

# CHAPTER 5: GREEN BELT

## INTRODUCTION 3/4

- 5.1 This chapter sets out the Local Plan policies relating to the Green Belt of the Borough.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE BOROUGH AND RECENT TRENDS

- 5.2 The Green Belt is a ring of countryside and generally open land around London which has been protected since the 1950's. The present Green Belt boundary in Woking Borough was confirmed in 1993, and detailed the Green Belt boundary for the first time in the western part of the Borough.
- 5.3 The designated areas of Green Belt are shown on the Proposals Map. The Borough's Green Belt can be divided into two distinct areas. To the north of the urban area, the Green Belt stretches from Horsell Common to Littlewick Common and the area to the north of Knaphill. This area is characterised by heathland and low lying pastureland with isolated market garden units. To the south the Green Belt stretches from Brookwood Cemetery to Hook Heath, Smart's Heath, Mayford, Sutton Green, Pyrford Common and the areas to the south of West Byfleet and around Byfleet. These areas vary in character but include areas of woodland and pastureland, as well as a number of golf courses.
- 5.4 Whilst the pressures to develop these areas have been high, the Green Belt is subject to strict policies which have generally resisted new development. Within the Green Belt new development has generally been limited to either small household extensions or related to recreational pursuits, and the Council has generally been successful in resisting major developments.

### NATIONAL/REGIONAL CONTEXT

- 5.5 The policies in this Plan are guided by Government guidance in the form of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG's) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's). Those of relevance to the Green Belt chapter are listed below.
- 5.6 The Government has set out the general intentions of Green Belt policy in *PPG2 - Green Belts*, a revised form of which was released in January 1995. PPG2 established purposes of Green Belt designation of which the following are relevant to Woking:

1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
  2. to prevent the urban area merging in with surrounding settlements;
  3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  4. to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land.
- 5.7 By protecting the countryside and concentrating development in existing urban areas PPG2 states that Green Belts can help in moving towards more sustainable patterns of development.
- 5.8 PPG2 stresses the importance of Green Belt permanency and states that Local Plans should only alter established Green Belt boundaries in very special circumstances. It also defines appropriate development within the Green Belt. Included within this list is development within Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt where in-fill and redevelopment may be acceptable. Local authorities are required to assess whether any developed sites meeting the criteria exist in their area, and identify them in their Local Plan.
- 5.9 *PPG7 - The Countryside- Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* requires local authorities to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land and sets out a series of tests to be applied to applications for agricultural workers dwellings in the countryside. *Regional Planning Guidance for the south east (RPG9)* is relevant to the Borough of Woking. This Guidance refers to PPG2 and reiterates the main points.

## COUNTY CONTEXT

- 5.10 Policies within the Surrey Structure Plan 1994 resist 'inappropriate' development within the Green Belt. The Plan states that only development associated with appropriate uses, including agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and cemeteries will normally be permitted. The Structure Plan reiterates that once local plans have established Green Belt boundaries they should only exceptionally be altered. The Structure Plan also provides guidance on development in rural settlements, reuse and adaptation of rural buildings, farm diversification and recreation facilities in the Green Belt.

## OTHER COUNCIL POLICIES

### *Countryside Strategy*

- 5.11 The Council's revised Countryside Strategy for Woking adopted in June 1998 contains policies and projects associated with the countryside including nature

conservation, recreation, landscape and agriculture. Its aims include to protect and where possible enhance the Borough's natural environment, to ensure there is equal opportunity for residents to have reasonable access to open spaces and the countryside, and broaden opportunities for the enjoyment of wildlife and the countryside whilst balancing recreational demand with the need to protect the Borough's biodiversity.

- 5.12 To implement the Strategy the Council prepares annually Action Plans which include a series of projects designed to positively enhance open areas and natural habitats in the Borough. The current Strategy and any future review will be a material consideration when dealing with planning applications relating to Green Belt areas.

#### OBJECTIVES FOR THE GREEN BELT

- 5.13 The Council's overall strategy for the Green Belt must take full account of the above guidance. Structure Plan policies set out a clear role for Green Belt areas, highlight the importance of boundary permanence and stress the need to resist the alteration of established Green Belt boundaries. All the planning guidance also resists inappropriate development within Green Belt areas and highlights the point that it is the openness of Green Belt areas that are their most important asset.
- 5.14 The key aim of the Local Plan is to provide for new development while working towards the principle that development should be sustainable. The Green Belt has an important role to play in working towards sustainable development by protecting the countryside and concentrating development in the existing urban areas of the Borough.
- 5.15 It is not proposed to make any amendments to the existing Green Belt boundary, as there are no very special circumstances which would justify any change. The Council has also considered the guidance on designation of Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt and has carried out a thorough study to assess whether there are any sites within the Borough which meet the criteria. One site, Broadoaks, in Parvis Road, West Byfleet, has been identified as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt.
- 5.16 The Green Belt as shown on the Proposals Map includes the areas shown within the Green Belt in the Brooklands Local Plan (First Alteration), adopted in January 1995.
- 5.17 The Plan's approach to the Green Belt must be to protect its open character and to resist urban sprawl. This is expressed in the following objective:

***The Council will protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.***

- 5.18 When development is appropriate the Plan will also seek to work towards the following objectives for the Green Belt:

1. to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
  2. to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near to urban areas;
  3. to seek to retain, and enhance where appropriate, attractive landscapes, near to where people live;
  4. to improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
  5. to protect and enhance established habitats or other nature conservation interests;
  6. to retain land for agricultural, forestry and related purposes.
- 5.19 Some of these objectives are met through the following policies in the Green Belt chapter, while the remainder are covered in other chapters, notably Natural Environment and Recreation.

---

**POLICIES**


---

 3/4

**GRB1 CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE GREEN BELT**

WITHIN THE GREEN BELT AS DESIGNATED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED EXCEPT FOR:

- (i) DEVELOPMENT REASONABLY RELATED TO AGRICULTURAL OR FORESTRY PURPOSES;
- (ii) DWELLINGS ESSENTIAL FOR AGRICULTURAL AND OR FORESTRY WORKERS;
- (iii) FACILITIES ESSENTIAL FOR OUTDOOR SPORT OR OUTDOOR RECREATION (EXCLUDING SPORTS STADIA);
- (iv) DEVELOPMENT ESSENTIAL FOR THE OPERATION OF CEMETERIES;
- (v) LIMITED EXTENSIONS, ALTERATIONS OR REPLACEMENT OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES;
- (vi) THE RE-USE OF BUILDINGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY GRB3;
- (vii) IN-FILL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN MAYFORD VILLAGE AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY GRB4;
- (viii) REDEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR DEVELOPED SITES IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY EMP6

IN CONSIDERING THESE DEVELOPMENTS THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO MINIMISE THEIR DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE APPEARANCE AND OPEN CHARACTER OF THE GREEN BELT BY REASON OF SIZE, PROMINENCE OR DESIGN.

**JUSTIFICATION**

- 5.20 The Green Belt areas are an important asset of the Borough for environmental, amenity and recreational reasons. Strict planning policies are required to provide protection from development pressures in these areas. This policy defines a limited set of development types that would be appropriate for the Green Belt and strongly resists other inappropriate developments. The list of appropriate development types has been drawn up in the light of government guidance.
- 5.21 The maintenance of the open character of the Green Belt is a key consideration in determining applications for development. As well as the size and siting of

buildings, features such as areas of hardstanding, gardens, car parking, walls, fencing and external storage associated with new development will be important considerations when assessing the visual impact of proposals on the open character of the area.



OLD WOKING

- 5.22 When dealing with planning applications for dwellinghouses to accommodate agricultural/forestry workers the Council will request information in order to carry out functional and financial tests in line with government guidance. These tests will be carried out to assess the feasibility and the genuineness of the intended enterprise. The Council will impose conditions to restrict the occupancy of the building when dealing with such proposals.
- 5.23 Stables, changing rooms, toilet facilities and car parking are examples of facilities that may be essential for the carrying out of outdoor recreational pursuits. Indoor recreation, leisure and community facilities, sports stadia, residential accommodation, retail, catering or office buildings are not facilities considered to be essential for outdoor recreational pursuits and will not be allowed in Green Belt areas.
- 5.24 The replacement of existing buildings with new buildings to be used for inappropriate purposes is not generally acceptable in the Green Belt. The only circumstances where it may be acceptable is where a major developed site in the Green Belt has been designated.

~~GRB2 – NEW BUILDINGS WITHIN THE GREEN BELT~~~~NEW BUILDINGS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN THE GREEN BELT UNLESS:~~

- ~~(i) THE BUILDING IS FOR A PURPOSE ACCEPTABLE UNDER GRB1, AND~~
- ~~(ii) THERE IS NO EXISTING BUILDING EITHER ON OR NEAR THE SITE WHICH IS BOTH AVAILABLE AND SUITABLE FOR CONVERSION TO ACCOMMODATE THE REQUIRED USE, AND~~
- ~~(iii) IN THE CASE OF NEW BUILDINGS FOR THE PURPOSES OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY, THEY ARE OF A SIZE REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR THE USE PROPOSED, AND~~  
~~— IN THE CASE OF NEW BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES ESSENTIAL FOR OUTDOOR SPORT OR OUTDOOR RECREATION (EXCLUDING SPORTS STADIA) OR THE OPERATION OF CEMETERIES, THEY ARE OF THE MINIMUM SIZE NECESSARY TO MEET THE ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE USE PROPOSED~~

~~IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO MINIMISE THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT OF BUILDINGS ON THE APPEARANCE AND OPEN CHARACTER OF THE GREEN BELT BY REASON OF SIZE, PROMINENCE OR DESIGN.~~~~PROPOSALS FOR THE REPLACEMENT OR EXTENSION OF DWELLINGS IN SUCH A MANNER THAT WOULD RESULT IN DISPROPORTIONATE ADDITIONS OVER AND ABOVE THE SIZE OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.~~

## JUSTIFICATION

- 5.25 ~~The Plan aims to protect the open character of the Green Belt by resisting new building development. In particular, permission will not be granted for a new building where a vacant building, suitable for conversion, exists on the application site or on nearby land under the applicant's control. In order to prevent the erection of overly large developments, an assessment will be made to determine whether proposed buildings are of a size commensurate to their needs. In the case of buildings for the needs of cemeteries and outdoor leisure and recreation related facilities, these should be of the minimum size necessary to serve the proposed use. Factors such as building volume, bulk and massing, the amount of open space to be lost, the prominence of buildings plus the distance between proposed developments and existing buildings will be considerations in the determination of all new build applications. The volume increase on the size of the original house will be an additional consideration when dealing with extensions to dwellings.~~

~~5.26 Land adjacent to urban areas is particularly vulnerable to development pressures, and the fragmentation of agricultural holdings can result in applications for the erection of buildings and structures which cumulatively would detract from the appearance of the countryside. In considering applications for new buildings on parcels of land previously part of a larger agricultural holding the Council will require clear cut evidence that the criteria set out in this policy, and in policy GRB1, are met.~~

### ~~GRB3 – THE RE USE OF BUILDINGS WITHIN THE GREEN BELT~~

~~THE RE USE OF BUILDINGS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WITHIN THE GREEN BELT WHERE:~~

- ~~(i) THE PROPOSED USE WILL NOT CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE AMENITIES OF THE AREA OR NEARBY RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES, OR TO THE OPEN CHARACTER OF THE GREEN BELT; AND~~
- ~~(ii) THE BUILDINGS ARE OF PERMANENT AND SUBSTANTIAL CONSTRUCTION AND ARE CAPABLE OF CONVERSION WITHOUT MAJOR OR COMPLETE RECONSTRUCTION; AND~~
- ~~(iii) ANY ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES OR ACTIVITY GENERATED WOULD NOT DETRACT FROM THE OPEN OR RURAL CHARACTER OF THE GREEN BELT; AND~~
- ~~(iv) THE FORM, BULK AND GENERAL DESIGN ARE IN KEEPING WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS;~~

