



# The Planning Inspectorate

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Your Ref:

Our Ref:

T/APP/C1950/A/93/221095/P7

Date:

25 AUG 1993

Dear Sirs

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990, SECTION 78 AND SCHEDULE 6  
APPEAL BY MR WILLIAM WOOD  
APPLICATION NO: S6/0662/92/FP

1. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine the above mentioned appeal. This is against the decision of the Welwyn Hatfield District Council to refuse planning permission for change of use of yard and buildings from agricultural contractor's use to haulage contractor/machinery removal specialist use, on land at Colesale Farm, Northaw Road West, Northaw, Herts. I have considered the written representations made by you and by the Council and also those made by interested persons. I have also considered those representations made directly to the Council which have been forwarded to me. I inspected the site on 19 July 1993.

2. I see from the representations that your client has operated his haulage contractor/machinery removal business from the site for some time, and it was taking place at the time of my inspection. I have therefore considered the application under the provisions of Section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) as being for the continuation of this use.

3. The appeal site is situated in a broad tract of open countryside between Northaw and Cuffley and consists of a triangular parcel of land, having an area of some 1500 sq m. It is the westernmost part of the farmyard complex originally associated with the extensive Colesale Farm, and has a frontage and existing access to the north side of Northaw Road (B156). For the most part it is an open yard area but it contains a long, open-fronted structure on its northern boundary, constructed from corrugated sheeting on a framework of stout poles. On neighbouring land, the adjoining farmhouse and some of the farm buildings are used as a farm shop, and

other nearby farm buildings are, I understand, intended to be incorporated into a current scheme for a new golf course on the surrounding farmland. The area nevertheless has a typically rural character and, together with the appeal site, lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

4. In line with national planning guidance, policies in the approved Hertfordshire County Structure Plan and the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan contain a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and state that, except in very special circumstances, permission will not normally be given for the construction of new buildings or for the change of use of existing buildings for purposes other than agriculture, forestry, or a limited range of other uses appropriate to a rural area. The policies nevertheless acknowledge the problems faced by small businesses in finding suitable premises and make provision in certain circumstances for the re-use and adaptation of redundant agricultural buildings, particularly where this would help to diversify the rural economy. Generally, however, employment development is directed towards sites within defined Employment Areas and to sites already used for such purposes.

5. From the written representations and my inspection of the site and its surroundings, I consider that the principal issues in this case are whether the use represents appropriate development within the Green Belt and, if not, whether there are any very special circumstances sufficient to justify an exception to the general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

6. The yard area is used mostly for the parking of a variety of trailer units and lifting equipment, some of which is apparently for hire, and for car parking. There is also a diesel tank and some used lorry tyres in one corner, together with some small items of plant and two prefabricated office buildings. One of these is a mobile site office and is the subject of a separate application, and the other is fitted out as a small workshop. At the time of my inspection, a lorry tractor unit was being repaired under one end of the open fronted building and a lorry mounted crane was parked under another part. For the most part however, this structure is in use as a shelter for reclaimed machinery and sundry other items of small plant and equipment.

7. There is a line of tall conifers along the frontage of the site to Northaw Road West and the other boundaries are largely enclosed by hedgerows and buildings. Nevertheless, there are clear views into the site from the access and through the frontage trees. Although the site has been maintained in a reasonably tidy condition, I consider that the number and non-agricultural appearance of the various vehicles and trailers, and the similar nature and quantity of the plant and materials stored there, present an unattractive appearance wholly out of keeping with the rural surroundings. The use does not fall within any of the categories appropriate to a

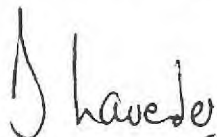
rural area listed in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 "Green Belts" or in the relevant structure and Local Plan policies, and amounts to considerably more than just the re-use of a redundant building, which in itself is neither substantial nor attractive in the terms of paragraph 16 of PPG2. In my judgement, the use of the land and buildings constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt and is harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

8. You contend that your client's business is not significantly different from the agricultural contractor's use of the land permitted by the Council in 1977 and, in the light of the existing and proposed uses adjoining, represents no more than a further diversification of the main part of the farm, in line with prevailing employment policies. I see from the representations that the business employs seven staff and you say that suitable sites for this type of activity are difficult to find. However, while the site is already used for employment purposes, the 1977 permission was for agricultural contracting use only. It has now ceased, and the present use is unauthorised. Unlike the previous and other nearby uses, your client's business has no direct affinity with agriculture, or other typically rural activity, including the intended neighbouring golf course. The Local Plan refers to ample amounts of land being available for employment related development in suitable identified areas, and the advice which you quote from Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 "Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms" states that individual planning decisions will depend on such factors as the scale of development, the nature of the use, and its location. In view of the non-agricultural nature of the use, the countryside location, and the demonstrable harm caused to the rural qualities of the area, I do not consider that your arguments amount to the very special circumstances required to justify inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

9. I have considered all other matters raised in the representations, including the absence of objections from the Highway Authority and the unlikelihood of disturbance to residential amenity, but find nothing of such weight as to alter my conclusions.

10. For the above reasons, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me, I hereby dismiss this appeal.

Yours faithfully



D LAVENDER MRTPI  
Inspector