



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 April 2025

by H Senior BA (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P4225/W/24/3356528

Summit Cabin, 21 Salley Street, Calderbank Road, Littleborough OL15 9NG

- 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 D Chapman against the decision of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00692/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of a detached building for use as holiday let accommodation, the installation of an underground septic tank and associated landscaping works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have determined the appeal on the basis of the submitted evidence and merits of the case. Whether development has, or has not, already been undertaken is not material to my decision.
3. I have utilised the description of development from the decision notice as the change from “holiday let cabin” had been agreed by the appellant.
4. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published following the Council’s decision on the planning application. Comments were requested from both parties on the changes from the previous Framework, insofar as it relates to this appeal. I have considered these comments in addition to the evidence initially provided in the appeal.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - whether the proposal makes adequate provision for the disposal of sewage; and
 - whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether the Proposal is Inappropriate Development

6. Paragraph 142 of the Framework outlines the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The Framework, at paragraph 154, sets out the categories of development which may be regarded as not inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to certain conditions.
7. Paragraph 154b) relates to the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
8. The holiday let is adjacent to the Pennine Bridleway, a national long distance bridleway trail. This part of the trail is also known as the Mary Towneley Loop. It is used by horse riders, walker and cyclists. I accept that the holiday let is marketed as accommodation for persons using the trail, however there is no substantive evidence before me that the cabin is let solely to users of the trail, and even if it were, the proposition that holiday accommodation close to the trail constitutes appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation is highly questionable. Even if the use of the building could be considered to meet the first requirement of paragraph 145b), the further tests of whether the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within also need to be met. I will return to these issues later in my decision.
9. The exception in Paragraph 154e) relates to limited infilling in villages. The appeal site is adjacent to a row of terraced housing. Beyond the site the character of the area becomes more rural and agricultural with disused small agricultural buildings in the field adjacent to the site. The proposal is set back to the rear of the site with an access gate fronting the highway. It does not therefore have the appearance of infill development to continue the residential character of the terraced buildings. Whilst I accept that the site was described by the council as being in the village of Summit, the proposal is divorced from the built envelope of the surroundings and therefore as a matter of fact and degree, is not in the village. I therefore consider that the proposal does not meet this exception.
10. The Framework has introduced the concept of Grey Belt land. This is land that does not strongly contribute to the Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143 of the Framework. The appellant asserts that the land is Grey Belt. However, even if I were to agree that it meets the definition of Grey Belt land, in order for the development of homes and other development to not be regarded as inappropriate, paragraph 155 of the Framework sets out that all parts of the paragraph need to apply. Criterion b) requires that there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. Whilst the cabin could support the users of the national trail little substantive evidence has been put forward that there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. Accordingly, given that all the relevant criteria of paragraph 155 are not met, the proposal does not accord with this exception.
11. I therefore find that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, conflicting with the Green Belt protection aims of the Framework and Policy JP-G9 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (2024) (PEJDPD).

Openness

12. One of the five purposes of a Green Belt, outlined at paragraph 143 of the Framework, is that it should assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
13. The proposal introduces a building in an area which according to the appellant was previously occupied by agricultural buildings. However, there is no substantive evidence of the size or extent of the previous buildings. In any event, the holiday let is larger, which along with the access track has reduced the openness of the area due to the increase in build development and the reduction in the sense of spaciousness. Consequently, albeit to a limited degree, the proposal would harm the openness of the Green Belt in both visual and spatial terms.
14. I therefore conclude that the development would lead to a loss of Green Belt openness and would impact on the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, contrary to the Framework.

Disposal of Sewage

15. Policy EM/8 of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan requires that development proposals should make satisfactory arrangements for the disposal of sewage. Building regulations approval has been obtained for the means of providing sewage disposal through the use of a biodisc. From the evidence before me and having regard to the nature and scale of the development, I can see no reason that submission, approval and implementation of an appropriate means of disposing of sewage could not be secured by means of a suitably worded planning condition.
16. Therefore, subject to a suitably worded condition, the proposal makes adequate provision for the disposal of sewage, and I find no conflict with Policy EM/8 and Policy G8 of the Rochdale Core Strategy (2016).

Other considerations

17. The development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The Framework is clear that such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
18. The proposal provides benefits to the tourism industry and the local economy in the area through attracting visitors as well as promoting healthy lifestyles through the use of the Pennine Bridleway. Due to the limited size of the proposal these factors attract moderate weight in favour of the proposal.
19. The proposal also includes the planting of a number of broadleaved native trees which would increase the Habitat Units on the site beyond the statutory requirement. This would attract moderate weight in favour of the proposal.
20. These other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of the inappropriateness of the development. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify inappropriate development undertaken do not exist.

Other Matters

21. Paragraph 216 of the Framework requires that the effect of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application and states that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset.
22. The terraced buildings at Salley Street have been identified as non-designated heritage assets and their significance derives from the historic use as weaver cottages. The cabin lies some distance from the terrace and is set back from the road. If viewed from the Pennine Bridleway, which is higher than and to the rear of the cabin, the rear of the terraces are visible. However, the landscaping around the site will mature and allow the cabin to be less prominent in the views. I therefore consider that the cabin has a neutral impact of the setting of the non-designated heritage assets.
23. I have had regard to the previous appeal decision that I have been referred to. However, I note that there are clear material differences between the proposal and the individual circumstances surrounding these. These include that the glamping pods were to facilitate the site as an outdoor setting whereas this proposal relates to a national trail with users traveling past the site. In addition, I have determined the appeal on the site-specific circumstances of the site.

Green Belt Balance

24. The Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Therefore, substantial weight should be given to the harm to the Green Belt. The Framework states that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
25. For the reasons set out above, the development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Furthermore, there would be limited harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Taking into account all of the other considerations put forward in support of the proposal, I consider that these attract moderate weight in favour of the proposal.
26. Therefore, in considering the substantial weight given to the Green Belt, I conclude that the very special circumstances needed to justify the development in the Green Belt have not been demonstrated. As such the proposal would conflict with the Framework and Policy JP-G9 of the PEJDPD which together seek to protect the Green Belt.

Conclusion

27. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

H Senior

INSPECTOR