facility for outdoor sport. I have no compelling reason to disagree with the parties in this regard. The effect of the development on the openness and purposes of the GB will therefore determine if it is inappropriate development. There is both a spatial and a visual aspect to the openness of the GB.
7. The site includes a dwelling and two outbuildings and has trees and hedges at its boundaries. Based on the appellants' drawings, the proposed stable building has a footprint that would measure 10.5m by 22.7m. The scheme also includes a sizeable area of hard surfacing for parking and turning adjacent to the proposed building and a manege that would measure around 25m by 45m enclosed by a 1.3m high post and rail fence. These aspects of the proposal would be on land currently laid to grass. Taken together, they would introduce a significant amount of development onto land that is currently devoid of built form, resulting in the sprawl of development across the site. Consequently, the amount and scale of the development would have a significant spatial impact on the openness of the GB.
8. The development would be well screened from the road due to its location and intervening buildings and vegetation. However, given its ridge height of 4.5m, the proposed building would be visible to an extent from the countryside, within the wider context of surrounding built form and natural landscape features. This would be particularly the case in winter months when screening from vegetation is less effective. For these reasons, the building would have a limited visual impact on the openness of the GB.
9. Overall, the proposal would not preserve the openness of the GB. It would therefore fall outside the exceptions to inappropriate development specified by part C.(ii) of Policy DM4 of the EFLP and paragraph 154b) of the Framework. No other exceptions have been put forward as potentially being applicable. Consequently, very special circumstances must exist to justify the development in the GB. I consider this matter later in this decision letter.

Pedestrian and highway safety

10. The proposal would utilise the existing site access from King Street which is reasonably straight in the vicinity of the site. Parking and turning would be achievable within the site such that vehicles could enter and exit the site in a forward gear.
11. The Council asserts that the proposal may be used for commercial purposes that would result in the intensification of use of the access. However, the appellants confirm that the development is intended solely for a family member's private use and not for commercial use. That is the basis on which the application has been made, and I see no reason to consider the appeal other than on that basis.
12. The anticipated level of vehicular activity is set out in the appellants' appeal evidence. This indicates approximately three visits per month associated with

waste removal, deliveries, and farrier services, in addition to around two veterinary visits per year. Further vehicle movements would arise during weekends when horses are transported to competitions. While this would likely represent an increase in vehicle movements to and from the site over the existing situation, no substantive or technical evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the increase would be so substantial that it would result in unacceptable pedestrian and highway safety impacts, particularly given the highway characteristic described above.

13. The proposal would not have an unacceptable effect on pedestrian and highway safety. It would not conflict with Policy T1 of the EFLP which, among other things, seeks that developments do not compromise highway safety and provide appropriate parking and servicing provision.
14. Furthermore, the proposed development does not conflict with paragraph 116 of the Framework which requires that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Other considerations

15. The site is proximate to the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC). If I were minded to allow the appeal, I would need to assess whether the development would adversely affect the integrity of the EFSAC. However, even if there would be no adverse effects, this would constitute a neutral consideration rather than a benefit weighing in favour of the scheme.
16. The proposed development is intended to be for use by a family member and thus the benefits flowing from this would largely accrue privately rather than publicly. Nevertheless, there would be some small benefits arising from proposed biodiversity enhancements.
17. The appellants have drawn my attention to planning permission ref. EPF/0972/22 for a manege within the GB. I have been provided with the decision notice which suggests that the permission was for a manege only and did not include a new building. Furthermore, the Council has advised that the permission pre-dated the adoption of the EFLP. Based on the evidence before me, I am not satisfied that the schemes are directly comparable, and this matter does not lead me to alter my findings.
18. Policy RST4 of the EFLP has been referred to by the appellants. The Council has confirmed there is no such policy in the EFLP therefore it is not relevant to this appeal.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

19. The Framework sets out that very special circumstances will not exist to justify inappropriate development unless harm to the GB by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
20. The other considerations I have identified above attract limited weight when taken together. Conversely, the Framework specifies that any harm to the GB attracts substantial weight. The proposal would be inappropriate development which is

harmful to the GB by definition. Furthermore, there would be significant spatial harm and limited visual harm to the openness of the GB. Overall, the other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development in the GB do not exist and the proposal conflicts with Policy DM4 of the EFLP and the Framework's GB policies.

21. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
22. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

F. Bradley

INSPECTOR