



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 February 2026

by J Symmons BSc (Hons) CEng MICE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 April 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W4223/W/25/3375124

Clough Manor, Rochdale Road, Denshaw, Oldham OL3 5UE

- 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 Saddleworth Holdings Ltd against the decision of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is FUL/354054/25.
 - The development proposed is a touring caravan site including new access to highway.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in determination of the appeal are:
 - whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to any relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework dated December 2024 (the Framework), including where relevant, the effect on openness and purpose;
 - the proposal's effect on residents of neighbouring properties' living condition with regard to noise, disturbance and privacy; and
 - if the proposal is found to be 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 required to justify the development.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is situated off Rochdale Road and comprises a parcel of land adjacent to Clough Manor, positioned between the hotel and nearby residential properties. The site is within the Green Belt. Although described as open grassland, it was clear from my visit that the land has been subject to notable earthworks. These works appear to have relevelled some of the land, lowering the central part of the site and created some mounding to its side boundaries. These works have also removed most of the former grass cover. An open mesh type fence also exists to the appeal site's boundary to the road.
4. The proposal entails the formation of five surfaced pitches for touring caravans, together with access and service infrastructure and boundary fencing, hedging, planting and other landscaping. The proposed landscape would include native vegetation and planting to provide all year round coverage and soften views from

the road and nearby properties. It is proposed that the caravan pitches would operate on a seasonal basis, limited to between March and October.

Whether the proposal is inappropriate development

5. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, whose essential characteristics are their openness and their permanence. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
6. The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It further sets out at Paragraph 154 and 155, exceptions where development may be regarded as not inappropriate.
7. Policy 22 of the Oldham Local Development Framework Development Plan Document – Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2011 (OLP) states that development in the Green Belt will only be permitted where it does not conflict with relevant policies at national level. Policy JP-G9 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022-2039 (PFE) reiterates the purposes of the Green Belt and the benefits of its appropriate use. While broadly aligned with the Framework, these policies are less detailed regarding the exceptions. I therefore afford greater weight to the Framework.
8. The Council advises that the proposal would not fall within any exemptions set out in the Framework and the appellant does not dispute this or advance any evidence to the contrary. I see no reason to question this. Accordingly, the proposal would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Openness and purposes

9. The Framework identifies openness as an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. The Planning Practice Guidance for Green Belt explains that openness has both spatial and visual aspects, and that factors such as the duration of the development, its reversibility, any measures to restore the land to its previous (or an equivalent or improved) state, and the level of activity it is likely to generate, including vehicle movements, are all relevant considerations.
10. Notwithstanding the disturbance arising from the removal of the former grass cover and the regrading of levels, the appeal site occupies a position between existing development and retains a reasonably open aspect, with broad views across the rising moorland and grassland landscape beyond. This is consistent with its identification within the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment as part of the Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes (West and South Pennines) character area.
11. Spatially, having regard to the scale of the proposal and the wider context, the effect would be limited. However, the visual impact would be much more pronounced. Even in the absence of lighting columns, wash blocks or other permanent structures, the traffic associated with the use, the presence of the touring caravans and the proposed hedging and planting especially once mature and particularly along the southern boundary, would be prominent and readily perceptible, eroding openness. This effect would be further exacerbated if a proposed 1.5-metre-high acoustic fence along the southern boundary was

introduced, to address intervisibility concerns between the caravan pitches and the rear elevations of nearby properties.

12. Although the caravans would be present on a seasonal basis only, the use of the pitches would extend over a substantial part of the year. There is little evidence to demonstrate that the site would not be subject to some level of occupation throughout the operating season and, as such, the visual effect of touring caravans would, in all probability, be largely continual in some form. In addition, once established, the proposed hedging and planting would have a permanent presence and would diminish openness irrespective of whether caravans were on the site. The impact on openness would therefore be likely to persist throughout the operating season and, to a lesser extent, beyond it.
13. While it is asserted that the effects of the proposal on the Green Belt would be reversible and that the land could be restored to grassland within a short period, the development would nonetheless be operational for a significant part of each year. There is no clear evidence to indicate that restoration would take place when the site is not in use, or that such restoration would occur within any foreseeable timescale. As such, the proposal cannot reasonably be regarded as temporary in its effects, and the resulting harm to openness would endure for a substantial proportion of the year despite its seasonal operation.
14. Paragraph 143 of the Framework sets out the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Although most would not be affected, the proposal would represent encroachment into the countryside and would therefore conflict with the purpose of safeguarding the countryside from such development.
15. Taken together, the proposal would result in moderate harm to both the openness of the Green Belt and one of its stated purposes.

