



Supplementary Planning Document Development in the Green Belt

September 2015

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is a Supplementary Planning Document?

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Green Belt development forms part of the suite of planning documents associated with the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 (WLLP or 'the Local Plan'). This SPD is subsidiary to the overarching Local Plan, which provides strategic and development management policies for West Lancashire. Once adopted, the SPD will assist West Lancashire Borough Council in determining planning applications.

This SPD should be read alongside other relevant guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance, the West Lancashire Local Plan, and other SPDs, for example the West Lancashire Design Guide SPD (2008).

Some minor development is permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 without the need for a planning application. Such development is usually known as 'permitted development'. Home owners and developers who are considering such schemes are nonetheless encouraged to refer to the guidance in this SPD when considering even minor development. This guidance clarifies the implications of permitted development on future planning proposals in the Green Belt.

This SPD will not propose any changes to any Green Belt boundaries but will be used when making a judgment on planning applications put before the Council. However all applications will be judged on their merits and on a case by case basis, having regard to the adopted Development Plan and any other material planning considerations including national planning policy and this SPD

1.2 Sustainability Appraisal

Since the Green Belt SPD will be based upon, and consistent with, national policy and does not propose any changes to any Green Belt boundaries, it is not considered that the Green Belt SPD requires its own Sustainability Appraisal or Strategic Environmental Assessment.

1.3 The Green Belt in West Lancashire

West Lancashire is predominantly rural in character, with scattered villages, the market town of Ormskirk, and the new town of Skelmersdale, and comprises the largest extent of highest grade farmland in the North West of England. It is this character and the Borough's proximity to a number of urban centres, including Liverpool and Preston that make it a popular place to live for those commuting both to Merseyside, Greater Manchester and to other parts of Lancashire.

The Green Belt in West Lancashire covers more than 90% of the total land in the Borough. The Green Belt boundaries where West Lancashire borders Sefton and Knowsley were established through the Merseyside Green Belt Plan in 1983. The general extent of the Green Belt elsewhere in West Lancashire was designated through Policy 8(a)(v) of the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan, adopted in March 1993. Following this, detailed Green Belt boundaries were established around West Lancashire's towns and smaller settlements via a series of area-specific local plans, adopted by the Borough Council.

Map 1 below illustrates the extent of the West Lancashire Green Belt and the settlement areas.



Map illustrating the extent of West Lancashire's Green Belt and settlement areas

Green Belt (West Lancashire) Settlements

1.4 Planning Policy in relation to the Green Belt

National Planning Policy

Paragraphs 79-92 of the NPPF set out national planning policy in relation to Green Belt. It is clear that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent the uncontrolled spread of urban areas by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and its permanence.

The Green Belt serves five purposes:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The West Lancashire Green Belt Study 2011 demonstrates that virtually all Green Belt land adjacent to the settlements of West Lancashire fulfils at least one of the above purposes of the Green Belt.

In March 2014, the government introduced National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), a web-based planning policy resource. NPPG provides extra detail and guidance to back up the national planning policies set out in the NPPF. NPPG may be updated periodically, but should always remain consistent with NPPF policy.

Local Planning Policy

The adopted Local Plan does not have a Green Belt policy as such. Instead, Policy GN1(b) states that development proposals within the Green Belt will be assessed against national policy and any relevant Local Plan policies.

The approach to considering development within the Green Belt

The approach to considering proposals for development in the Green Belt is to first ascertain whether or not the proposed development is appropriate in the Green Belt. Case Law¹ recognises that the NPPF does not define what constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Instead it identifies what may be acceptable forms of development (i.e. development capable of being not “inappropriate”), with all other forms of development therefore regarded as inappropriate by necessary implication.

¹ See *Fordent Holdings v. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2013] EWHC 2844 (Admin), paragraph 19

Note that where a proposed development contains individual elements that may be judged “not inappropriate”, these do not make the development as a whole appropriate². Development cannot be seen as acceptable in terms of Green Belt policy, merely because part of it is “not inappropriate”.

