

Item 3c	16/00365/FUL
Case Officer	Iain Crossland
Ward	Wheelton and Withnell Ward
Proposal	Removal of existing stables and erection of new stables
Location	Laneside Farm Brown House Lane Higher Wheelton Chorley PR6 8HR
Applicant	Mr Stephen Nolan
Consultation expiry:	01 July 2016
Decision due by:	14 June 2016

Recommendation

It is recommended that this application is refused for the following reason:

By virtue of its size and scale the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt that would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The harm that would be caused through reason of inappropriateness is not outweighed by any evidence advanced in support of the application. The proposed development is, therefore, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Central Lancashire Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document as the facilities in their entirety are not considered appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Representations

Wheelton Parish Council: Comment that plans are inadequate as the existing stable block to be removed is not visible therefore the Parish Council is unable to review the plan and therefore request better plans are provided. Local knowledge shows that there is an open ditch next to the new site of the building and it is questioned where the effluent from the building will be directed. The area is also close to Thirlmere Aquaduct.

In total 10 representations have been received which are summarised below

Objection	Support
Total No. received: 2	Total No. received: 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development is not small scale and adds cumulatively to the effects of existing buildings and activities at Laneside Farm to the detriment of the openness and character of the Green Belt in a location which has been acknowledged as sensitive to the further erosion of these Green Belt purposes. It is, therefore, inappropriate development. The absence of the demonstration of need for the development in the context of the existing buildings at Laneside Farm. Previous applications have been made at the farm on the basis that existing building are redundant therefore these should be used instead of creating additional buildings. Impact on landscape character and the sensitivity of this particular area to further development The site is already overdeveloped and cluttered Impact on highway safety There are no very special circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clydesdales require specific management including larger than normal stables with adequate washing and grooming areas The stables will blend in beautifully with the ambiance of the area and visually enhance the area. It is refreshing to see agricultural buildings being erected for a change instead of barn conversions and oversized dwellings

Consultees

Consultee	Summary of Comments received
LCC Land Agent	Whilst they continue to recognise the justification for stabling for the applicant's horses, they believe that the duration of the agreement held to justify a permanent structure of this design requires consideration. In addition, they consider that the scale of the building to be larger than necessary as a result of unnecessary facilities and others that could be accommodated within the existing buildings upon the unit. As such, it is their opinion that both the length and width of the building could be reduced and still meet the needs of the applicant.

	<p>They continue to believe that the design of the structure greatly exceeds the need of the activities undertaken by the applicant and has no justification.</p>
--	---

Assessment

The Site

1. The application site comprises an existing stables building and yard area with an associated paddock for the grazing of horses. This has a field access from Brown House Lane that serves the existing stables building. The site forms part of a wider agricultural holding identified within the red edge on the Location Plan. The land comprises stables buildings to the north and south of Brown House Lane adjacent to the lane itself. There is also a cluster of buildings in what amounts to the farm yard, which comprises a two storey timber clad building referred to as a sheep dip, a steel agricultural shed used for agricultural and non-agricultural storage, a timber extension to the rear and a timber stable structure between the storage building and sheep dip. Some of the land appears to be in use as allotments and subdivided small holdings with the remainder used for pasture.
2. It is noted that there is extensive planning history relating to this site that when taken together show a shift in the use of the land and buildings contained within it from agriculture to equestrian related uses. Of particular note are three applications on the farm yard area. An application to change the use of the steel shed from agriculture to a mixed use of agriculture and non-agricultural storage (re.05/00719/COU), which was approved on appeal. An application for the conversion of the 'sheep dip', which was described as a redundant agricultural building, to a dwelling, including the demolition of the steel shed (ref.11/00733/FUL). The decision by the Local Planning Authority to approve this application was quashed by the High Court following a Judicial Review challenge of the decision by a neighbour. A prior approval application submitted under Part 3, Class MB of The Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) Order 2013 to change an agricultural building (the sheep dip) to a dwelling (ref.14/00672/P2PAJ), which was withdrawn. There have been successful applications for two stables buildings under application reference number 09/00457/FUL and 08/01117/FUL.
3. The site is located within the Green Belt in a rural area characterised by clusters of dwellings of agricultural origins and character with the village of Higher Wheelton to the south. The wider area is largely open rural countryside interspersed with agricultural buildings and dwellings.

The Proposal

4. The proposed development involves the erection of a stable building comprising three stable bays, a sick bay, a horse washing and drying area, a tack room, feed store, and store room. The main part of the stables building would measure approximately 16m by 10m, with a 1m roof overhang along each side. It would have a dual pitched roof with ridge and eaves height of approximately 5.1m and 3.5m respectively. The existing timber stables building, measuring approximately 8m by 5m, would be removed.
5. The building would be constructed of blockwork with brick to damp proof course level and would be timber clad externally. The roof would be laid in Accord Brit Tile Roof Sheets with a series of roof lights and air vents. There would be a gravelled area to the west of the stables building. The access would extend from an existing field access serving the existing stables building and there would be a brick footway running along the length of the building.
6. There would be drainage channels installed to serve the stables building with a septic tank adjacent to the proposed access along with an area for a muck midden to the north side.
7. The applicant owns three Clydesdale horses, which are currently kept on the farmyard site utilising the timber structure between the sheep dip and steel shed to the east of Brown House Lane, and use the land on the west side of Brown House Lane for grazing. Clydesdale horses have been kept by the applicant on the site for a number of years.

Assessment

The main issues for consideration are as follows:-

Issue 1 – Impact on the Green Belt

Issue 2 – Neighbour amenity

Issue 3 – Impact on character and appearance of the locality

Impact on the Green Belt

8. The application site is located within the Green Belt. The Framework states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, except in a limited number of specific circumstances.
9. National guidance on Green Belt is contained in Chapter 9 of the Framework, which states:

79. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

80. Green Belt serves five purposes:

 - *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

87. As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

88. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

89. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
10. The main use of the site would be for private recreational use and falls to be considered as a facility for outdoor recreation, in accordance with the definition in the Framework outlined above.
11. The Central Lancashire Rural Development SPD sets out more detailed guidance in relation to equestrian development. In assessing the acceptability of equestrian development in rural areas the SPD sets out matters relating to scale, siting, design, site treatment, highway safety and reinstatement, which should be taken into account. These are assessed below and contribute to an overall assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt.
12. In accordance with the Framework, appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation are not considered inappropriate provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt. The Central Lancashire Rural Development SPD provides more detailed guidance on this and the development is assessed in relation to this guidance
13. Scale: The stables building is for private use and would accommodate three heavy breed Cyldesdale horses. There would be three stable bays, a sick bay, a horse washing and drying area, tack room, feed store, and store room. This is in excess of the provisions made for small private developments involving no more than three horses as set out in the Central Lancashire Rural Development SPD as an additional stable bay would be provided.

