

Chapter 7

Green Belt

7. THE GREEN BELT

The Situation as Surveyed

7.1 The Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) is an area of general restraint around London, in which it is intended to safeguard open land from development. The functions of the Green Belt are set out in the Explanatory Memorandum of the Approved Kent Structure Plan but are reproduced here for convenience. Its general regional functions are:-

- (a) To contain the further outward growth of London.
- (b) To prevent the merging of existing towns and settlements.
- (c) To preserve an area of mainly open country, for the enjoyment of residents of heavily built-up areas.
- (d) To preserve the special character of historic towns.
- (e) To assist in urban regeneration.

The particular functions of the Green Belt in Kent are:-

- (f) To preserve the open country between the edge of Greater London and the urban areas of the Medway Towns, Maidstone/Malling and Tunbridge Wells.
- (g) Near London, to curb the growth and preserve the separate identities of settlements in the area between Dartford and Swanley and in the Darent Valley north of Eynsford.
- (h) Further out, to maintain the break between Gravesend and the Medway Towns; to restrict the expansion of settlements south of the A2 including New Ash Green, Hartley, Longfield, New Barn, Istead Rise and Meopham, in order to prevent further suburbanisation and preserve their identity; to restrain further expansion between Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Tonbridge; and to define the western edge of the Maidstone - Malling urban area and curtail development in the transport corridor towards London.

The Borough Council's Approach

7.2 The Borough Council's objective is to safeguard the Green Belt in Gravesham in view of its local and wider regional importance. The main elements in the approach are:-

- (a) Precise definition of the area to which Green Belt policies apply in the Borough, taking account of Government advice set out in Circular 14/84 and PPG2.
- (b) Strict control of development in the Green Belt.

To these ends, the precise boundaries of the Green Belt in the Borough have been carefully re-examined in this Review and minor adjustments made where appropriate.

Policies and Proposals

Policy for the Green Belt in Gravesham

- 7.3 The Borough Council considers that, within Gravesham, Green Belt policies should apply to all land within the Borough lying south of the A2 and generally to the east of Gravesend, except for land lying within the boundaries of villages as identified on the Proposals Map.

Policy GB1

Green Belt policies, as set out in the Approved Kent Structure Plan (See Appendix 3), will be applied in the areas indicated on the Proposals Map.

Policy for development in the Green Belt

- 7.4 Applications for development in the Green Belt, whether they take the form of new development, change of use of existing buildings, replacement dwellings or extensions to dwellings, must be considered in the light of the relevant Approved Kent Structure Plan policies. Policy RS6 of the Approved Kent Structure Plan restricts development in the countryside to a number of specific categories which can be summarised as:-

- (a) That necessary for agriculture, forestry and the winning of minerals, or other land use essentially demanding a rural location.
- (b) Acceptable changes of use of redundant buildings of character.
- (c) Acceptable re-use or redevelopment of the existing built-up area of redundant institutional complexes.
- (d) Rebuilding or modest extension of existing dwellings in appropriate locations.
- (e) Public or institutional uses for which the rural location is justified.

Structure Plan policy for the Green Belt is even more restrictive, giving a strong presumption against new development except that related to open recreation and agriculture. Further guidance as to what is acceptable in terms of these policies and certain of the categories is set out in Chapter 9 (Country-side).

Policy GB2

There will be a strong presumption against permitting new development in areas subject to Green Belt policies, other than in accordance with Approved Kent Structure Plan Policy MGB2.