



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 March 2026

by **E Fawcett BA (Jt Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd June 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/E2340/W/25/3373723

Pleasant Meadows, Jewel Lane, Brierfield, Burnley BB12 5QP

- 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 Mrs Gillian Fletcher against the decision of Pendle Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/0218/FUL.
 - The development proposed was described on the application form as “retention of a static caravan for use as a welfare unit and the installation of 3 wooden moveable stables”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During my site visit I observed that a caravan, storage container and stables were present on the site, although this did not include the enclosure to the caravan shown on the plans. Whilst reference has been made by the Council to the introduction of a storage container into the proposed development at the appeal stage, the evidence before me indicates that this was included in the plans submitted to the Council and consulted on as part of the planning application. It would not therefore prejudice interested parties to refer to this element of the proposal within my decision. In addition, ‘retention’ as referred to in the application form and the decision notice does not constitute an act of development. On the basis of the above, I have therefore determined the appeal based on the plans before me and on a description that removes ‘retention’ and includes the storage container.
3. The Pendle Local Plan Fourth Edition 2021-2040 (the Local Plan) was adopted on 18 December 2025 following the submission of the appeal. This now forms part of the statutory development plan and replaces policies of the Pendle Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2011-2030) and the saved policies from the Replacement Pendle Local Plan (2001-2016), and I have therefore had due regard to this in my decision. The Council has confirmed which policy is the most relevant to the decision and both parties have been provided with the opportunity to make representations on this. I have taken into account any comments received.

Main Issue

4. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt, so the main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework); and

- if the proposal is found to be inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the development.

Reasons

Whether or not the Development Would Be Inappropriate

5. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, and the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Development within the Green Belt is inappropriate unless an exception, listed in Paragraphs 154 and 155 of the Framework, applies. Policy SP07 of the Local Plan relies on the provisions of the Framework in respect of most development within the Green Belt and in relation to this appeal.
6. The appellant contends that the site constitutes previously developed land (PDL) because it, along with a wider surrounding area, was occupied by a mill and cottages that were demolished around the late 1970s. Paragraph 154 g) allows limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of PDL which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
7. The Glossary to the Framework provides the definition for PDL and excludes land where the remains of permanent structures or fixed surface structures have blended into the landscape. As there is no longer evidence of structures on the appeal site, from when the land was occupied by a mill and cottages, the site would not fall within the definition of PDL, for the purposes of the Framework. Therefore, the proposals would not comply with paragraph 154 g).
8. Paragraph 154 b) provides an exception for the provision of appropriate facilities, including buildings, for outdoor recreation. This is on the provision that the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Both parties accept that the site is used for equestrian activity, and based on the evidence and my own observations during my site visit, I have no reason to disagree. Although there are references to other animals grazing and to areas of land being used for haymaking, the details provided are limited. The evidence overall indicates that the primary use of the site and its associated land is a non-commercial equestrian one, including the keeping, exercising and grazing of horses. The Council has not raised an objection to the stables which form part of the proposed development. On the basis that the stables are needed for the keeping of horses and those that are on site are no larger than are reasonably necessary for that purpose, I agree with that assessment.
9. The appellant has set out that the caravan is necessary to provide essential welfare facilities to ensure that they are able to comply with their duties under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in respect of horses that are kept and grazed at the site and adjoining land, in addition to other animals. These facilities are said to be needed to support those caring for the animals, including farriers and vets, by providing toilet and washing facilities, a place to rest, and secure storage for medicines. The appellant also refers to specific medical needs affecting both themselves and their husband.