The table below sets out the types of development deemed “not inappropriate” in the Green Belt by paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF, and highlights the relevant West Lancashire Local Plan policies that apply to such development and/or links to sections of this SPD which provide further information.

² See *Timmins / Lymn v. Gedling Borough Council* [2014] EWHC 654 (Admin)

Development type	Relevant WLLP Policies and further information
NPPF paragraph 89:	
<i>Buildings for agriculture and forestry</i>	Policy EC2 supports the continuing use of rural areas for employment use
<i>Facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation</i>	Policy EN3 provides more detail about the Council's approach to providing open space and recreation facilities
<i>Extension or alteration of a building</i>	See section 2.6 on extensions in the Green Belt
<i>Replacement of a building</i>	See section 2.2 for replacement dwellings and 2.3 for all other buildings in the Green Belt
<i>Limited infilling in villages</i>	West Lancashire contains no villages within the Green Belt
<i>Limited affordable housing for local community needs</i>	Under Policy RS1 very limited affordable housing (i.e. up to 4 units) may be permitted within the Green Belt where it can be proven that there are no suitable sites within the nearest adjacent settlement, in accordance with the sequential test in Policy GN5 . The area of search could be the settlement, ward or parish; it is not necessarily restricted to 'nearest adjacent settlement'. The Council's Affordable Housing SPD will also provide further detailed advice on this subject.
<i>Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land)</i>	See section 2.3 for conversion of existing buildings, or section 2.4 for the redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Green Belt
NPPF paragraph 90:	
<i>Mineral extraction</i>	Lancashire County Council has responsibility for identifying sites and policies for minerals development in the Borough. The WLLP contains a map showing where Mineral Safeguarding Areas have been designated within West Lancashire in the Adopted Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework.
<i>Local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location</i>	Lancashire County Council is responsible for transport policy within the Borough. The current Local Transport Plan 3 runs from 2011 – 2021. Policy IF2 seeks to support the strategic transport priorities for West Lancashire as well as more minor local priorities and specific local issues.
<i>Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order</i>	West Lancashire does not currently have any Community Right to Build Orders in operation. This will be monitored if the situation changes.

1.5 Impact of development upon the Green Belt

Openness

The term openness is taken to mean the absence of buildings or development on over or under the land³. Whether a development impacts upon openness is therefore an absolute test and is not concerned with the extent to which development is visible, aesthetically pleasing or camouflaged.⁴

With regard to the openness of the Green Belt, the Council will consider the impact of proposals on a case by case basis and the unique circumstances of the site. Redevelopment proposals should generally have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it, and where possible, have less impact.

In some instances, replacement buildings are desired elsewhere on a site. Sometimes this can have a greater or lesser impact on the perception of openness, dependent on their location. In these cases the Council will assess the existing site and the impact of any existing building. If the new position would not be in keeping with its surroundings, be more prominent or would be less in keeping or would have a greater perceived impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, the proposal is less likely to be acceptable. However, if it is considered to have less impact upon openness, this is likely to weigh in favour of the application.

Very Special Circumstances

If the development is inappropriate, it is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in '**Very Special Circumstances**' which can only exist where the potential harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (NPPF paragraphs 87-88).

When attempting to demonstrate 'Very Special Circumstances', the onus is on the applicant to prove that the exceptional nature of the proposal outweighs the harm that it would cause to the Green Belt. Each argument will be judged on its own unique set of circumstances and any accepted case would not necessarily result in a precedent for similar arguments on the same or alternative sites.

Where development is permitted in the Green Belt on grounds of very special circumstances, the Council will reserve the right to remove permitted development rights

³ This approach has been used by Inspectors in West Lancashire cases. E.g. see decision letter for Bannister House Farm, Mere Brow (22 October 2014), paragraph 10 (Ref: APP/P2365/A/14/2217810)

⁴ Timmins / Lymn v Gedling Borough Council [2014] EWHC 654 (Admin) paragraph 74

for development which may have an adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. This may include extensions and outbuildings, fences, or activities such as external storage.