~~RE USE OF BUILDINGS FOR MAJOR RETAIL OR BUSINESS PURPOSES, OR OTHER USES RESULTING IN A LARGE NUMBER OF VISITS TO THE SITE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.~~

### JUSTIFICATION

~~5.27 Buildings can often be converted without causing material harm to the open character of the Green Belt. However, the Council recognises that particular uses or levels of use can either directly or indirectly have an adverse effect. For example, whilst the conversion of a vacant building to provide residential accommodation in itself may be acceptable, associated features such as gardens, fences, walls, driveways and ancillary buildings harm the open character of the area. The effect of these and similar features will be assessed when dealing with re use applications. In order to prevent future ancillary developments permitted development rights will be removed when allowing change of use applications.~~

~~5.28 The Plan aims to resist the re use of buildings that have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the Green Belt. Planning permission will not be granted~~

~~for the re-use of buildings that, by virtue of their size, positioning, design and general appearance are not in keeping with the area, unless it is possible to improve the appearance of the building sufficiently as a condition of its re-use.~~

- ~~5.29 The Green Belt areas of Woking Borough are less accessible by means other than the private car than the town and village centres. The establishment of uses in a Green Belt location which attract a large number of visits is to be resisted, since this would conflict with one of the fundamental aims of this Local Plan, namely, to direct development to areas readily accessible by means other than the private car. Such uses are also likely to generate significant requirements for parking, the provision of which is likely to adversely affect the open nature of the Green Belt. Therefore, in order to promote sustainable development, the Plan will resist the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt which have this effect, and the level of activity and likely vehicular movement to and from the site will be a consideration. In particular, major office or retail schemes are unlikely to be permitted and will be considered strictly within the overall location policies of the Plan, which identify Woking town centre and the district and village centres as the most appropriate locations for such development.~~
- ~~5.30 When dealing with applications for the change of use of agricultural buildings consideration will be given to whether proliferation of buildings constructed under permitted development rights could have a seriously detrimental effect on the openness of the Green Belt. Where this is the case, a condition will be attached removing permitted development rights from a holding. This will occur where a number of buildings have been erected under agricultural permitted development rights and/or where the agricultural use of the holding has been ceased or reduced.~~
- ~~5.31 Proposals for changes of use will also need to comply with the relevant policies in other chapters. Proposals to re-use disused buildings will be considered against policy NE5 of the Natural Environment chapter on protected species.~~

#### GRB4 Y INFILL DEVELOPMENT IN MAYFORD VILLAGE

MAYFORD VILLAGE IS DESIGNATED AS AN IN-FILL ONLY SETTLEMENT WITHIN THE GREEN BELT ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.

WITHIN THE VILLAGE INFILL DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE:

- (i) IT IS FOR A PURPOSE ACCEPTABLE UNDER POLICY GRB1, OR;
- (ii) IT IS ON LAND WHICH IS SUBSTANTIALLY SURROUNDED BY EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND WHICH FORMS A GAP WITHIN A BUILT UP FRONTAGE; AND

- (iii) THE PROPOSED BUILDINGS WOULD BE USED EITHER FOR RESIDENTIAL PURPOSES OR FOR ANOTHER USE WHICH WOULD NOT BE HARMFUL TO RESIDENTIAL AMENITY.
- (iv) IN THE CASE OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, PROPOSALS ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLICIES APPLIED TO NEW AND REPLACEMENT HOUSING IN THE URBAN AREA (HSG18-HSG24)

#### JUSTIFICATION

- 5.32 Mayford Village is a small and compact community where limited development within the village boundaries would not have an adverse effect on the character of the Green Belt. The boundaries of the village have been altered to exclude the current Jackman's Nursery site. Due to the size and horticultural nature of the site it is the view of the Council that in-fill development would be inappropriate and the site's designation within the settlement envelope could present difficulties in resisting unsuitable developments in the future.
- 5.33 Within the village, only in-fill residential development will normally be acceptable. New build business or industrial developments will not be allowed as they are likely to result in an unacceptable effect on the primarily residential character of the village and the Green Belt.

