



The countryside charity  
Hertfordshire

31a Church Street  
Welwyn  
HERTS AL6 9LW  
[www.cpreherts.org.uk](http://www.cpreherts.org.uk)  
[office@cpreherts.org.uk](mailto:office@cpreherts.org.uk)  
01438 717587

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Lilly Ruddock  
Planning and Building Control  
St. Albans City and District Council  
St. Peter's Street  
St. Albans  
Herts AL1 3JE

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

9<sup>th</sup> October 2020 (by email)

Dear Ms. Ruddock,

**Application No. 5/2020/1885**  
**Timber stable block with associated hardstanding and landscaping.**  
**Sleapshyde Farm, Sleapshyde, Smallford, St Albans Hertfordshire AL4 0SE**

CPRE Hertfordshire have concerns regarding this application for development in the Green Belt. Under the provision of the NPPF (para 145) new buildings for stables, like buildings for other outdoor sports, are inappropriate development as they result in loss of openness and therefore only to be approved if there are very special circumstances. 'Facilities' which do not compromise openness may be appropriate under the NPPF.

Over the last eighteen months there have been a series of applications for work intended to secure the future of the listed buildings on this site. (5/2019/0034; 5/2019/0152; 5/2020/0204 and 5/2020/0239). None of them mentioned that as a consequence there would be a need to construct a substantial new stable block.

Applications 5/2020/0204 and 5/2020/0239 were specifically for the conversion of the existing stables to residential and were approved earlier this year. The Design and Access statements accompanying them made no reference to the need for a replacement structure.

Consequently, it is strange to note that this application, for a stables structure almost three times that of the original, is justified in the DAS accompanying this application as necessary because "*the proposal relates to the continuation of the keeping of horses displaced by the adjacent development (to convert and ultimately preserve the listed barns) on the site.*"

The applicant believes that as outdoor recreation, the proposal falls within the exceptions in paragraph 145(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy 1 of the St Albans Local Plan and, as screening landscaping will be planted along the two sides fronting Sleapshyde Lane and the A414, there will be no harm to the openness of the Green Belt. We firmly disagree.

CPRE is working nationally and locally for a beautiful and living countryside

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

President: Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO  
Chairman: Richard Bullen

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*R (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Epping Forest DC* [EWCA Civ 404] held that the concept of “openness” means the state of being free from built developments, i.e. the absence of buildings. As we have mentioned above, this is a substantial structure, with a footprint of 194.4 sq.m. It will have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Similarly *Turner v Secretary of State* [EWCA Civ 466] determined that openness is essentially freedom from development and relates primarily to the quantum and extent of development and its physical effect on the site. Sleapshyde is a hamlet, set back from the A414. The complex of listed buildings which constitute Sleapshyde Farm are separated from the A414 by the open field in which this structure will stand. The proposed building is in close proximity to the boundaries with the A414 and Sleapshyde Lane. As a result it will increase the quantum of development on Sleapshyde Farm and extend the envelope of the farm and the hamlet up to the dual carriageway. The rural setting of the listed barn complex will be compromised.

No very special circumstances are presented to outweigh the resulting harm to the openness of the Green Belt and, given the statement in the DAS quoted above, the requirement for this building was knowingly created by the conversion of the existing stables. Before determining this application, the Council will have to satisfy itself if there is an overriding justification for these new stables, why they are so much larger than the previous building and why they did not feature in the earlier applications.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving