

Introduction

Green Belts are one of the best known and understood planning policies. Their function in restricting the growth of urban areas and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment is well recognised and respected.

The Borough is perhaps fortunate in having an adopted Green Belt which has been in force since 1984 in the form of the Greater Manchester Green Belt. This has been largely incorporated unchanged into the UDP and has proved effective over the years in containing urban sprawl and achieving the other purposes of Green Belts.

Green Belt boundaries differ from other aspects of the Plan in that they are intended to be as permanent as is possible and therefore are not subject to review within or at the end of the Plan period but are intended to remain unchanged for a period in excess of the life of the Plan.

Safeguarded Land is land between the urban area and the Green Belt. This land, shown on the Proposals Map, is treated in a similar way to Green Belt except that its protection is not necessarily guaranteed beyond the plan period. Safeguarded Land ensures the protection of Green Belt within the longer time-scale by reserving land which may be required to meet longer-term development needs without the need to alter Green Belt boundaries.

Within the Green Belt there is a presumption against development except for certain specified exceptions in line with Government Guidance (PPG2). Development Control policies are provided to clarify those circumstances in which it may be permissible to allow specified types of development in Green Belt and Safeguarded Land. For the first time this Plan identifies Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt which are either in continuing use or redundant and where, subject to the policies of the Plan, infilling or redevelopment may be allowed, in line with guidance in PPG2.

The Council's policy towards development on agricultural land is also specified.

*** GB1 GREEN BELT**

WITHIN THE GREEN BELT, DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, APPROVAL WILL NOT BE GIVEN, EXCEPT IN VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUILDINGS FOR PURPOSES OTHER THAN AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY, ESSENTIAL FACILITIES FOR OUTDOOR SPORT AND OUTDOOR RECREATION, CEMETERIES AND FOR OTHER USES OF LAND WHICH PRESERVE THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT AND WHICH DO NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PURPOSES OF INCLUDING LAND IN IT.

OTHER FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING CHANGES IN THE USE OF LAND WILL NOT BE APPROVED UNLESS THEY MAINTAIN OPENNESS AND DO NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PURPOSES OF INCLUDING LAND IN THE GREEN BELT.

PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED WITHIN OR CONSPICUOUS FROM THE GREEN BELT WHERE THEY WOULD INJURE THE VISUAL AMENITIES OF THE GREEN BELT WHICH, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD NOT PREJUDICE ITS MAIN PURPOSE, MIGHT BE VISUALLY DETRIMENTAL BY REASON OF THEIR SITING, MATERIALS OR DESIGN.

*(All pages)

This policy specifies how the Council will react to proposals for development within the Green Belt and is based on Government advice on Green Belt Policy (PPG 2). It also specifies the sorts of development which are acceptable in the Green Belt.

According to that advice, the primary purposes of the Green Belt are to:-

- Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- Prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

When any large-scale development or redevelopment of land occurs in the Green Belt (including mineral extraction, the tipping of waste, and road or infrastructure developments), it should as far as possible contribute to the achievement of the national objectives for the use of land in Green Belts given below. This approach applies to large-scale developments irrespective of whether they are appropriate development, or inappropriate development which is justified by very special circumstances.

Objectives for the Use of Land in Green Belts are:-

- To provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- To provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- To retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
- To improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
- To secure nature conservation interest; and
- To retain land in agriculture, forestry and related uses.

It should be noted that policies **GB1A**, **GB1B** and **GB1C** which follow apply to both Green Belt and Safeguarded Land designated under Policy **GB2**.

*** GB1A Re-use of Buildings**

In the Green Belt or in Safeguarded Land the re-use of buildings will be permitted if the fully detailed submissions satisfy the following criteria:-

- (a) The building must be structurally sound, capable of re-use without major reconstruction and large enough to be converted without the need for major or prominent additions;**
- (b) The building must be of permanent and substantial construction and its form, bulk and general design must be in keeping with its surroundings. The degree to which it makes a positive contribution to the rural scene or involves the improvement of buildings which currently detract from the character of the area will also be a significant consideration;**
- (c) The proposals must be architecturally consistent with the existing building or group of buildings and consideration will be given to the retention of the existing height, shape, mass, internal spaces, plan form and internal and external functional and architectural details. Proposals must respect local building styles and materials. In order to be considered, proposed extensions, additions or buildings in the curtilage of re-used buildings (whether carried out as part of the original conversion, or subsequently) must meet the requirements of this and clause (a) and will be limited to single storey construction up to a maximum of 50 cubic metres volume;**
- (d) A comprehensive scheme of external works and landscaping must be included and any encroachment onto agricultural land to form a curtilage should be minimised;**
- (e) In the case of a Listed Building, a building in a Conservation Area or a building of local interest proposed for conversion to residential use, no alternative more sympathetic use is feasible;**
- (f) On sites within the green belt the scheme must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land within it. On sites within safeguarded land the scheme must not prejudice the possibility of achieving later comprehensive development.**

***(All pages)**

This policy applies to buildings in both the Green Belt and Safeguarded Land and specifies the circumstances in which the Council will allow existing buildings to be retained by permitting a change of use. Such development, if sensitively carried out, can not only help to retain attractive rural buildings but also help to diversify the local economy.

When considering making proposals under this policy, applicants are strongly advised to discuss the project at an early stage with the Council and to employ the services of a Chartered Architect. Applications will not be accepted in outline form and full and precise details of both internal and external features must be submitted.

A building will be considered to be needing major reconstruction (and therefore not capable of re-use under this policy) if more than 20% of its fabric needs to be rebuilt, although the replacement of the roof covering in appropriate material will usually be acceptable. Wherever possible new window or other openings should not be made and existing ones (or previously closed off ones) should be re-used.

The design should minimise the visual impact of the conversion both externally and internally, for example by using minimal and discrete new openings, retaining open roof structures and existing partitions and minimising new floors especially over threshing spaces. Existing materials should be re-used wherever possible.

Permitted development rights under the General Development Order will normally be removed and for business uses the approval will be specific to the use applied for to prevent unsuitable changes of use within the Use Class.

After conversion any proposals for further extensions or for outbuildings will be considered against the provisions of this policy and the building will not be considered to be an existing house for the purposes of policies **GB1B** and **GB1C**.

*** GB1B Extensions to Existing Dwellings in the Green Belt and in Safeguarded Land**

In the Green Belt and in Safeguarded Land extensions to existing dwellings will only be allowed where:-

- (a) they do not exceed the cubic content of the original property by more than 75%; and**
- (b) in any case, are not more than 200 cubic metres and that the sum of additions to the original property does not exceed 200 cubic metres.**
- (c) On sites within the green belt the scheme must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land within it. On sites within safeguarded land the scheme must not prejudice the possibility of achieving later comprehensive development.**

*(All pages)

The restrictive policy applied to Green Belt and Safeguarded Land is not intended to prevent modest extensions to existing dwellings which are in scale and character with the building. This policy specifies the limits which will normally be applied to proposals for extensions as a guide to judging when their scale and size would prejudice the primary purposes of Green Belt or Safeguarded Land policy and would be likely to be refused.

The restrictions in clauses (a) and (b) are to be applied to the 'original' property which means the property as existing on 4th November 1991 (the date the policy first came into force), or if built after that date, as originally built.

If any existing extensions or parts of the existing dwelling are to be demolished as part of the scheme, the volume of these demolitions will be permitted as an addition to the maximum volume of extension permissible under this policy. Cubic content will be determined by external measurement.

Special considerations may be applied to such extensions on Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. See policy **EV4B**.

Extensions

For the purposes of this policy, 'extensions' will be taken to include garages and permanent domestic outbuildings within the curtilage, any part of which is within 5 metres of the original dwelling, as well as attachments to the main dwelling.

*** GB1C Replacement Dwellings in the Green Belt and in Safeguarded Land**

In the Green Belt and in Safeguarded Land the replacement of existing dwellings will only be allowed where:-

- (a) the existing dwelling can lawfully be used for residential purposes; and**
- (b) the proposed dwelling is not higher than, does not occupy a larger area of the site than, occupies substantially the same position on the site as and is substantially the same volume as the existing dwelling; and**
- (c) the proposal does not involve an enlargement of the residential curtilage.**
- (d) On sites within the green belt the scheme must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land within it. On sites within safeguarded land the scheme must not prejudice the possibility of achieving later comprehensive development.**

*(All pages)

New dwellings in the Green Belt are generally contrary to Green Belt policy. However, in accordance with advice in PPG2, the replacement of existing dwellings in the Green Belt may be acceptable providing the new dwelling is not materially larger than the dwelling it replaces. The same considerations are also applied to replacement dwellings in Safeguarded Land. The policy is intended to make clear the approach the Council will take to such proposals and must be read in conjunction with the other policies of the Plan particularly the final paragraph of policies **GB1** and **GB2** and policy **R1D**.

The Council will encourage the protection and enhancement of buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest.

*** GB1D Development in Green Belt Settlements (Haigh and Bickershaw)**

Within the settlements of Haigh and Bickershaw which are washed over by the Green Belt, development will only be allowed where:-

- (a) it falls within the settlement boundary shown on the Proposals Map;**
- (b) there would be no adverse effects on amenity; and**
- (c) the development can be accommodated in site planning terms.**

***(5, 8, 16)**

In accordance with the advice in PPG2, the Council has decided that the villages of Haigh and Bickershaw which are washed over by the Green Belt should be listed and that infilling development within them is consistent with Green Belt policy. Such development will not have an adverse effect on the character of the villages provided that it complies with this policy and in particular that it is only permissible within the settlement boundary shown on the Proposals Map.

As with all other proposals, this policy must be read in conjunction with the other policies of the Plan, and in particular with policy **GB1** (and the final paragraph regarding visual amenity) and policy **R1D**.

*** GB1E Major Existing Developed Sites in the Green Belt**

Limited infilling or redevelopment will be permitted within the boundaries of the major existing developed sites shown on the Proposals Map and listed below provided that it meets the following criteria:-

- (a) that it does not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and**
- (b) in the case of infilling, which is to be allowed only at sites in continuing use, that it has no greater impact on the purpose of including land in the green belt (as set out in PPG2) than the existing development and does not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site;**
- (c) in the case of redevelopment, which is to be allowed both at sites which are redundant and in continuing use, that it would not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings (unless this would achieve a reduction in height which the Council considers would benefit visual amenity) and would have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land within it. Such redevelopment should contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in green belts.**

(d) in the case of redevelopment for residential development, that the site meets criteria (a) to (e) of Policy R1B even though it is not within the defined urban area.

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|---|------------------|
| 1. Former Leigh CE High School, Leigh | *(17, 23) |
| 2. Industrial Area off Edge Green Road, Golborne | *(22) |
| 3. Bispham Hall Brick and Terracotta Works, Billinge | *(14) |
| 4. St John Rigby College, Orrell | *(9) |
| 5. Winstanley College, Winstanley | *(14) |
| 6. Leyland Mill, Wigan | *(7) |
| 7. Dicconson Mill, Aspull | *(8) |
| 8. Astley Works, Gin Pit Village | *(24) |
| 9. Kilhey Court Hotel, Standish | *(4) |
| 10. The Orica UK Ltd site at Shevington | *(6) |

These sites remain subject to development control policies for Green Belts as well as the other policies of the plan but have been identified as ones where limited infilling or redevelopment which complies with the policy may be permissible. Infilling is, in conformity with the advice in PPG2 (annex C), defined as the filling of small gaps within built development.

The complete or partial redevelopment of such sites may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement. However, the character and dispersal of proposed redevelopment will need to be considered as well as its footprint. The site should be considered as a whole, whether or not all the buildings are to be redeveloped. The test of area in clause (c) above relates to the redevelopment of the entire site; any proposals for partial redevelopment should be put forward in the context of comprehensive, long-term plans for the site as a whole. Suitable re-use is to be preferred to redevelopment where the buildings are listed, are of local interest (as referred to in policy **EV4C**) or are in a Conservation Area. Redevelopment should not incur additional expenditure on the provision of infrastructure, nor should it overload local facilities such as schools and health care.

Appendix 2 gives further details of these sites.

***GB2 SAFEGUARDED LAND**

THE SAFEGUARDED LAND, DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, MAY BE REQUIRED TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN THE LONGER TERM, WELL BEYOND THE PLAN PERIOD. IT IS IDENTIFIED FOR THIS PURPOSE IN ORDER THAT THE BOUNDARIES OF THE ADOPTED GREEN BELT WILL NOT NEED TO BE ALTERED AT THE END OF THE PLAN PERIOD IN 2016. THIS LAND IS NOT ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT AT PRESENT. IT WILL BE KEPT FREE OF PERMANENT DEVELOPMENT SO THAT IT MAY FULFIL ITS PURPOSE OF MEETING POSSIBLE LONGER TERM DEVELOPMENT NEEDS. ALTHOUGH TEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT MAY BE PERMITTED IF THIS WOULD ASSIST IN ENSURING THAT THE LAND IS PROPERLY LOOKED AFTER, NO DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD PREJUDICE LATER COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED. PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE PERMANENT DEVELOPMENT OF SAFEGUARDED LAND WILL BE GRANTED ONLY FOLLOWING A REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN WHICH PROPOSES THIS.

***(3, 4, 6, 7, 15-19, 21-25, 27, 28)**

Safeguarded land comprises areas and sites between the urban area and the Green Belt which may be required to meet longer-term development needs beyond the plan period without the need to alter the Green Belt boundary. The designation of such land therefore helps to strengthen the permanence of Green Belts, as suggested in paragraph 2.12 of PPG2.

Planning permission for the development of this land (other than for temporary developments which may assist in ensuring that the land is appropriately managed) will only be granted following a Plan Review which proposes the development of particular areas of Safeguarded Land.

The detailed Part 2 policies which apply to Safeguarded Land are policies **GB1A**, **GB1B** and **GB1C** which also apply to Green Belt.

GB3 AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION

THE COUNCIL WILL PROTECT AGRICULTURAL LAND FROM IRREVERSIBLE DEVELOPMENT BY APPLYING THE FOLLOWING SEQUENTIAL TEST:-

- (1) DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED ON THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND UNLESS OPPORTUNITIES HAVE BEEN ASSESSED FOR ACCOMMODATING DEVELOPMENT ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED SITES AND ON LAND WITHIN THE URBAN AREA.**
- (2) WHERE DEVELOPMENT ON AGRICULTURAL LAND IS UNAVOIDABLE, THE USE OF POORER QUALITY LAND IS PREFERABLE TO THAT OF HIGHER QUALITY (KNOWN AS THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND AND DEFINED AS LAND IN GRADES 1, 2 AND 3A OF THE AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION) EXCEPT WHERE THIS WOULD BE INCONSISTENT WITH OTHER SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS.**

THE COUNCIL WILL ALSO SEEK TO MINIMISE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON FARMING BY AVOIDING THE SEVERANCE OR FRAGMENTATION OF VIABLE AREAS OF UNINTERRUPTED FARMLAND.

In line with national policy, land of higher agricultural quality is seen as an important national resource which is to be protected from irreversible development. A sequential test is to be applied to such proposals such that higher quality land would only be considered for development when opportunities for accommodating the development firstly on previously developed sites and on land within the urban area and secondly on land of poorer agricultural quality had been exhausted. The policy also seeks to maintain viable farming units and areas by avoiding, as far as possible, the division of tracts of farmland.