

Planning Committee Officer Report

Application No.: EPF/0225/26

Site: Land adjacent to Jessica, Chase Lane, Chigwell, Essex IG7 6JW

Proposal: Partial demolition and extension of existing stable building to provide improved facilities for a non-profit organisation.

Recommendation

The proposal is smaller than earlier schemes for the site, but it would still create a much larger building in the Green Belt. In the officers' view, the building would be too large and would harm the openness of the countryside. Although the community benefits put forward by the applicant are noted and carry some weight, they are not considered strong enough to outweigh this planning harm.

The Site

The site is off Chase Lane and contains an existing stable building and associated hardstanding. It lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The Proposal

The application seeks to partly demolish the existing stable structure and replace/extend it to provide improved equestrian facilities. The proposed building would include stables, tack rooms, storage and a treatment room.

This scheme is smaller than previous applications on the site, but it would still be noticeably larger and bulkier than the building that is there now.

Relevant Planning History

There have been earlier applications for larger equestrian development on this site. Those proposals were refused, and an appeal was also dismissed. The main concern in previous decisions was the effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

The current application has been reduced in size compared with those earlier schemes, which is a positive change. However, the key planning issue remains the same.

Main Planning Issues

Green Belt

The site is in the Green Belt, where new building is tightly controlled. The main question is whether the proposal would keep the site open in character and avoid excessive building in the countryside.

In this case, the proposed building would be significantly larger than the current stable block. Although the scheme has been scaled back from earlier versions, it would still add substantial built form on the site. For that reason, it is considered harmful to the openness of the Green Belt.

Community Benefit

The applicant says the development would help support the work of a local riding trust for people with special needs. That is an important consideration and should be recognised.

However, the planning test for building in the Green Belt is a high one. On the information submitted, it is not considered that the claimed benefits clearly outweigh the harm caused by the enlarged building.

Highways and Amenity

There does not appear to be a strong reason to object on highway safety or neighbour amenity grounds. The main concern is the Green Belt impact.

Conclusion

This application is an improved and reduced version of earlier schemes. However, the proposal would still result in a larger and more prominent building in the Green Belt.

For that reason, the officer view is that the application should be objected to.

Suggested Committee Resolution

That Chigwell Parish Council objects to application EPF/0225/26 because the proposed development would result in an overly large building within the Metropolitan Green Belt and would harm the openness of the site. The Parish Council does not consider that the benefits put forward are sufficient to outweigh that harm.

If Epping Forest District Council is minded to approve the application, the Parish Council requests conditions controlling the use of the building, external lighting, parking, drainage and any further structures or works on the site.