Living conditions – noise, disturbance and privacy

16. There are two dwellings located immediately adjacent to the appeal site. Noise and disturbance to these properties arising from the comings and goings of vehicles, together with the on-site activities of visitors, would be inevitable. When considered alongside the longer daylight hours during the operating season, the likelihood of continual daily use, and the extent of space around the caravan pitches that could facilitate external activity, the level of noise and disruption generated could be considerable.
17. The scheme has been designed with the caravan pitches angled away from the neighbouring dwellings, set at a minimum separation distance of approximately 33m, and with intervening landscaping proposed along the boundary. However, it has not been demonstrated that these measures would be sufficient to adequately attenuate noise and disturbance to an acceptable level, particularly during periods of more intensive use.
18. While it has been suggested that a condition could be imposed to restrict the use of generators, amplified sound and external lighting, there is an absence of detail as to how such controls would be effectively monitored, managed or enforced, or how any breaches would be addressed. A condition would not therefore be reasonable or effective in preventing harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers arising from noise and disturbance.

19. While it has been suggested that an acoustic fence could be installed to mitigate noise and disturbance, no substantive evidence has been provided to demonstrate that such a measure would be effective to adequately address the concerns identified.
20. Additional to the above, it has also been raised that the proposal would affect the privacy of the two neighbouring dwellings. However, having regard to the orientation of the caravan pitches away from the properties and the proposed separation distance, opportunities for direct overlooking would be limited and would not be unacceptably harmful. No convincing evidence has been provided to demonstrate otherwise.
21. Consequently, while the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to privacy, it would cause undue harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties as a result of noise and disturbance. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policy JP-P1 of the PFE and Policy 9 of the OLP, as well as Section 12 of the Framework, which seek to ensure that new development creates places that promote health and well-being and provides a high standard of amenity for existing users.

Other considerations

22. The proposal would diversify the existing rural hotel business and would support tourism and the visitor economy, thereby contributing to the local economy and aligning with national and local objectives for rural economic development. However, no detailed evidence has been provided to demonstrate an operational need for diversification or to quantify the likely economic, tourism or visitor benefits arising from the development. In the absence of such evidence and given the limited scale of the proposal and its seasonal nature, any economic benefits would be modest when considered against the local economy as a whole. Consequently, while these benefits are acknowledged, they attract only moderate weight in favour of the proposal.
23. The appellant advises that the appeal site has been certified by the Caravan and Motorhome Club as a Certificated Location under paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. This indicates that the proposal would meet the relevant national licensing standards intended to ensure the safe, orderly and hygienic operation of caravan sites. However, such certification, or alternatively the grant of a site licence, would ordinarily be expected for a proposal of this nature and scale, and no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate otherwise. Accordingly, this matter carries neutral weight and weighs neither in favour of nor against the proposal.
24. The proposal would be in proximity to the existing hotel and, as it provides only five caravan pitches, it would not represent an over-intensification of the land. However, it would erode visual openness and conflict with the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It would not appear visually contained nor would it prevent the outward perception of development beyond the established built form. Accordingly, the proximity of the proposal to the hotel, whether in the curtilage or not, and the limited number of caravan pitches attracts limited positive weight in favour of the proposal.
25. A five-year maintenance period of the landscaping is proposed through the use of a planning condition. However, this is a standard expectation for new landscaping

and simply ensures the proposed landscaping succeeds. As such this provision is a neutral factor and does not weigh either for or against the proposal.

26. As noted earlier, while it is stated that the proposal would not involve changes to site levels, it is evident that the land has already been subject to notable earthworks. It would also be reasonable to expect, in accordance with Policy 9 of the OLP and Paragraph 167 of the Framework, which promote sustainable drainage and seek to avoid increased flood risk, that surface water drainage, including the use of infiltration where feasible, together with foul drainage would be provided for a development of this type. Moreover, such infrastructure would largely be expected to be located below ground and therefore be visually unobtrusive. Accordingly, these benefits are neutral factors which do not weigh in favour of the proposal.

Planning Balance

27. The proposal would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties as a result of noise and disturbance and would be inappropriate development. It would moderately harm openness and purpose of the Green Belt and Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness.
28. The other considerations advanced in support of the development attract limited to moderate weight when assessed individually. Even when taken cumulatively, they amount to no more than a moderate overall weight in favour of the proposal. This is therefore insufficient to clearly outweigh the above harms. Accordingly, the very special circumstances required to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt has not been demonstrated.

Conclusion

29. For the reasons given above and considering all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Symmons

INSPECTOR