10. To satisfy paragraph 154 b), the proposed facilities must be appropriate for outdoor recreation. The static caravan is a substantial structure and, although no internal layout has been supplied, it is reasonable to assume that it is designed for human habitation. Whilst it could provide a toilet and running water for visiting workers and a place for the appellant to rest, which would support animal welfare, its overall scale and accommodations extend beyond what is necessary for that purpose. As a result, the caravan would not be wholly related to outdoor recreation, nor would it constitute a facility that is entirely appropriate for that purpose. It therefore fails to meet the requirements of paragraph 154 (b) of the Framework.
11. Even if the appellant's position were accepted, it would still be necessary to assess the effect of the proposal on openness in order to determine whether it constitutes inappropriate development. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) identifies a number of factors relevant to assessing openness, including both visual and spatial impacts, as well as the duration of the development and how easily it could be removed.
12. The caravan is positioned alongside a large timber agricultural-style building used for the stabling of horses, running almost the full length of its side with one end facing the public right of way. Beyond the caravan, the land consists of open grassed fields divided by post and rail fencing. A riding arena sits to the rear of the stables and caravan, extending outward from the existing group of structures but remaining visually permeable due to its fencing. As a result, the landscape beyond the caravan retains an open character.
13. The caravan introduces built form into an area that is otherwise open, extending the spread of structures at the site and is clearly visible from the public right of way. Due to its prominence in public views, and its notable footprint, height and volume, the caravan both visually and spatially fails to preserve openness. The plans also show a proposed portal-frame enclosure around the caravan, open on one side. Although similar in appearance to the stable building and capable of screening some views of the caravan, it would increase the amount of enclosed space and would appear more permanent than the caravan itself. It would therefore result in a slightly greater loss of openness.
14. The storage container is located behind the stable building and is visible from the public right of way, albeit to a limited degree. Whilst comparatively small in relation to the original stable building, its floor area and height still contribute to a reduction in openness, particularly when considered cumulatively with the caravan and its proposed enclosure, even if the visual impact is modest.
15. Although the site historically accommodated more development, those buildings were removed many years ago. The proposal must therefore be assessed against the current situation. The caravan and container have a greater impact on openness than if they were not present.
16. Both the caravan and container could likely be removed and the land restored without significant difficulty. However, the proposed enclosure around the caravan would be of a more permanent construction, forming an extension to the existing building, making this element less easily removable. The appellant has expressed a willingness to accept a temporary permission for 2 or 3 years. This would reduce the harm to openness that would be caused, although reference has also been

made to alternative facilities being available. In this regard, the appellant has also suggested a condition tying removal to the appellant relocating to the area and completing development approved under permission 21/0655/FUL, which includes a stable building with a workshop and tack store. Whilst a dwelling close to the site could accommodate welfare and storage needs, the appellant has not yet purchased a home locally, and there is no certainty that this would occur within the suggested timeframe or be sufficiently close to the site to be practical. Only limited information has been provided in respect of permission 21/0655/FUL, and there are no substantive details regarding its location, the nature of the approved development and whether it has been implemented. Therefore, such conditions would not be enforceable and would not ensure the temporary presence of the proposal.

17. The appellant has also suggested conditions preventing permanent residential use of the caravan, requiring screening by timber fencing, and prohibiting external lighting. However, such measures would not mitigate the harm to Green Belt openness identified above.
18. In summary, the site does not constitute PDL under the Framework and therefore does not meet paragraph 154 g). The caravan is not an appropriate facility for outdoor recreation and so would not meet the exception in paragraph 154 b). Even if the appellant's position on this point were accepted, the development would still fail to preserve openness. The proposal therefore amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, causing harm to its openness, and conflicts with Policy SP07 of the Local Plan.

Other Considerations and Whether Very Special Circumstances Exist

19. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt and causes harm to its openness. The Framework is clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
20. The proposal would provide welfare facilities for the appellant and visiting farriers and vets. However, the development would not represent the minimum scale necessary to provide this benefit and I therefore afford it limited weight. There would be a benefit in respect of the personal circumstances of the appellant, and their husband, in terms of their health. Nevertheless, I am not satisfied that this could not be achieved by a proposal of a smaller scale and therefore I give this benefit limited weight.
21. A benefit in respect of animal welfare would be achieved through the provision of facilities to support their care. I also afford this limited weight as it has not been robustly demonstrated that this could not be provided by a development of a lesser scale. The proposal would also provide secure storage of medicines and equipment, in what has been described as a high crime area, with access to the site available from the public right of way. Again, I am not satisfied that the proposal would be of the minimum scale necessary to achieve this and so I give this benefit limited weight.

22. When weighed against the substantial weight afforded to Green Belt harm, the other considerations listed above do not clearly outweigh that harm. The very special circumstances required to justify the development therefore do not exist. The proposal conflicts with the Framework and with Policy SP07 of the Local Plan, which seeks to safeguard the Green Belt.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, to suggest the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

E Fawcett

INSPECTOR