

APPLICATION NUMBER: 25/00478/HOUS

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Location:	Five Trees, Birtle Road, Heywood, BL9 6UT
Proposal:	Single storey side and rear extension, formation of hardstanding and alterations to rear fenestration following demolition of existing garage and kitchen extension.
Applicant:	Mr Ian Greenwood
Case Officer:	Bob Melling
DETERMINATION DATE 11.08.2025	EXT OF TIME N/A
RECOMMENDATION:	Refuse

DELEGATION	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N
	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N
	Neighbour comments received?	N

CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	N/A

Location

The application relates to 'Five Trees', a large, detached bungalow situated within the Green Belt, off Birtle Road. The site is surrounded by landscaping which screens the majority of the property from view, however it is visible from Birtle Road. There are other properties located to the north and west, but open space remains to the south and east. The topography increases gradually in a northerly direction, meaning the property occupies an elevated position when viewed from the south on Birtle Road.

The application property was granted permission for a new roof including front and rear dormers in November 1995, however this permission was not implemented. Permission was then granted for single storey front and side extensions in August 2004, and these extensions were built. The case file for this application (ref: 04/D43855) suggests that the extensions comprised an approximate 30 percent increase in volume when compared to the original dwelling.

Description of Proposal

Permission is sought for a single side and rear extension following the demolition of the existing attached garage and kitchen extension. The extension would project approximately 5.38m from the western side elevation and 9.13m beyond the rear elevation. The proposals also include the laying of additional hardstanding to create vehicular access to the proposed garage, and various alterations to the existing fenestration. Materials for construction are proposed to match those used in the exterior of the existing dwelling.

Relevant History

95/D32514: Construction Of New Roofs To Existing Dwelling Including Formation Of Front And Rear Dormers. Granted STC November 1995

04/D43855: Single Storey Front And Side Extensions To Dwelling. Granted STC
August 2004

Township/Member comments

N/A

Consultee responses

N/A

Representations

Letters of notification were sent to surrounding properties. No representations were received in response to the proposed development.

Policy

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Sub-Regional

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE):

The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan was adopted and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the 9 authorities covered by the plan on 21st March 2024. The following policies are relevant:

JP-P1	Sustainable Development
JP-G1	Landscape Character
JP-G8	A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
JP-G9	The Green Belt

Local

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1	Defined Urban Area
EM/7	Development and Flood Risk

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016:

The Rochdale Core Strategy was adopted on 19th October 2016. The following policies are relevant:

G7	Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity
G8	Managing water resources and flood risk
P3	Improving design of new development
DM1	General development requirements
T2	Improving accessibility
Appendix 5	Schedule of parking standards

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD): Supplementary Planning Document ‘Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development’ (2016).

Amendments

N/A

Assessment

Principle of Development

Policy Position

Inappropriate Development

The entire application site is located within the Green Belt as allocated under PfE Policy JP-P9. The NPPF states that *‘The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence’*.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF establishes that:

‘When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.’

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF sets out that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it meets one of the exceptions. Exception c) is relevant to the current application:

‘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.’

Therefore, the main consideration in assessing the principle of development is whether the proposed extension constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, if so, whether very special circumstances have been demonstrated which may outweigh the presumption against development.

Section 5.20 of the Council’s ‘Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD’ states that *‘normally, in principle, extensions that result in up to a 35% increase in floor space or volume over and above the original dwelling would normally be considered appropriate and not disproportionate (this calculation would include previous extensions to*

the original dwelling, which is defined as the dwelling as it was first built or as it stood on 1 July 1948). However, the guidance goes on to state that *‘the characteristics of properties and proposals will vary significantly and there may be instances when a 35% increase would be considered disproportionate and other occasions when a greater than 35% increase may be considered proportionate.’*

The submitted Green Belt assessment suggests that the proposals comprise a 24.06 percent increase in volume, however this figure does not take into account the volume of the existing extensions when calculating the volume increase. Under application 04/D43855, it was noted that the proposed extensions (which have been built) comprised an approximate 30 percent increase in volume. Therefore, we can assume that the original dwelling had a volume of approximately 601.46m³. The proposals do include the removal of the existing garage and kitchen extensions; however, the overall volume increase would still stand at approximately 59.7 percent. Therefore, the cumulative effect of the existing and proposed extensions would represent a significant percentage increase on the volume of the original building.

The proposed extension, in combination with the previous extensions, would clearly exceed the 35% SPD threshold in respect of floor space and there would be a visible increase in overall volume and bulk.

Given this, it is considered that the existing and proposed extensions would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling, and the cumulative effect of the existing and proposed extensions would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The NPPF is explicit in that development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 144 of the NPPF states that when considering any application, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any Green Belt harm. Unless the Green Belt harm by way of inappropriateness, and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations, ‘very special circumstances’ will not exist.