Permitted Development within the Green Belt

There are certain forms of development that householders are able to carry out which do not need planning permission. These are set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. However certain types of properties converted to residential use or previously extended may have had their Permitted Development rights removed – this often applies to properties such as barn conversions and other recent buildings (including dwellings that have replaced older buildings)

Householders should consult the Planning Portal website and seek guidance from the Council on the need for planning permission before carrying out any extension or alteration work.

2.1. General Principles in relation to redevelopment of previously developed land in the Green Belt

Previously developed land can include vacant land and / or existing buildings.

The NPPF defines previously developed land as:

“Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure”.

Previously Developed Land excludes:

- land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings;
- land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures;
- land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and
- land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

West Lancashire has a number of previously developed (or ‘brownfield’) sites within the Green Belt. In line with the NPPF, the Council will consider redevelopment proposals of previously developed sites based on their impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it.

The following policies deal with replacement dwellings, replacement non-residential buildings, conversions of buildings and redevelopment of brownfield sites. If the guidance is not followed, proposals are unlikely to be successful unless the applicant can demonstrate very special circumstances. Although the policies will be the basis for making a judgment on planning applications put before the Council, it must be stressed that all applications will be judged on their merits on a case by case basis having regard to the adopted Development Plan and any other material planning considerations including national planning policy and this SPD.

2.2 Replacement dwellings

POLICY GB1 – REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

A proposal for the replacement of an existing dwelling within the Green Belt should satisfy each of the following criteria:

- a) The existing dwelling is lawful and permanent in nature;
- b) The total volume of the replacement dwelling should not be more than 20% greater than the dwelling that it replaces;
- c) The replacement dwelling should not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive scale or bulk. It should also be in keeping with the character of the area and appropriate in terms of design and materials;
- d) The curtilage of the replacement dwelling should be no larger than that established for the dwelling it replaces
- e) The replacement dwelling should be on or close to the footprint of the one it replaces, unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that an alternative location within the same curtilage will have no adverse impact on openness or achieve significant environmental improvements or road safety benefits.

The applicant must submit to the Council details of the existing and proposed dwellings within a 'Green Belt Assessment', which should include:

- full details of the volume calculations (in cubic metres) of the existing dwelling (or dwellings), as well as any outbuildings
- volume calculations of the proposed replacement dwelling

Detached outbuildings will not be included as part of the volume of the existing dwelling. However, if any outbuildings of permanent and substantial construction are to be demolished in tandem with the demolition of the existing dwelling, an extra allowance may be made in terms of the increase in volume of the proposed dwelling. The extra volume permitted under this 'allowance' will typically be less than the volume of the outbuildings being demolished.

The applicant will also be required to carry out a survey of any protected wildlife species⁵ and their habitat which may be present in the existing building and its curtilage. Mitigation measures or replacement provision may be required in order to secure the future of any population found to be present.

Where appropriate, a condition will be attached to any permission requiring the demolition of the existing property before any replacement is occupied and remediation of the site following demolition of the dwelling.

⁵ S.41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 defines what are 'protected species'

The Council reserves the right to remove permitted development rights for development which may have an adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. This may include extensions and outbuildings, fences or activities such as external storage.

Justification

NPPF paragraph 89 bullet point 3 allows for replacement dwellings in the Green Belt, providing the new dwelling is not 'materially larger' than the one it replaces.

The Council considers that a limit of 20% is appropriate in terms of the increase in volume of the replacement dwelling compared with the dwelling it replaces.

Any unused permitted development rights on the existing dwelling will not be taken into account in volume calculations; these are effectively 'forfeited' if a dwelling is replaced.

Regardless of the percentage limits for increases in volume, replacement dwellings will be judged on their impact on the openness of the Green Belt, their design, their siting within the plot and general location. It may be the case that a replacement dwelling is judged to have an unacceptable impact on the openness of the Green Belt compared with the existing dwelling, even if the above volume limits have not been breached. Conversely, there may be cases where the limits could be marginally exceeded if a replacement dwelling is designed in such a way that its impact on openness is minimised.

