

## 4.0 DM2: GREEN BELT

### National Context

- 4.1 The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Green Belts perform five important functions in:
- Preventing urban sprawl
  - Preventing towns from merging into one another
  - Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
  - Preserving the setting and character of the historic towns
  - Helping urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of under-used and outworn urban land and buildings.
- 4.2 The Green Belt has a positive role to play in providing opportunities for access to the countryside for the urban population. Within the Green Belt, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development which should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework also attaches great importance to preserving the openness of the Green Belt. The Government notes that Local Planning Authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt when assessing applications for development. 'Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.'

### Local Context

- 4.4 Green Belt covers 77% of the area of Three Rivers and this contributes to the character of the District as a whole and its desirability as a place to live and work. Protecting its openness is set out in Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. However, as set out in the Spatial Strategy, some minor adjustments to the Green Belt may be necessary over the Plan period to promote a sustainable pattern of development. Any changes to the established Green Belt boundary as defined in the Local Plan will be made through the Site Allocations LDD and shown on the Proposals Map.

### Further Guidance for Applicants

- 4.5 The Council recognises that residents living within areas designated as Green Belt may wish to build ancillary buildings such as sheds and garages, extend their existing dwellings or in some cases apply for the replacement dwellings. However, it is essential that these are of a scale and design that do not impact on the openness and rural character of the Green Belt. Proposals for development in the Green Belt will also be assessed against other policies including those relating to design of development such as Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy. Further guidance relating to floorspace and other factors that the Council will take into account in the consideration of householder developments in particular is provided in the adopted Green Belt SPG. This guidance will be incorporated into the forthcoming Design SPD.
- 4.6 It is also acknowledged that proposals may be put forward for the conversion or change of use of buildings in the Green Belt. The Council accepts that in some circumstances this may be considered not inappropriate. However, the acceptability of a change of use of a building in a Green Belt location will be dependent upon the nature of the building and its appearance in the landscape and whether the proposed use would accord with Green Belt policy and not have an unacceptable impact on the environment.

## DM2 Green Belt

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate with certain exceptions, some of which are set out below:

### a) New Buildings

Within the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances, approval will not be given for new buildings other than those specified in national policy and other relevant guidance. Further guidance on the factors that will be considered in assessing applications for agricultural or forestry dwellings in the Green Belt is contained in Appendix 3.

### b) Extensions to Buildings

Extensions to buildings in the Green Belt that are disproportionate in size (individually or cumulatively) to the original building will not be permitted. The building's proximity and relationship to other buildings and whether it is already, or would become, prominent in the setting and whether it preserves the openness of the Green Belt will be taken into account.

### c) Replacement Dwellings

Replacement dwellings in the Metropolitan Green Belt will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- i) the replacement does not materially exceed the size of the original dwelling or
- ii) where the original dwelling has a floor area (measured externally) of less than 110 square metres then the replacement dwelling may be of a total floorspace (excluding garage) of 110 square metres and
- iii) the replacement would not be more harmful to the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt by reason of its siting than the original dwelling.

### d) Ancillary Buildings

The Council will only support the provision of ancillary buildings in the Green Belt where it can be demonstrated that the development would:

- i) be of a scale and design clearly subordinate to the dwelling and of a height and bulk such that the building would not adversely affect the openness of the Green Belt
- ii) be sited in an appropriate location that would not be prominent in the landscape and would not result in the spread of urbanising development
- iii) avoid features normally associated with the use of a building as a dwelling such as dormer windows.

### e) Extensions to Residential Curtilages

The Council will safeguard the countryside from encroachment, therefore proposals which include the extension of the curtilage of a residential property within the Green Belt which involves an incursion into the countryside will not be supported.

### f) Re-use and Conversion of Buildings in the Green Belt

The Council will only support applications for the re-use/conversion of buildings in the Green Belt where:

- i) the form, bulk and general design of the building is in keeping with the surroundings

- ii) any proposal by way of alterations/extensions, parking/turning areas, modifications to access or landscaping does not have a significant adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt and does not appear excessively prominent
- iii) the scale of the proposed use is not likely to have a detrimental effect on the locality (e.g. by noise, smell or bringing heavy traffic into narrow lanes or involving uses not appropriate to the Green Belt or areas of open land)
- iv) the building is suitable for reuse/conversion without extensive alteration, rebuilding and or extension
- v) proposals do not include open or agricultural land to provide new gardens/amenity space or include doors giving access from buildings directly onto such land.

### *Policy Links*

<b>National Policy (others may also be relevant)</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>Related Core Strategy Policies</b>	CP1: Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development CP9: Green Infrastructure CP11: Green Belt CP12: Design of Development
<b>Core Strategy Strategic Objective</b>	S1, S2, S9

### *Further Guidance*

<b>Supplementary Planning Documents</b>	SPG3: Green Belt Design SPD
<b>Additional Information</b>	Hertfordshire Building Futures: <a href="http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures">http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures</a>

### **Reasoned Justification**

- 4.7 The Metropolitan Green Belt is a long-standing instrument of national and regional planning policy. Whilst much guidance is provided in national policy, the preferred approach supplements this with other relevant local criteria. The preferred policy approach seeks to provide the context for protecting the Green Belt in Three Rivers and ensures that development does not harm the Green Belt.
- 4.8 This policy links directly to Core Strategy Objective 1: to ensure that development in Three Rivers recognises and safeguards the District's distinctive character of small towns and villages interspersed with attractive countryside and Green Belt, through sustainable patterns of development; Objective 2: to make efficient use of previously developed land and Objective 9: to conserve and enhance the countryside and the diversity of landscapes, wildlife and habitats in the District.