14. Siting: The stables building would be positioned within an area of hardstanding in the position of an existing stables building. The proposed stables building would be screened to the south to some extent by an existing boundary fence and to the west by an existing building on the other side of Brown House Lane. Although the proposed stables building would replace an existing stable building in a similar position, the proposed stables building would be more prominent in the landscape by virtue of its increased size. The stables building and midden would be located well in excess of 30m from the nearest property at Sitchcroft Farm, and would be screened from this property by the boundary fencing and intervening structures.
15. Design: The proposed stables building would have a ridge height of approximately 5.1m, which is in excess of the 3.5m maximum set out in the Rural Development SPD, however, the LCC Land Agent advises that this can be accepted given that Clydesdale horses would require greater headroom than normal. In terms of floor area the stables building would be unusually large measuring approximately 10m by 16m plus a 1m overhang. This is partly due to the size of the individual stable bays measuring 4m by 4.58m each. This is larger than normal but is considered appropriate in this instance on the basis that they are for Clydesdale horses, a particularly large breed. There is a tack room and feed store, which is generally accepted for stables, however, in addition to this there is a further store room, sick bay and washing and drying area, which are not referred to in the Rural Development SPD and contribute to the unusually large scale of the building. The LCC Land Agent considers that the further store room, sick bay and washing and drying area are not necessary requirements for the keeping of the applicant's horses. The applicant asserts that these facilities are required and this is discussed below.
16. Aside from this large scale, the building would be timber clad and of a traditional outward appearance. The building would have internal double skin walls with cavity constructed of blockwork up to eaves height upon a brick base. The applicant asserts that this is necessary due to the increased power of the Clydesdale breed. However, the LCC Land Agent considers that the proposed building is unnecessarily overdesigned and that a reinforced block work wall would meet the needs of the stables, even when considering the larger horses proposed to be housed within the proposed building.
17. Site Treatment: Hardstanding would be minimal given that the stables building would replace an existing stables building and would be partially constructed on an existing area of hardstanding.
18. Highway Safety: There is an existing vehicular access from the highway at Brown House Lane, which serves the existing stables. This would be used to access the proposed stables building and associated area of hardstanding. There would be adequate space for the parking and turning of vehicles with trailers following development.
19. Re-instatement: A condition is normally recommended for stable buildings, which would require the removal of them where they are no longer required and restoration of the land to its former condition in order to protect the appearance of the countryside. The applicant's agent has indicated that such a condition would be accepted.
20. On the basis of the above the proposed development would not meet the guidelines set out within the Central Lancashire Rural Development SPD in relation to the design and scale.
21. The development is therefore considered to be in excess what could be regarded as appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In accordance with the Framework inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
22. The applicant's agent has advanced a case in support of the proposed development in relation to its scale and internal accommodation needs. This centres upon the particular breed of horse (Clydesdale) that is currently kept at the site, the inadequacy of the current facilities and the need for a larger building of more substantial construction than standard timber frame stables building for the health and security of the horses. The applicant states that the inclusion of an indoor washing and drying area within the proposed building is necessary as the Clydesdale horses need regular grooming and cleaning due to the characteristics of their breed such as longer feathers to the legs. In addition, the applicant and his wife, who show their horses, believe that a

suitable area is required in order to prepare their horses for shows. The fact that the horses are taken to shows is also put forward as the justification for a sick bay. This is because horses can pick up infections at shows from other horses, and if not isolated from the horses in the stable run the risk of spreading infection through nose to nose contact particularly.

23. The supporting statement refers to Defra guidance identifying the type and scale of accommodation appropriate for such larger horse breeds. This is supplemented by a letter from the applicant's vet Mr John Gilliver of Gillivervet Limited. This confirms that Clydesdale horses require larger than normal stable bays. The letter also confirms that the horses are taken to shows and competitions and as such need to be turned out to a high standard requiring a wash room. The letter states that the applicant has lost two horses in the past and that an isolation facility is an essential part of any modern stabling facility.
24. A letter has been received from a Clydesdale breeder confirming that the applicants take their horses to shows, and that preparation for such shows requires a great deal of preparation and that indoor washing and drying areas are essential to this. The letter also states the need for an isolation stable if a horse picks up an illness at an event.
25. A letter from a member of the Clydesdale Horse Society confirms the need for sick horses to be isolated as they are prone to diseases, which are airborne and therefore requires them to be isolated from other horses. The letter confirms that the applicants show their horses and have had previous winners. It states that wash facilities would help the applicants to prepare their horses for shows. The letter also confirms the horses require a vast array of equipment and feed.
26. An inventory of equipment and feed associated with the horses has been submitted by the applicants, showing an extensive list of items and feed requirements.
27. A previous planning decision taken in West Sussex is referred to by the applicant in terms of the need for a blockwork wall with cavity. It is noted that this case was not in the Green Belt and the cavity walling was to a 'low level'.
28. An article on the Clydesdale Horse Society website states: *During the 1960's and early 1970's, breed numbers dwindled and in 1975, the Clydesdale was categorized by the Rare Breed Survival Trust as "vulnerable". Over the years and with the increase in breed numbers, it is now categorized as "at risk".*
29. The scale of the proposed building is of greatest significance to the impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The main body of the stables building, excluding the overhangs, would measure approximately of 16m by 10m in area. It would have a dual pitched roof with a ridge and eaves height of approximately 5.1m and 3.5m respectively. This is considered to be excessive in scale for a small private development, as is the inclusion of a full height blockwork wall with cavity and apparent inclusion of a septic tank, which is unusual for a private stables development.
30. The scale of the building has been influenced by the size of the horses (Clydesdale) to be stabled there. It is accepted that the size of the stable bays themselves is appropriate for the horses in question and that the height of the building is necessary for this purpose. The inclusion of a tack and feed store of the size proposed is normal and meets with the guidance set out in the SPD. The additional storeroom is understandable given the size of the horses and their associated equipment, however, it is noted that the Land Agent does not consider the additional store to be necessary.
31. The wash room and drying area take up a large part of the building measuring approximately 8m by 4.5m. It is asserted by the applicant and their supporting letters that this area is required to help them prepare the horses for shows. Although this would help prepare the horses for shows the frequency of such intensive grooming would not appear to justify such a facility of such permanence and scale and is more akin to a large commercial equine unit rather than a small scale unit. In addition it is unclear why an outdoor area of hardstanding could not be used for this purpose. The Land Agent considers such a facility to be unnecessary for the keeping of the applicant's horses.

32. The sick bay would measure approximately 4.3m by 3.4m. The applicant asserts, with the support of their vet and letters from Clydesdale breeders, that this is necessary as horses may pick up infections at shows and isolation is required to prevent the spread of illness to other horses. The frequency of such a situation occurring would seem fairly low, and it is not considered that such a facility is necessary for the keeping of the applicant's horses by the Land Agent. The inclusion of a sick bay would seem more akin to a riding school, large livery or stud where numerous horses are continually being moved on and off site. In addition to this there may be other possibilities for isolating a horse without the need to add to the built form in the Green Belt. Based on the fact that some common infections and diseases are airborne it would seem unwise to isolate a horse in the same building and it may be that the applicant could come to an agreement with the landowner to use another building on the farm for this purpose as and when such a situation arises or consider a temporary facility.
33. There would be an internal blockwork wall with cavity to eaves height. Although it is accepted that such horses would require a more sturdy stable design this is considered unnecessarily over engineered by the Land Agent, who considers that a reinforced block work wall would be adequate, even when considering the larger horses proposed to be housed within the proposed building. It is considered unnecessary that the internal wall should extend all the way to eaves height.
34. In consideration of the above, the considerable scale, mass and permanence of the proposed building goes beyond that which could be considered an appropriate facility and would form an intrusive feature, which would erode the openness of the Green Belt to a harmful extent, resulting in a failure to safeguard the countryside from encroachment, without necessary justification.
35. Whilst it is recognised that the applicant has stated that none of the existing buildings situated to the north of the site on the east side of Brown House Lane are available to provide stabling or other facilities, the Land Agent sees no reason why the steel shed building could not be used to provide the necessary storage needs for the proposed stables building. It is noted that these buildings have in the past been referred to as being redundant at the time of application ref.11/00733/FUL, and at the time of the officer's site visit continue to appear little used, with equestrian paraphernalia in the vicinity. On this basis it is unclear why the facilities such as the washing and drying areas and sick bay could similarly not be accommodated within the other buildings on the site. The applicant states that this is not possible as the other buildings are in separate ownership.
36. The LCC Land Agent has concerns regarding the relatively short length of the lease agreement at six years and subsequent security over the land. He suggests that the Council would wish to have demonstrated to them security of tenure for a period which would reflect the permanence of the structure proposed. In considering the circumstances surrounding this application, it is feasible that should the proposed use of the land cease, a situation could occur where a structure could be situated on land for which the owner has no identified need. It is noted that the applicant is the son of the landowner and that they have indicated that they are able to come to an agreement if necessary (conversely it is unclear why a similar arrangement with the landowner could not be made for temporary use of the building referred to above for isolation purposes).
37. The proposal has already been found to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Considering the case put forward in favour of the application above it is not considered that this amounts to very special circumstances that would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and it is therefore unacceptable.