What results in very special circumstances is not defined within either the NPPF or local policy. There could be a single and substantial factor that clearly outweighs the harms, or a number of seemingly ordinary benefits which, when considered in isolation might not be individually particularly noteworthy, but collectively, clearly outweigh the harms, to amount to ‘very special circumstances’ existing. The weight given to any particular factor, and their combination, is a matter of planning judgement for the decision taker.

In accordance with paragraph 153 of the NPPF, this report will evaluate harm to the Green Belt, any other harm and any other considerations, before coming to a conclusion as to whether very special circumstances exist. In assessing harm, the following weight has been ascribed to each matter either in favour or against the proposed development:

- ☐ Neutral;
- ☐ Limited;
- ☐ Moderate;
- ☐ Significant; or
- ☐ Substantial.

Harm to the Green Belt

Harm by Definition

Having established that there is definitional harm, it is necessary to consider other forms of harm to the Green Belt. The next sub sections will therefore consider the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and the impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Impact on Openness

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Given that the development has been identified as being inappropriate, the next test is to assess the impact of the development upon the openness of the Green Belt.

Planning Practice Guidance provides further advice on what factors can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on openness. This guidance clarifies that assessing this impact requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case in question. Furthermore, the guidance gives a number of examples where the courts have identified a number of matters which might need to be taken into account in making the assessment. In summary these include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects;
- ☐ The duration of the development, and its irremediability;
- ☐ The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation or use of the land by future occupiers.

As alluded to above, openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt that has spatial as well as visual aspects.

The application property benefits from some natural screening from mature trees along the site boundaries. However, it is recognised that the effect of this screening is only possible when the trees are in full leaf. Moreover, most of the trees along the site boundaries are not protected, meaning they could be pruned or felled without permission. It should also be noted that the topography increases gradually in a northerly direction, meaning the property occupies an elevated position when viewed from the south on Birtle Road. This creates an enhanced sense of exposure, with the application property visible to those travelling north along Birtle Road (Figure 1).



Figure 1 - Google Street View Image with Indicative Location of Extension Outlined in Red
Google, © 2025. Imagery © Airbus, Maxar Technologies.

Data:

Although the proposed extension would replace the existing attached garage, it would have a much greater scale and massing, reading as a continuation of the main dwellinghouse. The proposed extension would be approximately 3.41m taller and 10.66m longer than the extension it would replace, projecting a further 5.14m from the original rear elevation.

Moreover, the proposals include the loss of part of the lawned area to the side of the proposed extension to accommodate a large area of hardstanding, which again would contribute to the increased sprawl of built development on the site and loss of open greenspace. Therefore, it is considered that the development would negatively impact visual openness both within the site and from its surroundings.

In assessing the spatial aspect of the development, the application site is not isolated from the surrounding built environment to the north and east. The application site effectively sits on the edge of a cluster of existing development which is physically separated from the wider open countryside, as shown below (Figure 2).



Figure 2 - Aerial View of Application Site (Indicative Outline in Red)
Data: Google, © 2025. Imagery © Airbus, Maxar Technologies.

However, in assessing the spatial harm caused by the development on the Green Belt openness, it is important to recognise that the absence of any significant visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on openness. The spatial openness of the Green Belt is clear around the building and the development now introduces a much larger extension to the side of the dwelling, including an extended area of hardstanding. There is now a greater impact on the openness by the simple merit of the quantum of development that exists compared to that which previously existed.

Therefore, there is a reduction in the spatial openness of the application site, and this is harmful to the Green Belt.

Overall, the development would result in harm to spatial and visual openness, contrary to the requirements of paragraph 142 of the NPPF. It is now important to consider the impact of the proposal on the purposes that land within the Green Belt should serve.

Impact on purposes

Paragraph 143 of the NPPF sets out that Green Belt serves the following five purposes:

- 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 reserve 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.

A) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

The development applied for is not significant enough in size to contribute towards what could be considered to constitute a sprawl of a large built-up area and it would not conflict with this purpose.

B) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

The development and application site involved with this application serves no purpose in preventing neighbouring towns merging and as such it would not conflict with this purpose.

C) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

The development applied for is not significant enough in size to contribute towards what could be considered to constitute an encroachment into the countryside.

D) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The application site does not abut an identified historic settlement and does not have a physical or visual relationship to the setting or significance of an historic town. The proposed development would not conflict with this purpose.

E) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

The application site does not conflict with this purpose as it does not assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Openness Conclusion

The development is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and therefore, is harmful by definition. In terms of harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt, Officers have considered the proposal having regard to its individual merits, including its location, scale and form and the site context and the development would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt as discussed above. However, the proposal would not conflict with the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

Consequently, the development negatively impacts upon both spatial and visual openness. In conclusion, the harm upon openness and definitional harm by reason of inappropriateness is afforded substantial weight as required by NPPF.