If the applicant proposes a replacement dwelling in a different location on the same site as the existing, it will be necessary to demonstrate that there is no increase in the overall visual impact of the building in the landscape. A scheme of remediation of the original house site will also be required and will be linked by condition or legal agreement to any replacement house.

The Council will consider the appropriateness or otherwise of the removal of permitted development rights on a case by case basis. The purpose of the removal of permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings and other structures from replacement dwellings in the Green Belt is to prevent future cumulative additions that may adversely impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

The Council has a duty to conserve biodiversity – including a population or habitat – and must consider how wildlife or land may be affected in when making planning decisions about development and land use.

2.3 Conversion and replacement of non-residential buildings

There is a varied range of buildings located in the Green Belt which are no longer suitable for their original purposes. The majority are likely to be agricultural buildings but there may also be churches, chapels, schools, public houses, and other buildings for which an alternative use may be sought.

Many of these buildings make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Provided they are structurally sound, conversion of these buildings, for example to employment or community use, visitor accommodation or housing, can safeguard their future. By re-using existing resources, conversions can also meet the aims of sustainable built development.

Conversion of a building is considered to be development which would not lead to effective demolition and reconstruction of the building.

POLICY GB2 – CONVERSION OR REPLACEMENT OF NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

1. Conversion of buildings

A proposal for the conversion of an existing non-residential building within the Green Belt should satisfy each of the following criteria:

- (a) The building should be of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major change, demolition or extension;
- (b) The proposals will maintain and enhance the character and wider landscape setting and site features;
- (c) The proposals seek to improve the external appearance of the building, in line with the Borough Council's Design Guide SPD;

2. Replacement buildings

A proposal for the replacement of an existing non-residential building within the Green Belt with another non-residential building should satisfy each of the following criteria:

- (a) The existing building should be lawful and permanent in nature;
- (b) The total volume of the replacement building should not be more than 20% larger than the volume of the building it replaces;

- (c) The replacement building should not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive scale or bulk or by virtue of its location. It should also be in keeping with the character of the area and appropriate in terms of design and materials;
- (d) The replacement building should be on or close to the footprint of the one it replaces, unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that an alternative location within the same curtilage will have no adverse impact on openness and/or it will achieve significant environmental improvements or road safety benefits.

The applicant must submit to the Council details of the existing and proposed buildings within a '*Green Belt Assessment*', which should include:

- full details of the volume calculations (in cubic metres) of the existing building(s) on site;
- volume calculations of the proposed replacement building(s).

Where appropriate, a condition will be attached to any permission, requiring the demolition of the existing buildings before the commencement of use of any replacement, and remediation of the site following demolition.

For both conversions of buildings and replacement buildings, the applicant will also be required to carry out a survey of any protected wildlife species⁶ and its habitat which may be present in the existing building and its curtilage. Mitigation measures or replacement provision may be required in order to secure the future of any population found to be present.

Justification

Conversions of buildings are permitted under NPPF paragraph 90, provided the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.

In the case of traditional buildings, the proposal should retain essential features and detailing such as openings, walls and roofs as well as traditional forms and layouts

There are some buildings which may not be suitable for conversion, for example those of lightweight or less permanent construction such as glasshouses or timber stable buildings; buildings which are structurally unsound, missing substantial sections of wall or roofs; and / or buildings at risk of flooding.

The Council considers that a replacement building which is up to 20% larger than that which it replaces may be appropriate in the Green Belt. Regardless of the percentage limits for increases in volume, replacement buildings will be judged on their impact on the openness of the Green Belt, their design, their siting within the plot and general location. It may be

⁶ S.41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 defines what are 'protected species'

the case that a replacement building is judged to have an unacceptable impact on the openness of the Green Belt compared with the existing building, even if the above Policy GB2 volume limits have not been breached. Conversely, there may be cases where the limits could be marginally exceeded if a replacement building is designed in such a way that its impact on perceived openness is minimised.

The Council has a duty to conserve biodiversity – including a population or habitat – and must consider how wildlife or land may be affected in when making planning decisions about development and land use.

2.4 Previously developed sites in the Green Belt

POLICY GB3 – REDEVELOPMENT OF PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED SITES IN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals for the redevelopment of previously developed sites within the Green Belt will be permitted provided the proposed development would not have a greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt or on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The applicant will also be required to carry out a survey of any protected wildlife species⁷ and their habitat which may be present in any existing building(s) and their curtilage. Mitigation measures or replacement provision may be required in order to secure the future of any population found to be present.

Justification

Policy GB3 is consistent with paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

When determining the impact of the proposed development upon the openness of the Green Belt, the Council would take into consideration a number of issues including:

- Existing and previous buildings which occupy or may have occupied the site, including their size and layout;
- If no longer present, how long ago the buildings occupied the site, and for what period of time.

⁷ S.41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 defines what are ‘protected species’

2.5 Other considerations in relation to residential development on Brownfield land in the Green Belt

In the case of residential development on brownfield sites in the Green Belt, a proportion of the units should be affordable housing in accordance with WLLP **Policy RS2 (Affordable and Specialist Housing)** and WLLP **Policy AH1 (Affordable Housing Requirements)** of the Affordable Housing SPD 2015, if the Policy RS2 threshold for providing affordable housing has been exceeded.

For sites currently or most recently in employment or retail use (e.g. Use Classes A1, B1,B2, B8) or as agricultural/horticultural workers' dwellings, WLLP **Policy GN4 (Demonstrating Viability)** would need to be satisfied, unless such development were Permitted Development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

WLLP **Policy RS5 (Accommodation for Temporary Agricultural/Horticultural Workers)** permits the re-use of existing buildings within the Green Belt for accommodation for temporary agricultural and/or horticultural workers provided that it complies with other policies in the Local Plan and national planning policy. WLLP **Policy EC2 (The Rural Economy)** states that as a general approach, the re-use of existing buildings within rural areas will be supported where they would otherwise be left vacant. This conforms with paragraph 90 of the NPPF which sets out the re-use of buildings (providing they are of permanent and substantial construction) as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The Council reserves the right to remove permitted development rights for development which may have an adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. This may include extensions and outbuildings, fences or activities such as external storage.

2.6 Alterations and Extensions to Buildings within the Green Belt

There is a substantial demand to extend dwellings within the Green Belt. Although house extensions can, in principle, be appropriate development within the Green Belt, large extensions can substantially change the original appearance of a rural building and can have a cumulative effect on the character of the Green Belt. The following policy therefore provides guidance on how the Council will assess proposals for extensions to buildings in the Green Belt.

POLICY GB4 - ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO BUILDINGS WITHIN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals for an extension to an existing building within the Green Belt should satisfy each of the following criteria:

- (a) The existing building is lawful and permanent in nature;
- (b) The total volume of the proposal, together with any previous extensions, alterations and non-original outbuildings, would not result in an increase of more than 40% above the volume of the original building.
- (c) The design of the extension or alteration is in keeping with the original form and appearance of the building and does not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive scale or bulk, or by virtue of its location. It should also be in keeping with the character of the area and appropriate in terms of design and materials.

The applicant must provide clear evidence of what constitutes the original property and the volume of subsequent and proposed extensions within a '*Green Belt Assessment*' submitted to the Council, which should include:

- full details of the volume calculations (in cubic metres) of the 'original' property(-ies), plus any original domestic outbuildings;
- volume calculations (in cubic metres) of any subsequent extensions / outbuildings; and
- volume calculations of the proposal.

Outbuildings of permanent and substantial construction (i.e. generally not sheds or green houses) and other attached covered structures such as car ports or porches will be taken into account in determining whether a proposal complies or not with the requirements of criterion (b) in that the volume of any outbuilding or extension which does not form part of the 'original building' will be taken into account in assessing whether or not the 40% threshold has been reached.

The 'original building' is defined within the NPPF as the building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.

The extension of an existing residential property within the Green Belt should not result in an increase in the residential curtilage.

The Council reserves the right to remove permitted development rights for subsequent development which may have an adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. This may include extensions and outbuildings, fences or activities such as external storage.

The applicant may also be required to carry out a survey of any protected wildlife species⁸ and their habitat which may be present in any existing building(s) and their curtilage. Mitigation measures or replacement provision may be required in order to secure the future of any population found to be present.

Justification

Extensions and alterations to buildings in the Green Belt are not considered in national or local planning policy to constitute inappropriate development, providing that any extension or alteration is not disproportionate and therefore, by definition, harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. Disproportionate development is defined in the NPPF as that which is 'materially larger' than the original building. The Council considers that any extension or alteration to a building within the Green Belt which exceeds 40% of the volume of the original building to be materially larger and therefore disproportionate.

This figure of 40% is provided as a guide only. There may be cases where an extension of less than this volume would be considered to have an unacceptable impact upon the perceived openness of the Green Belt in certain locations. Figure 1 and 2 (page 20) illustrate examples of extensions of less than 40% of the size of the original property which, due to their form and projection from the original building, may be judged to have a greater perception of negative impact upon openness. Figure 3 on the other hand, illustrates an extension of 40% of the original property. Due to its position in relation to the property, the impact of this form of extension upon the perceived openness of the Green Belt would be substantially less than the extensions in Figures 1 or 2. Similarly, it may be possible to have an extension, similar to that shown in Figure 3, but of marginally more than 40% of the original property, whose impact upon the perceived openness of the Green Belt is also substantially less than the extensions in Figures 1 or 2.

In summary, the prominent or easily visible expansion of a building will detract more from the perceived openness of the Green Belt than would a more concealed or compact form of expansion. For example, the infilling of space between existing parts of the building, so that no further outward projection is involved, would often have no material effect on the perceived openness of the Green Belt. Most outwardly projecting extensions are likely to detract to some degree from the perceived openness of the Green Belt. In some cases very small outward additions to an already disproportionately extended building may often have no further material impact on the perceived openness of the Green Belt and may be

⁸ S.41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 defines what are 'protected species'

allowed. However it is not possible to set out prescriptive rules in this respect and every case will be examined on its own merits.

Any additions on the site that have been constructed since the 'original' building date will be considered cumulatively and will be counted as part of the overall increase in size of the building when further new additions are being assessed. In the case of residential properties, this includes any building or structure erected as an enlargement of the dwelling for the purpose of additional domestic accommodation, or for a purpose ancillary to the residential use of the dwelling. This approach is taken because small reductions in openness, repeated many times, can cumulatively have a material detrimental effect. In the case of domestic properties, detached outbuildings are included as, despite their detachment, these are considered as extensions. (New detached domestic outbuildings would otherwise constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt).

No development will be permitted in Green Belt areas which would result in the extension of domestic gardens as this is deemed to have a potential impact on openness and conflicts with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

The Council has a duty to conserve biodiversity – including a population or habitat – and must consider how wildlife or land may be affected in when making planning decisions about development and land use.

