
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 February 2026 by A Morrison MTCP MRTPI

Decision by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 June 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/P2365/D/25/3376391

Hope Cottage, Back Lane, Bispham, Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 3SZ

- 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 Colin Hall against the decision of West Lancashire Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0596/FUL.
 - The development proposed is originally described as the erection of an oak timber framed garage and storage shed within the boundary of the site.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are a) whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt; its effect on b) the openness of the Green Belt and c) the character and appearance of the area; and d) whether any 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 for the Recommendation

Whether Inappropriate Development

4. The appeal site comprises a parcel of land adjacent Hope Cottage, an extended semi-detached dwelling set within a rural part of West Lancashire. Towards the rear of the site is a cluster of shallow-pitched timber structures, the largest of which is a stable. To the opposing side of these structures as the dwelling is a fenced paddock, whilst to their front is a mix of grass and hardstanding set behind the property's vehicle access onto Back Lane. The proposal seeks to replace the structures with a triple garage.
5. Policy GN1 of the West Lancashire Local Plan Development Plan Document 2012-2027 (the Local Plan) indicates that proposals in the Green Belt will be assessed against national policy and any relevant Local Plan policies. Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate subject to a number of exceptions. One of which being

concerned with replacement buildings, provided the new one is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.

6. The main parties agree that whilst the structures were formerly within the domestic part of the property, they were necessarily excluded from the application site to facilitate the approval of a two-storey extension in 2020. This extension has since been built and consequently the Council considers the structures to form part of a separate equine, non-residential area of the property.
7. The appellant contends that both the existing and proposed uses are residential, highlighting the ancillary and linked nature of the equine land to the dwelling and noting the absence of any commercial activity. Whilst I have considered these submissions, the claimed residential status of the site has not been formally established through a certificate of lawfulness. Given that the most recent permission expressly excluded the structures from the domestic part of the property, and in the absence of substantive evidence to demonstrate otherwise, it would not be appropriate for me to reach an alternative conclusion on the extent of residential use for the purposes of this appeal.
8. Therefore, whilst the proposal would be for a residential use, it would not be in the same use as the buildings it would replace. On this basis, the scheme would not qualify for the above exception in the Framework and would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This would be harmful to the Green Belt by definition and also, by association, result in conflict with the Green Belt protection aims of Local Plan Policy GN1

Openness

9. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belt, whose essential characteristics are their openness and permanence. Openness has both spatial and visual dimensions.
10. The proposal would be considerably taller than the concentrated group of low-level structures it would replace and would extend built form further away from the dwelling towards the paddock. This would reduce the spatial openness of the site beyond the current situation, regardless of the comparative footprint. The garage would be seen from fields to its rear and from the public highway, notwithstanding the presence of some existing boundary planting. Owing to its overall bulk and positioning, it would reduce appreciation of the existing degree of openness between the dwelling and the paddock.
11. Taken together, there would be an unavoidable reduction in openness of the Green Belt in regard to both dimensions. This would result in further conflict with the Framework's principles in this regard and, by association, the aforementioned local plan policy.

Character and Appearance

12. Although extended over time, alongside the adjoining dwelling, Hope Cottage retains a characteristically modest scale that is befitting of its original appearance and standalone rural situation. The existing collection of low-level structures, by virtue of their orientation, size and siting, presents as a clearly subordinate group that sits comfortably within this setting and does not detract from the rural character of the area.

13. The proposed garage would face onto the highway, span three bays beneath a pitched roof and be positioned well apart from the host dwelling. As a result, in contrast to the existing structures, it would appear as an unduly large and visually prominent building within its context. Despite the suitability of its materials and general aesthetic, these factors would not mitigate the harmful impact on the character and appearance of the locality as arising from its substantial massing and detached siting.
14. During my site visit, I did not observe any comparable ancillary building to the side of the neighbouring dwelling, to which the appellant suggests the proposal would mirror. While I recognise that the garage would partially screen views of existing electricity poles and cables to its rear, these are minor features within the landscape and do not materially detract from its current character and quality.
15. Accordingly, the proposal would have an unacceptable effect upon the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policy GN3 of the Local Plan, which, amongst other things, seeks that development is sensitively designed so as complement or enhance attractive attributes, including through appropriate siting, orientation and scale.

Other Considerations

16. The appellant details that the roof pitch, and consequently the building's height, is dictated by the angle required to achieve optimal performance from the solar panels intended for installation on its south-facing slope. A shallower pitch would also not be compatible with either the proposed roof structure or the use of slate as the finishing material. The intention to provide a source of renewable energy to the property is commendable, however given the modest scale of the proposed installation, I attach limited weight to this benefit of the scheme.

Conclusion and Recommendation

17. The appeal scheme would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and harm its openness. These matters attract substantial weight. There would also be harm to the character and appearance of the area. The weight I have ascribed to the other considerations would be insufficient to clearly outweigh these matters. The very special circumstances required to justify the proposal do not therefore exist. The proposal would conflict with the development plan for the reasons set out in my findings on the main issues. Material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate a decision otherwise. I therefore recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Morrison

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

18. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR