



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 February 2026

by K Lancaster BA (hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/P2365/W/25/3375999

May Cottages, Back Lane, Newburgh, Lancashire WN8 7UQ

- 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 and Mrs Hughes against the decision of West Lancashire Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0467/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the change of use of the existing garage and workshop to a single dwelling house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. Nevertheless, the Council concluded that the proposal would benefit from Paragraph 154(h) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which provides an exception for development in the Green Belt comprising the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction. The evidence before me and my own observations do not lead me to a different conclusion on this matter. Accordingly, the proposal would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Main Issue

3. Therefore, the main issue is whether the proposed development would be in a suitable location for housing with regard to the Council's spatial strategy and its access to services and facilities.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a detached single-storey, garage/workshop building located to the rear of a semi-detached residential property known as 2 May Cottages.
5. The site is not within any of the settlements identified in the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy SP1 of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document October 2013 (the Local Plan) and is therefore located in the countryside. Policy SP1 seeks to ensure new development is sustainable in its location and accessibility, among other provisions.
6. Policy GN1 of the Local Plan establishes the settlement boundaries for towns, villages and rural settlements within the Borough. Its purpose is to direct

development to the most sustainable locations. Policy RS1 of the Local Plan supports residential development within settlement boundaries and on allocated sites, subject to criteria including location, design and infrastructure capacity. Outside settlement boundaries, residential development is not normally permitted unless justified under other policies for example, rural exception schemes.

7. Paragraph 83 of the Framework seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas by ensuring housing is located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. In terms of its location, the appeal site lies outside of the settlement boundary of Newburgh in the open countryside. Nevertheless, the appeal site is part of a ribbon of development along this part of Back Lane. Therefore, whilst it is outside of Newburgh, it is clearly not isolated. As such, the proposal would not conflict with Paragraph 84 of the Framework which seeks to prevent isolated development within the countryside.
8. The appeal site is located within a rural location, and I acknowledge that sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas. However, I have been provided with very limited information in respect of the distances to the nearest services and facilities, such as shops, schools, health facilities, public transport links, and employment opportunities from the appeal site. Furthermore, I observed on site that there appeared to be no such facilities within the immediate vicinity.
9. The site would be served by only a very limited range of facilities within a reasonable walking distance, and it lacks convenient access to public transport. The proposed access would be taken directly from Coarse Lane, a 40mph road with no adjoining footpaths. Likewise, although no access is proposed to Back Lane to the north of the site, this road also provides no immediate footway provision. In addition to the absence of adequate pedestrian infrastructure, street lighting along both routes is sparse, further diminishing the potential for safe and practical pedestrian or cycle movements during both daytime and evening hours.
10. Taken together, these constraints mean the site cannot reasonably be considered to occupy a sustainable location. The limited opportunities for walking, cycling, or public transport would deter future occupants from using alternative modes of travel and would inevitably result in a high degree of reliance on the private car for day-to-day needs.
11. Paragraph 110 of the Framework recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. However, the location of the appeal site and absence of footpaths and street lighting would result in a reliance upon the private car for the majority of journeys. Therefore, even when acknowledging that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, it would not promote sustainable development in rural areas, and neither would it enhance or maintain the vitality of the immediate rural community.
12. As such, on the evidence before me and my own observations on site, the appeal site would not represent a sustainable location for residential development in respect of access to everyday services and facilities and future residents would therefore be likely to be heavily reliant upon the use of the private car.
13. For these reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not be in a suitable location for housing when assessed against the Council's spatial

strategy, nor would it provide appropriate access to services and facilities. It would therefore conflict with Policies RS1 and GN1 of the Local Plan. Collectively, these policies aim to secure a sustainable pattern of residential growth by defining settlement boundaries, restricting development beyond them, and directing new housing in line with the established settlement hierarchy.

Planning Balance

14. Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework indicates that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged where the policies which are most important for determining the application are deemed out-of-date. This includes, for proposals involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
15. In such cases, Paragraph 11(d) states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
16. The Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing. The evidence indicates that the area has a housing land supply of just 1.86 years, a significant undersupply. The delivery of new housing must therefore be afforded considerable weight.
17. However, the Framework also seeks to ensure housing in rural areas is located to enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It promotes sustainable transport and the active management of growth. It also seeks to ensure development gives priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and access to public transport, and can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including through its location.
18. Whilst Policy RS1 of the Local Plan is more restrictive than the exceptions set out in the Framework for Green Belt development, Policies GN1 and SP1 remain broadly consistent with the Framework's approach of directing development to sustainable locations. I thus apportion significant weight to the harm and development plan conflict arising from the inappropriateness of the location for an additional dwelling. The identified harm would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Accordingly, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons set out above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations including the Framework, which indicate a decision should be made otherwise than in accordance with it. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

K Lancaster

INSPECTOR