

Green Belt Statement

Proposed Replacement Dwelling

Located at:

Blue Pitts Farm, Thornham Lane, Rochdale

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1 Introduction

This Green Belt statement has been prepared on behalf of our client with regards to the proposed replacement dwelling at Blue Pitts Farm, Thornham Lane, Middleton, Rochdale, Manchester. Latitude and longitude for the site of 53°34'43"N, 002°09'19"W. The postcode for the site is M24 2SD.

This statement is intended to clarify that the proposals are in full accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land.

Please note that any enclosed drawings may not be to standard scales, due to the need to represent them at the largest possible scale for clarity. Please also refer to the planning drawings contained within the application for standard 'to scale' drawings.

2 The Site & Existing Building

The site is located just off Thornham Lane in Middleton, Rochdale. It is bounded directly by Thornham Lane Road to the south and the entrance to Blue Pitts Farm directly to the west. The site sits in the centre of a collection of farms, with Blue Pitts Farm to the north, Thornham Fold Farm to the west, and Cinder Hill Farm across the road to the south and east. The Tandle Hill Tavern is located just to the east of the site.



The Site in its Immediate Context (image credit: Google Maps)

Existing Building

The existing building is a two-storey house with a pitched roof running front-to-back with gables on the side elevations, and a single-storey lean-to to the rear. The building is set lower than Thornham Lane by approximately half a storey. The building backs directly on to Blue Pitts Farm to the north and has a small amount of garden amenity to the front and side between the building and Thornham Lane.

3 Green Belt Policy

Development within Green Belt Land is subject to specific criteria. The aim of the government's Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) under section 13 (Protecting Green Belt Land) provides five 'purposes' of Green Belt policy in paragraph 138; these are:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

Local planning authorities are instructed to regard the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt as inappropriate. However, there are exceptions to the policy listed within Paragraph 149 of the NPPF. Planning appeals & case law have clearly established that proposals which meet 'exception' policy criteria are considered 'appropriate development in the green belt' and therefore are not required to meet green belt policy criteria associated with 'inappropriate' development. Paragraph 149 states:

149. *A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:*
- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
 - b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
 - c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
 - d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
 - e) limited infilling in villages;*
 - f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
 - g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*

- *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

Relevant Policy Exception

The Green Belt exception policy relevant to these proposals is the following:

- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*

4 The Proposals

The proposals are to demolish the existing dwelling on the site, which is of poor-quality construction and in a dilapidated state, and construct a new dwelling in its place.

The new dwelling will be constructed in the same location and over the same footprint as the existing building and will retain the form of a two-storey building with a pitched roof running front-to-back with gables on the side elevations. The proposed dwelling features a slight split-level aspect in order to provide integral garage accommodation accessible from the road which is at a higher level; as a result the proposed ridge level will be higher than the original building by approx. 750mm. The lean-to to the rear is not proposed to be reinstated, slightly decreasing the proposed footprint from the original building.

Assessment of 'Materially Larger'

There is no formal definition or set figure within National or Local policy of when a replacement building would be considered to be 'materially larger' than the building it replaces. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'materially' as 'in a significant way; considerably'.

Numerous relevant cases determined at appeal and high court levels have determined that an assessment of 'materially larger' should primarily be one of size. Such an assessment should not solely be a mathematical comparison of relevant dimensions, i.e. it is accepted that a replacement building may be of a differing shape to the existing. The most important factor/metric should be determined on a case-by-case basis, but the typical starting point would usually be floor area. Some regard may be given to visual aspects, but this should not change the purpose of the assessment, i.e. is there an increase in size. An assessment of whether a building is 'materially larger' should not be one of visual impact or openness.

We have therefore assessed the proposals against the three most typical metrics for determining the size of a building; floor area, footprint, and volume, to determine whether there is a 'significant' increase by any of these metrics in size over the existing, as well as a general consideration of the overall form on the proposals compared to the existing building, to provide a holistic view of whether the building should be considered 'materially larger'.

Floor Area:

Existing:

- Ground Floor: 86.1m²
- First Floor: 81.3m²
- Second Floor: 41.0m²
- Total: 207.4m²

Proposed:

- Ground Floor: 79.7m²
- First Floor: 79.7m²
- Second Floor: 42.9m²
- Total: 202.3m²

The proposals result in a 2.5% decrease from the existing floor area. As the proposals are smaller in this regard this cannot by definition be considered 'materially larger'.

Footprint:

Existing: 99.6m²

Proposed: 94.1m²

The proposals result in a 5.5% decrease from the existing footprint. As the proposals are smaller in this regard this cannot by definition be considered 'materially larger'.

Volume:

Existing: 695.2m³

Proposed: 753.8m³

The proposals result in an 8.4% increase over the existing building. This is a minor increase (i.e. not significant or noteworthy) and should therefore not be considered to be 'materially larger' than the existing.

Form:

The proposed building is to be constructed over the same footprint, at the same width & depth as the existing, minus the existing rear projection. The proposed roof is slightly higher due to a split-level aspect on the ground floor, but the building primarily remains as a typical two-storey building with a pitched roof and end-gables. As such the proposed building form remains almost identical to the existing.

Conclusion

The proposed building is at most 8.4% larger than the existing building (featuring a slightly smaller footprint and floor area, with a slightly higher roof level giving a slight increase in volume) and of an almost identical form, and as such should not be considered to be 'materially larger' than the building it is to replace.

The proposed building is of the same use as the existing (dwelling).

As such the proposals are in full accordance with Paragraph 149. d) and as such constitute '**appropriate development in the Green Belt**', in accordance with NPPF Green Belt policy.

Further, there is no NPPF policy requirement, or facility, to assign 'harm' or require the preservation of 'openness' against '**appropriate development**'. To do so is a failure to understand 'exception' policy 149. d). For absolute clarity paragraphs 147 and 148 are concerned with 'inappropriate development' only.