The development is unacceptable in principle.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF requires analysis of other considerations in the planning balance and these are set out below.

Design / Visual Amenity / Character of the Countryside

PfE Policy JP-G1 (Landscape Character) requires development to reflect and respond to special qualities and sensitivities of the key landscape characteristics of its location having regard to various features. This application is located within the Pennine Foothills as defined by Figure 8.1 of PfE.

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Paragraph 135 goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

While the proposed extension would utilise an appropriate material palette, it is noted that the window to the front elevation of the proposed extension would not match the style of the existing windows.

Overall, however, it is considered that the scale and design of the extension would be broadly in-keeping with the existing bungalow.

Having due regard to PfE Policy JP-P1, CS Policies DM1 and P1, P2 and P3 and the NPPF, it is considered that the development has a limited harmful impact on the site and its surroundings.

Residential Amenity

The development is not considered to have an adverse impact on residential amenity as the property is located a sufficient distance from neighbouring properties. Therefore, neutral weight is attributed against the development in this regard.

Highways

The development is not considered to have an adverse impact on highway safety and would not generate a level of additional traffic which would have a detrimental impact on the safe and efficient operation of the immediate local highway network, or strategic routes. Therefore, neutral weight is attributed against the development in this regard.

Drainage

Policy EM/7 of the saved UDP and policy G8 of the Core Strategy require development proposals to prevent an increased risk of flooding and to ensure the satisfactory disposal of surface water. This includes the incorporation of appropriate measures for the management of surface and flood water, including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

The application seeks permission for a tarmac driveway with an area of approximately 187m² and it has not been demonstrated that the tarmac would be permeable, nor has it been shown how rainwater runoff would be discharged. While it has not been demonstrated that the development would comply with the aforementioned policies, it is noted that, in the event of an approval, the Council could apply a condition to the permission requiring the submission of a surface water drainage strategy. On this basis, neutral weight is attributed against the development regarding drainage.

Ecology

CS Policy G7 requires that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity are given full and appropriate recognition and protection. Policy G7 requires that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity.

The proposed extension would result in the loss of two established shrubs (Figure 3) to the rear of the existing garage, however no significant vegetation worthy of protection would be lost as a result of the proposals. In any event, it is acknowledged that the requirement for biodiversity features to mitigate the loss of the existing shrubs could be secured via condition. Therefore, neutral weight is attributed against the development in this regard.



Figure 3 - Image of 2no. Shrubs To Be Removed

VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A Court of Appeal judgement in *Redhill Aerodrome Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* establishes that ‘any other harm’ in paragraph 153 of the NPPF includes non-Green Belt harm that is to be taken into account in the weighing exercise of the planning balance as to determining whether or not very special circumstances exist which would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by inappropriateness and any other harm.

This Court of Appeal judgment is an important reminder that under paragraph 153 of the NPPF, when considering any planning application concerning proposed development in the Green Belt, LPAs should continue to ensure that substantial weight is given to harm to the Green Belt and any other harm.

In light of the above assessment, it is necessary to now consider whether there are ‘very special circumstances’ which clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt (arising from the

inappropriate development discussed above) and any other harm resulting from the proposal as set out in paragraph 153 of the NPPF.

THE APPLICANT'S CASE

The applicant has submitted a Green Belt Statement which sets out: *'the development improves the dwelling's sustainability, modernisation, and energy performance.'*

THE COUNCIL'S ASSESMENT

It is not considered that considerations raised by the applicant have been evidenced through their submission. As such only neutral weight can therefore be afforded to the potential improvements in the dwelling's sustainability and energy performance.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that decision should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development by approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 also states that when considering any planning application, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

In conclusion, NPPF requires that substantial weight is given to Green Belt harm by reason of the impact upon openness and definitional harm by reason of inappropriateness.

The other considerations identified by the applicant are afforded neutral weight and therefore the harm to the Green Belt is not clearly outweighed by these considerations and consequently very special circumstances do not exist to support the grant of planning permission.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning permission is refused for the following reason.

1. The proposed development comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt that is harmful by definition and furthermore, fails to preserve the openness of the Green Belt. Very special circumstances do not exist as the identified harm (by definition and other harm) is not clearly outweighed by other considerations, and the application is therefore contrary to policies PfE Policy JP-G9 (The Green Belt) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Procedure Statement

The development does not comply with the development plan and therefore does not comprise sustainable development. There were no amendments to the scheme, or conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which could have made the development acceptable and it was therefore not possible to approve the application.

Notes for Applicant:

For the avoidance of doubt, the decision notice relates to the following plans and supporting reports:

Green Belt Statement prepared by KDB Services Ltd

Location Plan

Existing Site Plan

Site Plan

Block Plan

Existing Floor Layouts & Elevations. Dwg no. 001. Rev A

Proposed Floor Layouts & Elevations. Dwg no. 002. Rev A

Report Author Bob Melling