Figures 1 -3: Impact of extensions upon the perceived openness of the Green Belt

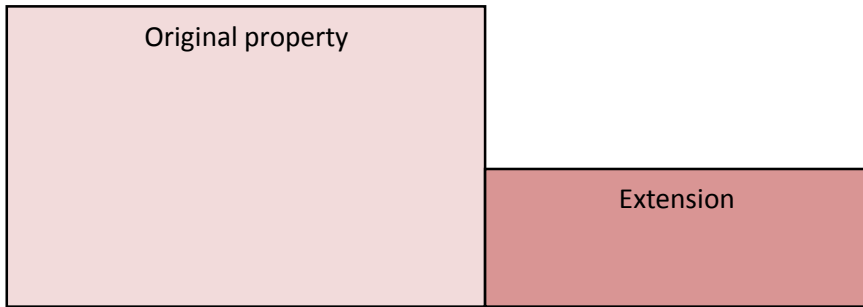


Figure 1



Figure 2

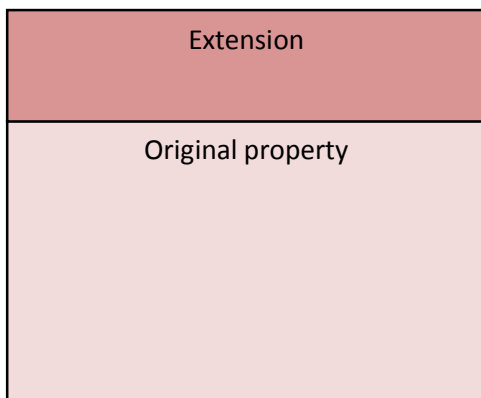


Figure 3

2.7 Stable Buildings in the Green Belt

The policy below concerns stables used for private recreational purposes only which may be situated in private gardens or open fields within the Green Belt. Commercial riding stables will be subject to different planning policies e.g. WLLP **Policy EC2** (The Rural Economy).

POLICY GB5 – STABLE BUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

The number of stables should be appropriate to the intended use and should be kept as small as possible. Applicants should provide evidence to demonstrate the need for the stable building and to justify the amount of accommodation required.

New stables should meet the following criteria:

Design and scale

- Stables should normally comprise blocks of single stable depth, opening directly to the outside
- The building should have a maximum height to the roof ridge of 3.5m
- Each stable should have a maximum floor space of 14m²
- Tack rooms and hay stores should be of a similar size to that of an individual stable

Materials

Stables should be constructed from timber mounted on low brick plinths or with some limited courses of internal blockwork up to a height of 1.3m in order to protect timber walls from damage from the horses.

Siting

When siting stable buildings, the following guidelines should be followed:

- The stable building should not be in an open or prominent position and, if possible, should be close to existing buildings;
- The stable building should not require the construction of a long track in order to provide access; this may in itself constitute an engineering operation requiring planning permission;
- The stable building should, however, be an appropriate distance from the façade of any inhabited building, or of the boundary of any garden of any inhabited building not in the same ownership of the stable (to avoid nuisance from smell, noise, etc.); and

The siting of the stable building should not have any adverse effect upon protected wildlife habitats⁹ or species, heritage assets or agricultural interests.

⁹ S.41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 defines what are 'protected species'

Areas of hardstanding

These areas associated with the stables should be the minimum size necessary for operation.

Landscaping and Boundary Treatments

Such screening should comprise a mixture of indigenous species of hedge and small trees appropriate to that particular rural setting. Details of landscaping and boundary treatments should be included in any application for a stable building.

Wildlife

Features such as nesting boxes within the eaves, or holes for birds or bats incorporated within stable buildings, will be encouraged.

Waste Disposal

Any applications for stable buildings should include details of drainage and methods for storage and disposal of manure.

Exceptions to these sizes and designs will only be accepted in very special circumstances.

Justification

There has been considerable growth in horse riding as a recreational pursuit in recent years. Demand has been stimulated by new facilities associated with farm holdings and by the selling off of individual fields or paddocks. Stable blocks on open, undeveloped land can appear isolated and intrusive and, once established, can lead to the intensification of uses on the site. The objective of this policy is to ensure that new stables are only permitted in locations which are not damaging to the character and appearance of the countryside.

Stables generally tend to be required for relatively short periods of time, with needs varying according to change of ownership or occupation of land or associated dwellings. On this basis, the Council considers it inappropriate that the stables should be constructed of permanent materials such as brick or stone. This may result in them remaining on the site long after they are needed and lead to a proliferation of brick and stone buildings across the countryside, to the detriment of the character and openness of the Green Belt. Instead, materials should help to reduce the impact of such buildings on the character and openness of the Green Belt.

The impact of these buildings can also be reduced by minimising the amount of hardstanding permitted around the stable buildings, in order to prevent the encroachment of development into the open countryside. Stable buildings and hardstanding areas can, if necessary, be screened by vegetation to further reduce their impact on the landscape.

The British Horse Society provide further advice on issues of pasture management in the publication 'Advice on Pasture Management'¹⁰.

The Council has a duty to conserve biodiversity – including a population or habitat – and must consider how wildlife or land may be affected in when making planning decisions about development and land use.

¹⁰ www.bhs.org.uk