Other Matters

Impact on neighbour amenity

38. The proposed stables building would be sited more than 30m from the nearest residential property at Sitchcroft Farm, with intervening structures providing adequate screening. This complies with the 30m guideline set out in the Rural Development SPD. Due to the degree of separation any impact on the amenity of the occupiers of Sitchcroft Farm is considered to be acceptable. Other properties in the area have a greater degree of separation and as a result would experience no unacceptable impact on amenity.

Impact on character and appearance of the locality

39. The main body of the proposed building would measure approximately of 16m by 10m in area. It would have a dual pitched roof with a ridge and eaves height of approximately 5.1m and 3.5m respectively. There would be an associated area of hardstanding around the stable and the building would replace an existing timber stables on Brown House Lane. Despite replacing an existing building the development would extend the built form in the area due to the scale of the proposed building and would further erode the open rural character of the locality.
40. The siting would, however, be close to the site boundaries and in relatively close proximity to other buildings, whilst the design and facing materials of timber cladding and Accord Brit Tile roof sheeting would be of an appropriately agrarian character.

Overall Conclusion

41. The proposed development is inappropriate in the Green Belt and is therefore harmful by definition. This harm is not outweighed by the case advanced in support of the application. It is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Central Lancashire Rural Development SPD.

Planning Policies

In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan (the Central Lancashire Core Strategy, the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposal has had regard to guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan. The specific policies/ guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Date
15/01100/FUL	Removal of existing hen coop and erection of stables with attached hen coop and associated hard standing	Withdrawn	09 March 2016
14/00672/P3PAJ	Prior approval application under Part 3, Class MB of The Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) Order 2013 to change an agricultural building to a dwelling.	Withdrawn	18 August 2014
13/00851/FUL	Parking 1no. horse trailer	Refused	27 November 2013
11/00733/FUL	Conversion of redundant agricultural building to residential use including ground floor rear extension. Demolition of detached agricultural/storage building to rear.	Revoked	08 November 2011
10/00283/FUL	Formation of a sand paddock measuring 40m x 30m, hay store extension to existing stable building, formation of horse trailer parking area and variation of condition 11 of planning permission 08/01117/FUL to allow the horse trailer to be parked on the site on a permanent basis (resubmission of application 09/00908/FUL)	Refused	18 November 2010
09/00908/FUL	Formation of sand paddock	Refused	08 January 2010

	measuring 60m x 40m, hay store extension to existing stable building, formation of midden, formation of horse trailer parking area and variation of condition no. 11 of planning permission no. 08/01117/FUL to allow horse trailer to be parked on the site on a permanent basis		
09/00457/FUL	Erection of timber stables	Approved	26 August 2009
08/01117/FUL	Erection of stable block, formation of hardstanding and construction of midden	Approved	24 December 2008
08/00894/FUL	Erection of a stable block and the formation of a hard standing	Refused	13 October 2008
06/00916/FUL	Retrospective application for horizontal timber cladding and construction of brick dwarf wall to the exterior of existing agricultural building	Appeal Allowed	20 June 2007
05/00719/COU	Change of use of building from agriculture to a mixed use of agriculture and non-agricultural storage	Appeal Allowed	19 December 2006