#### GRB5 - ~~LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND~~

~~THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND (THAT IS GRADES 1,2 AND 3A IN THE MAFF AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM) FOR ANY FORM OF DEVELOPMENT NOT ASSOCIATED WITH AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THERE IS A STRONG NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT ON A PARTICULAR SITE WHICH OVERRIDES THE NEED TO PROTECT SUCH LAND.~~

~~WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED ON BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND IT SHOULD, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, USE THE LOWEST GRADE OF LAND SUITABLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT.~~

#### JUSTIFICATION

- 5.34 ~~Agricultural operations are appropriate uses within the Green Belt. The quality of agricultural land will be an issue when determining planning applications. The best and most versatile agricultural land is an irreplaceable asset and should normally be retained especially where a large amount of land which makes a significant contribution to the viability of existing holdings is involved. The~~

~~Council will consult the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when dealing with any applications involving the loss of at least 20 hectares of high quality agricultural land.~~

- ~~5.35 The Council will also seek the retention of smaller or fragmented parcels of high quality land. However it is recognised that in some cases it may not be economically viable to farm such land at present, and where this is judged to be the case the priority will be to minimise its loss in any development.~~

### GRB6 Y SAFEGUARDED SITES

BROOKWOOD FARM IS DESIGNATED AS A SAFEGUARDED SITE FOR LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT NEEDS. THE GREEN BELT BOUNDARY IN THIS LOCATION WILL BE MARKED BY THE PLANTING OF A THICK, HARDWOOD SPECIES BASED BARRIER ALONG THE BOUNDARY OF THE PROPOSED CARRIAGEWAY OF THE WEST END/BISLEY/KNAPHILL BY-PASS SOUTHERN EXTENSION. WITHIN THIS AREA DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE:

- (i) IT WOULD NOT PREJUDICE THE POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE; AND
- (ii) THE DEVELOPMENT IS FOR A PURPOSE APPROPRIATE TO THE GREEN BELT AS SET OUT IN THE POLICIES OF THIS CHAPTER.

LAND AT MOOR LANE DESIGNATED FOR A PHASED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AFTER APRIL 1ST 2001 WILL ALSO BE SUBJECT TO THIS POLICY UNTIL THE DATE WHEN THE LAND IS RELEASED FOR DEVELOPMENT.

### JUSTIFICATION

- 5.36 Safeguarded sites lie between the urban areas and the Green Belt boundaries and comprise areas which may be required to serve long term development needs. The above sites were identified in the Woking Borough Local Plan 1993 to provide for long term needs, thereby helping to ensure the permanence of the Green Belt boundary.
- 5.37 Brookwood Farm is not allocated for development in this Plan and the Plan seeks to ensure the site is kept free of development that would prejudice its use for development in the long term. This policy will therefore be applied to the site pending its release in future reviews of the Local Plan. There is no evidence to substantiate a need for this land to be made available for development during the Plan period. The site may be released for development

in the future but only through any future review of the Local Plan. The boundary of the Green Belt in this location is the western edge of the route of the proposed West End/Bisley/Knaphill by-pass southern extension. A thickly planted barrier along the line of this carriageway is to be created to define the Green Belt boundary. This will be based on hardwood species, with complementary landscaping to include ground modelling appropriate to the location to emphasise the limit to urban development.

- 5.38 The site at Moor Lane may be released in phases for development after 2001 (see Policy HSG5). This policy will apply to the whole site until it is released, and then to any parts of the site which have not been released for development (Proposal Site 13H).