
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 02 September 2025

by **N Robinson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R1845/W/25/3368220

The Coppins Kidderminster Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire DY12 1LW

- 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 M Dixon against the decision of Wyre Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/0181/FUL.
 - The development proposed is siting of four shepherds' huts glamping pods and associated shower block.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for siting of four shepherds' huts glamping pods and associated shower block at The Coppins Kidderminster Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire DY12 1LW in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/0181/FUL, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made against Wyre Forest District Council by Mr M Dixon. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appeal proposal is referred to as being part retrospective and it is clear from my site inspection that 4 shepherds' huts are already in place at the appeal site. For the avoidance of doubt, I will determine the appeal on the basis of the submitted plans.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, with due regard to the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it;
- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
- The effect of the proposal on highway safety; and
- If the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

5. The site comprises land which is situated in the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are openness and permanence.
6. Paragraph 154h(v) of the Framework sets out that material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation) are not inappropriate development provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Paragraph 154b of the Framework identifies that new buildings are inappropriate unless, relevant to this proposal, they represent the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
7. Planning permission is sought for the siting of 4 shepherds' huts and a shower block. The appellant contends that the development meets the exceptions set down at Paragraphs 154b and 154h(v) as it comprises appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation. No compelling evidence has been put to me to suggest that the use of shepherd's huts themselves would not comprise a form of outdoor recreation as far as national and local planning policies in respect of the Green Belt are concerned.
8. In order to comply with the exceptions set down in Paragraphs 154b and 154h, it is necessary to consider whether the development preserves the openness of the Green Belt or conflicts with the purposes of including land within it. Openness can have both spatial and visual aspects.
9. The huts have a height of 3 metres and a footprint of approximately 11m². The overall size and combined footprint of the huts is modest. Whilst the huts obviously have a spatial presence as a physical object, their visual and spatial impacts are limited by their size. The huts are sited on wheels and are not permanently fixed to the ground. The appellant states that the huts are capable of being moved in the off season, which is specified as being November to February. Whilst I accept that whilst in situ the huts do result in some loss of openness by virtue of their siting within a previously-undeveloped part of the field, this would be very minor in nature given the scale of the huts and their temporary, movable nature, noting that the cessation of the use would result in the restoration of openness. Given this, I am satisfied that any effects of the huts on openness, be that spatial or visual, can clearly be remediated and the openness of the Green Belt preserved.
10. Turning to the shower block, this would be a permanent structure. It would have a height of 3 metres and a footprint of approximately 24m². In spatial terms the shower block results in development where currently there is none. However, its siting close to a heavily vegetated site boundary would limit views of the building to short distance ones from the site and wider field, in which the structure would be seen in the context of the adjacent agricultural building and the dwelling to the south. Given this, whilst introducing new built form, the shower block would not have a harmful impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Whilst the parking area would introduce a new permanent feature, this does not, in my judgment have a harmful effect on the openness of the Green Belt given its nature and characteristics.

11. Drawing on the above I consider that the proposal would not harm the openness of the Green Belt, owing to the overall visual characteristics and size of the proposed structures, and the impermanence, moveable nature and the stated intention to move the huts.
12. Turning to the purposes of the Green Belt, the Council suggest that the proposal would conflict with 2 of the Green Belt purposes set down in the Framework, to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another and to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. Given the visual containment of the permanent elements of this proposal and the movable nature and capacity for remediation of the huts, I am satisfied that there is no conflict with these, or the other Green Belt purposes, nor is there any indication that the proposal would result in the harmful encroachment of development to other parts of the field.
13. Taking these points together, I conclude that the appeal scheme falls within the exceptions set out in Paragraph 154 of the Framework and is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It therefore does not conflict with the Framework, the relevant provisions of which I have summarised above, or with Policy DM22 of the Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2022) (LP) which states that within the Green Belt development will not be permitted, except in very special circumstances, allowing only for exceptions broadly consistent with those listed by Government policy.
14. As I do not find that the development is inappropriate, there is no requirement to question whether very special circumstances are generated in this instance.

Character and appearance

15. The site falls gently from east to west and is bordered by mature vegetation. The site is located in an area of open countryside within the 'sandstone estatelands' landscape character area which is formed of open, rolling countryside characterised by an ordered pattern of large, arable fields, straight roads and estate plantations. This gives the site a largely tranquil pastoral character which contributes positively to the attractive rural character of the area.
16. LP policy DM21 seeks to limit new visitor accommodation in the district. The proposal would not meet any of the criteria for new visitor accommodation set out in this policy. The supporting text sets out that by encouraging the development of visitor accommodation in built-up areas, the environmental impact of building in the open countryside can be minimised. Whilst not referred to in the reason for refusal the Council have referenced conflict with LP policy DM30 which sets out that further caravan, mobile home and chalet developments will be resisted due to the collective impact which existing sites have on the landscape.
17. The proposal would introduce structures into an open field. However, the modest scale, small number, design, materiality and form of the huts and the shower block would mean that they would appear as a limited development of a rural character. Vegetation to the site boundaries and within the wider landscape, combined with the topography of the area, would limit views of the proposal in long distance views, including from public rights of way. Whilst the huts and shower block would be visible in short distance views from within the site and adjoining fields, their rural appearance would not appear incongruous within the site setting. This, coupled with the limited scale of the structures, their siting close to the field boundaries and the landscaping proposed would contain the development so that it would not appear

visually intrusive in the wider rural landscape. Given this, the wider field would retain its agricultural character, and the development would not alter the intrinsic rural character of the surrounding area.

18. Additionally, given the limited scale of the huts and their limited occupation, I am satisfied that the activity associated with their use would not result in any appreciable change to the tranquillity of the area. Whilst the Council suggest that the appellant has not demonstrated a need for the development, I have not been directed to a development plan policy which requires this.
19. In light of the above, I find that the development does not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the landscape or surrounding area. In view of this, whilst the proposal does not meet the criteria for new visitor accommodation set out in LP policies DM21 and DM30, as I have found that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the open countryside, in this case no harm would arise from this conflict. Given this, the proposal would accord with the wider aims of these policies which seek to support new visitor accommodation where it is appropriately sited and where amenity and environmental impacts are minimised.
20. I find no conflict with LP policies SP2, SP22 and DM20 which seek to safeguard and wherever possible enhance the open countryside and the unique character of the landscape.

Highway safety

21. The site is accessed via a gated driveway from the A456. The plans indicate that there is sufficient space for 2 vehicles to pass at the site access clear of the carriageway. Given this, there is no indication that the access is inadequate or that it would result in the potential for collisions on the highway. This view is supported by the Council, who has confirmed that they do not wish to defend the reason for refusal relating to highway safety.
22. In light of the above I conclude that the development would not compromise highway safety. I therefore find no conflict with LP Policy SP27 which requires that proposals demonstrate that they address road safety issues.

Other Matters

23. Biodiversity Net Gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Net Gain document which sets out how the biodiversity gain objective is met.

Conditions

24. I have had regard to the conditions suggested by the Council in their statement of case, on which the appellant has had the opportunity to comment. Where necessary I have made revisions to some of the conditions put to me to ensure that they meet the tests in the Framework and PPG, without altering their fundamental aims.
25. Given the retrospective nature of the application, it is not necessary to impose the standard time limit condition. It is necessary to impose a condition that requires the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans for certainty. I have also attached a condition which requires that the development is carried out in

accordance with the recommendations in the Initial arboricultural report and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in the interests of the protection of trees, character and appearance and biodiversity.

26. I have imposed a condition which specifies that the development be carried out in accordance with the specified materials in the interests of character and appearance. Conditions requiring the approval, implementation and retention of a landscaping scheme and details of external lighting are necessary in the interests of the character and appearance of the area. Conditions relating to the provision of the access, parking and turning areas are necessary in the interests of highway safety.
27. A condition which restricts the use of the site for short term holiday purposes is necessary to support the tourism industry and prevent occupation of the shepherd's huts as a permanent dwelling. In the interests of enforceability, I have included the requirement to keep a register of occupiers of the huts as part of that condition. A condition limiting the number of huts to 4 is necessary as I have found that the proposal is acceptable due to its small scale and additional units may result in greater effect on the character of the area and the openness of the Green Belt.
28. In view of my conclusions that the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt would be minimised through the removal of the huts from the site during the 'off season', I have included a condition which requires that the huts are removed from the site in this period.

Conclusion

29. For the above reasons, whilst conflict arises with the development plan, I have identified that, as the proposal does not result in harm to landscape character, that conflict brings no harm. The proposal would provide visitor accommodation, contributing to the local economy through increased trade for local facilities and services, meeting the Framework's objective to support a prosperous rural economy. Given the limited development plan conflict, I am satisfied that there are material considerations which indicate that a decision be taken other than in strict accordance with the development plan.
30. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

N Robinson

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1.) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2515 – 1, 2515 - 2a
- 2.) The materials to be used externally on the shepherd's huts and shower block hereby approved shall comply with the details shown on the approved plans.
- 3.) The recommendations included within the Initial arboricultural report (Birch, January 2025) and the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Net Gain (Arbor Vitae Environment Ltd, February 2025) shall be strictly adhered to.

- 4.) The holiday lets hereby approved shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and shall not be occupied as a person's sole or main place of residence.
- 5.) The applicant/site manager shall keep an up-to-date written register of all persons (including full name and main home addresses) visiting the site for holiday purposes. The register shall be maintained regularly thereafter and made available to the Local Planning Authority for inspection at reasonable notice.
- 6.) The site shall provide no more than four pitches which shall each be used for the siting of a shepherd's hut and for no other 'caravans' (static or touring) as defined by the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and Caravan Sites Act 1968.
- 7.) Any external lighting shall be subject to a detailed external lighting scheme which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to its installation. Any external lighting shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
- 8.) The development hereby approved shall not be brought in to use until the access layout with a minimum width of 5m for the first 10m and set back gates as shown on drawing no. 2515 2a has been provided. Thereafter the provision shall be retained for the purpose of safe and suitable access.
- 9.) The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until the first 5m of the amended access into the development has been surfaced in a bound material in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- 10.) The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until the access, parking and turning to serve the huts as shown on drawing no. 2515-2a have been provided. Thereafter the provision shall be retained for the purpose of safe and suitable access, parking and turning.
- 11.) The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until a detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscaping shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details within the first planting and seeding seasons following the approval of the landscaping scheme; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.
- 12.) The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until a scheme for the removal of the shepherd's huts and associated paraphernalia from the site between 01 November and 01 March each year has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall include details of the proposed storage location of the huts and paraphernalia during this period. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

END OF SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS