



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2025

by **C Skelly BA (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J4423/W/25/3363312

Old May Farm, Foxhall Lane, Sheffield S10 4QA

- 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 Elizabeth Lawson against the decision of Sheffield City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/03066/FUL.
 - The development proposed is change of use of portion of agricultural land to camping use to accommodate a Shepherd's Hut. The change of use does not include the access track which will remain as agricultural use.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As part of the appeal the appellant has submitted additional information pertaining to the economic viability of the farm business. As this additional financial information does not materially evolve the scheme, I am content to accept its submission for information purposes and am satisfied that no party with a potential interest in the outcome of this appeal is prejudiced by me doing so.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the proposal on an Area of High Landscape Value; and
 - whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations amounting to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Inappropriate Development

4. The appeal site is part of an agricultural field located approximately 160m from Old May Farm farmhouse. The land slopes steeply downwards from the appeal site towards the farmhouse. There is a Public Right of Way (PROW) which runs along the bottom of the field from Foxhall Lane. The site is in a remote location within the Mayfield Valley, with a handful of dwellings located between the farmhouse and the urban area.

5. The site is within the Green Belt. Policies GE1 and GE3 of the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan (1998) (UDP) set out the policy approach for new development in the Green Belt. Policy GE1 notes four purposes of the Green Belt whereas the Framework lists five purposes. Policy GE3 sets out the approach to the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt and the scenarios where this would be permitted but does not incorporate all the exceptions set out in the Framework. These policies are therefore not consistent with the Framework. For these reasons, I attribute the UDP policies which relate to the Green Belt limited weight. I have therefore sought to focus my assessments against the requirements of the Framework.
6. The Framework states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 153 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
7. It also states, at paragraph 154, that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of various exceptions apply. One such exception b) is 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. The Framework does not define outdoor recreation. The proposed development relates to tourist/camping accommodation which would be used by individuals for short stays in a rural location.
8. The proposed shepherd's hut would measure approximately 6m by 3m with a height of 3.2m. It would be accessed via an agricultural track recently granted through prior approval¹, however no formal car parking area is shown on the plans. The shepherd's hut would be sited to the front of a dry-stone wall at the top of the field behind which, is a copse of trees. Due to the undulating nature of the land and nearby trees, the shepherd's hut would not be visible from the PROW or Foxall Lane, but I observed that it would be glimpsed from longer distance views from parts of Mark Lane.
9. An impact on openness is not solely related to a development's size but also to its purpose and intensity of use. Whilst the appellant contends that the shepherd's hut would be a temporary structure that can be easily moved around in future, I note that foul drainage would be discharged to an underground septic tank and soakaway, which would fix it to a specific location.
10. The appeal site is in a remote location and the surrounding fields are free from any built form. In addition to the hut itself the proposal includes a gravel surface for outdoor seating. This seating area and any associated paraphernalia such as tables and chairs, in combination with the recurrent parking of a vehicle, would harm the visual openness of the Green Belt, albeit to a minor degree. Moreover, when considered as a whole, the proposal would cause some limited harm to the visual openness of the Green Belt when compared to the existing situation.
11. The appellant has suggested that the prohibition of parking or paraphernalia could be dealt with via condition. Further, two potential alternative car parking locations have been suggested. However, the specific manner in which vehicles and

¹ 24/01677/PWAN

paraphernalia are used/sited by future occupiers would be neither practical nor realistic to enforce at the remote rural site in question. It has not been clearly demonstrated otherwise. Moreover, I do not consider that any such condition would satisfactorily address the harm to the openness of the Green Belt which I have identified.

12. The appellant has referred me to an appeal case at 100m west of Rosedene². However, in that case the proposal related to the erection of a stable block, which is materially different to a facility intended to be occupied on a holiday let basis. Further, that site is located in a different District and individual site circumstances would have prevailed and influenced decision-making. Thereby, it is not directly comparable to the appeal case.
13. For the above reasons the proposal would fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and fail to satisfy the requirements of paragraph 154 b) of the Framework. Therefore, the scheme comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt contrary to the Framework and the broad aims of Policies GE1 and GE3 of the UDP.

Landscape

14. The appeal site is located in an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV), which is defined in the policy as an area of countryside which is very attractive and has special character. Policy GE8 of the LP states that in AHLVs, development must protect and wherever appropriate enhance their appearance.
15. The surrounding area comprises a valley landscape, with interlocking pastoral fields, bounded by stone walls and interlaced with blocks of established woodland. The appeal site is in a pleasant rural location on the side of a valley and positively contributes to the local character. Despite having a small footprint, when viewed along with the hardstanding and car parking, the proposal would introduce suburban features into this remote and scenic countryside location, which would be visible in longer distance public and private views across the Mayfield Valley. The proposal would lead to the encroachment of suburban features into the remote rural landscape, albeit on a small scale, which would harm the character and appearance of the AHLV.
16. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with Policies BE5, GE4 and GE8 of the UDP and Policy CS74 of the Sheffield Core Strategy (2009) (CS). Together these policies amongst other things seek to ensure that the scale and character of development conserves and enhances the landscape, natural environment and areas of high landscape value.

Other considerations

17. Consistent with elements of supporting text contained within the UDP, paragraph 88 of the Framework supports the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. The appellant contends that the shepherd's hut would provide essential income to ensure the continued viability of the farm business. To support the appeal the appellant has submitted information from the appellant's accountant in relation to the farm's financial viability. Although the information is limited it confirms that, whilst the farm business is viable, in-part

² APP/R1038/W/23/3326648

due to the personal circumstances of the appellant, the farm requires an alternative source of income going forward. The proposed development would allow the appellant to diversify their income so as to support the viability of the business, which would be of benefit to the rural economy including as a consequence of increased tourism.

18. I acknowledge that the location for the shepherd's hut has been chosen as it offers optimum views which may increase its appeal to visitors. However, I am not satisfied based on the submitted information that possible alternative locations upon the agricultural holding, with lower propensities to cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt or the character and appearance of the AHLV, have been exhaustively assessed and discounted with thorough and robust justification. This tempers, to some degree, the weight I can fairly attribute to the scheme's benefits as identified above.

Whether very special circumstances exist

19. The proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and fail to preserve its openness. In accordance with the Framework, substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. There would also be harm caused to the character and appearance of the AHLV, which carries significant weight. It is my judgement that the other considerations put forward attract moderate weight in support of the proposal. Therefore, the benefits do not clearly outweigh the harms identified such that the very special circumstances required to justify the development do not exist.

Conclusion

20. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise.
21. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

C Skelly

INSPECTOR