

THREE RIVERS LOCAL PLAN 1996-2011
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE
No.3

Extensions to Dwellings
In the Green Belt

AUGUST 2003



THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE NO.3

Re: EXTENSIONS & ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING DWELLINGS IN THE METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT

Minute of Exec 18 August 2003

EX79/03 **ADOPTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE RELATING TO EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING DWELLINGS IN THE METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT**

Members were asked to approve the adoption of a proposed policy as Supplementary Planning Guidance to help indicate what types of extension would or would not be acceptable in the Metropolitan Green Belt, and also to be used as a material consideration in determine planning applications. The reason for the report's recommendation was to regularise and formalise the way the Council considered planning applications for extensions to dwellings within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The Portfolio Holder referred to amended wording suggested by the officers for two recommendations relating to this matter, that were read out by the Chairman. She also proposed that the word 'normally' be added in section 11 c of the Appendix 1 containing the Policy. Members agreed the amendments to the recommendations and policy.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) that the proposed policy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed for the purposes of public consultation, subject to addition of the word 'normally' after the word 'not' in paragraph 2 of point 11 (c) of the policy; and
- (2) that the policy be agreed as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance for a period not exceeding 9 months, until the results of the public consultation exercise have been reported to the Executive Committee.

Interim Policy

1. **National Policy** as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.2 – Green Belts. In paragraph 3.1 it is stated that *“the general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in Green Belts but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances.”*
2. Paragraph 2 states: *“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted...”*

3. Paragraph 3.4 states that the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is inappropriate unless it is for specified purposes, which includes *“limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings (subject to paragraph 3.6).”*
4. Paragraph 3.6 states: *“Provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the **original** building, the extension or alteration of dwellings is not inappropriate in Green Belts.”*
5. Three Rivers District Local Plan 1996 –2011 (as amended 2001)
The relevant policy is GB6:

“4.27 Extensions to Dwellings in the Green Belt

4.28 The purpose of controlling extensions in the Green Belt is to protect its openness from built development and to avoid proposals which would be visually intrusive. Extensions of scale or character which would cause undue prominence in the landscape will be resisted, as will a series of extensions which incrementally lead to such an intrusion. Extensions should not be disproportionate in size compared to the original dwelling. Proposals will therefore be assessed on a case by case basis taking into account the relationship of a house to its setting and to other nearby houses.

4.28 In circumstances such as an isolated dwelling in a prominent position, it may well be appropriate to restrict extensions to a very small size or indeed completely prohibit them.

4.30 Where there is a ribbon of houses in the Green Belt extensions will be carefully controlled to ensure that a proliferation of small extensions do not close the gaps between houses and thus create a closely packed line of development.

GB.6 EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT *In order to preserve the openness of the Green Belt, the Council will not permit extensions to dwellings that are disproportionate in size (individually or cumulatively) to the original dwelling. The Council will also take into account the dwelling’s proximity and relationship to other buildings, and whether it is already, or would become, prominent in the landscape.”*

6. Whilst the currently adopted local plan does not define ‘disproportionate’, the previous plan, the Three Rivers District Plan Review 1991 stated that in general, extensions greater than 30% **of the volume** of the original dwelling house.....will be regarded as excessive. The full text is as follows:

“6.1.6 **Extensions to dwellings in the Metropolitan Green Belt**

6.1.6.1. Whilst the Metropolitan Green Belt policy states a presumption against development except for certain specified categories, the District Council recognises that there are many existing dwellings within the Green Belt which are either long-established or have been permitted. It would be unfair and unreasonable not to allow modest extensions to such dwellings, but control will be exercised to ensure that their scale and size does not result in their appearing intrusive in the landscape. Space between dwellings and around buildings will be critically examined to ensure that the rural character is not prejudiced. Extensions of such a size that the character and scale of the dwelling is changed or which would cause undue prominence in the landscape will be resisted, as will a series of extensions which incrementally lead to such a change. An exception to the general policy may be made when it is proposed to extend very small dwellings to provide basic modern amenities, such as bathroom, kitchen or internal WC, or to bring room sizes up to a reasonable standard. In general, extensions greater than 30% of the volume of the original dwelling house, as at 1 July 1948, or as built if erected subsequent to that date, will be regarded as excessive as the District Council considers that beyond this figure the extension is unlikely to be subordinate to the existing dwelling.

POLICY GB.8 *In order to ensure the protection of the open aspect of the Metropolitan Green Belt the size of extensions to dwellings will be carefully controlled and applications will be determined according to the existing size, site and location. Normally non-essential developments will be prevented in the Green Belt in order to maintain its open rural character. Extensions of such a size that the character and scale of the dwelling is changed or which would be prominent in the landscape will be resisted.”*

7. There is no recent evidence of any refusals in Three Rivers District of extensions of less than 50% increase on the original dwelling that have had appeal decisions. Presumably this is because this Council has not taken a strict line after the 1991 plan was replaced by the current local plan.
8. As Three Rivers District Council has not operated as strictly as some Local Planning Authorities, there have been few relevant appeals. Of those since early 2002, the following has been the outcome (see appendix for full decision letters):

Applic. No.01/00486 - 98 Toms Lane – ground & first floor extensions –
Dismissed 13.03.2002

Applic. No.01/01372 – Redheath Lodge, Sarratt Road, Croxley Green -
single storey rear extension of 14.67sq.m. **Dismissed** 22.10.2002 –
original dwelling was 80sq.m. which had been extended to 235 sq.m.
– extra would be a disproportionate addition

Applic. No.02/01044 - Mortons Cottage, The Green, Sarratt – two storey
rear/side extension. **Dismissed** 16.04.2003

The one lesson that can be learnt from these appeals is that Inspectors view the original dwelling house as the starting point. In other words, all previous extensions need to be added to any current proposal when assessing if a proposal would result in a disproportionate increase.

Detailed Supplementary planning guidance

Applications for residential extensions in the Metropolitan Green Belt will normally be unacceptable unless **both** the **Openness of Green Belt** and **Percentage Increase in Original Floorspace** criteria are satisfied:

10. Openness of Green Belt

- a) Extensions at first floor level or above (except for dormer windows) should not significantly extend the width of the original building or in any other way make the building more prominent by virtue of its bulk and/or design. Subject to no adverse impact on neighbours, rear extensions will normally be viewed more favourably than side extensions. Extensions to isolated dwellings in the countryside will be judged on their own merits given site circumstances, as in some instances side extensions may be preferable to rear extensions.
- b) Single storey side extensions will normally be viewed as adversely affecting the openness of the Green Belt, if side extensions result in more than 80% of the frontage being covered by buildings. Otherwise, single storey extensions would not normally be considered to impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- c) Dormer windows proportionate to the existing building, and with glazing covering the full frontage other than side framing, will not normally be viewed as adversely affecting the openness of the Green Belt.
- d) increases in ridge height, apparent bulk of roof and/or replacement of a storey at least partially contained in the existing roof, by a full storey will normally be considered to adversely effect the openness of the Green Belt.

11. Percentage Increase on Original Floorspace

Whereas, the 1991 plan set a benchmark of 30% of the original **volume**, assessment by floorspace is an easier standard to operate, and bulk is proposed to be judged by the assessment of *Openness of the Green Belt* as set out in paragraph 10 above.

- a) In assessing percentage increases, the base for calculations will be the original floorspace of the dwelling when built, or as at 1948 (the date of the introduction of modern planning legislation) if built before that date. Therefore, the cumulative total of extensions will be assessed, not just on the application proposals.
- b) The floorspace of existing garages and outbuildings within residential curtilages will not be taken into account in assessing the size of the original dwelling nor the proposed percentage increase, unless they were built at the same time and integral with the original dwelling.

- c) The floorspace of existing outbuildings within residential curtilages that may be proposed to be removed will not be taken into account in assessing the size of the original dwelling nor the proposed percentage increase.

However, applications proposing demolition of redundant formerly non-residential outbuildings now lying within the defined residential curtilage, which detract from the appearance of the area, will be treated on their own merits, provided that the applicant agrees to the removal of 'permitted development' rights for future outbuildings. It will **not** normally be acceptable for the replacement volume to approach that to be removed.

- d) Extensions resulting in a cumulative increase in floorspace of over 40% compared with the original dwelling will normally be unacceptable, with the following exceptions:
 - i) dormer windows satisfying 10 (c) above,
 - ii) ground floor conservatories of modest size compared to the house and site, though planning conditions will then be imposed on permissions prohibiting their replacement with more substantial construction,
 - iii) 'in-fill' extensions (e.g. if the existing building is 'L' or 'U' shaped) which do not increase the apparent bulk of the building.
- e) Small dwellings (defined as 110sq.m. floor area measured externally, or less, as for Policy GB 5 ii) with limited basic amenities may be allowed larger extensions to allow upgrading to contemporary living standards.

- 12. This guidance is in addition to the requirement to comply with other policies in the adopted local plan, and in particular Policy GEN 3 and Appendix 2 as appropriate.