

**MAIN ISSUES**

- 3.13 The main countryside issues for the Local Plan to consider are:
- (i) How tight should Green Belt boundaries be bearing in mind the need to endure beyond the Plan period?
  - (ii) Does any land need to be reserved to allow for longer term development around the settlements should there be a need for such?
  - (iii) Some development may be allowed in the Green Belt to ensure the future of the rural economy and to make good use of redundant but otherwise attractive buildings thus preserving them as features in the landscape.
  - (iv) What are acceptable alternative uses of agricultural land and buildings in relation to likely impact on the character and quality of the landscape?

**POLICIES AND PROPOSALS**

**Green Belt and Other Open Countryside**

- 3.14 The general extent of the Green Belt in Chorley Borough is shown in diagrammatic form on the Structure Plan Key Diagram. It is the responsibility of this Local Plan to define precise boundaries on the ground taking due account of Structure Plan settlement policies (see Chapter 2), development requirements in the Plan period and to ensure durable boundaries thereafter, and that such boundaries relate to physical features on the ground where possible. Appendix 3 gives the guidelines used for defining the boundaries in terms of existing land uses.
- 3.15 The Structure Plan does not identify all rural areas of the Borough as being appropriate for Green Belt designation. In particular, the West Pennine Moors and associated land to the east of the M61 are excluded from the Green Belt due to the unlikelihood of Chorley merging with other settlements along this axis. However, it is considered important that this area is protected as an Area of Other Open Countryside from inappropriate development which would harm its open and rural character. The restrictions on development in the Green Belt and in the Area of Other Open Countryside are very similar and accord with strategic and national guidance. The fundamental difference is that there is a specific presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 3.16 Once Green Belt boundaries have been fixed they should only be changed in exceptional circumstances and are expected to endure significantly longer than the time period of this Local Plan (to 2001). This means that account needs to be taken of likely development needs beyond the Local Plan period. To accommodate for such, land between the urban area and the Green Belt (and Area of Other Open Countryside) boundaries can be safeguarded from development over the Plan period. Policy C3 identifies Areas of Safeguarded Land and outlines the restrictions on development in such areas that will be pursued over the period of the Plan. The likelihood of Areas of Safeguarded Land being required for development purposes in the longer term will depend on a number of factors including population, development, economic and social trends over the period of this Local Plan. Decisions on whether Areas of Safeguarded Land are required for development will therefore be incorporated in forthcoming reviews of the Plan.
- 3.17 The standard permissible uses in the Green Belt, Area of Other Open Countryside and Areas of Safeguarded Land are those which are essentially open and 'green' in appearance such that the use does not detract from the character of the countryside. These uses necessarily require ancillary buildings such as a sports pavilion or club house. These, as with all new buildings in the countryside, will require careful siting and an appropriate appearance so as not to visually intrude into the landscape.

- 3.18 Horticultural uses - where all the plants and produce are grown on the holding - are considered to be agriculture and therefore generally acceptable in the countryside. However, garden centres - where the majority of the goods sold are bought-in are essentially retail uses. The degree to which such centres are appropriate in the countryside will depend upon the extent to which individual proposals need to be located there. The onus will be upon an applicant to prove such a need exists.
- 3.19 There may be occasions where a development proposal comes forward which, whilst not falling within one of the specified categories of acceptable uses, may justifiably be located in the countryside. Planning permission would only be granted for such in 'very special circumstances'. It is the responsibility of the applicant to prove that such circumstances exist.

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| <b>C1</b> | <b>Within the Green Belt, as shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will not be granted, except in very special circumstances, for the erection of new buildings, other than for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it, or limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings. In appropriate circumstances, rural buildings may be used to provide suitable accommodation for small firms or tourist activities or as individual residences. In very special circumstances, a change of use may be permitted within the terms of national Green Belt Policy.</b> | <u>Implementation</u><br><br>By the use of development control powers. |
| <b>C2</b> | <b>Within the Area of Other Open Countryside, as shown on the Proposals Map, development will be limited to:</b>  | <u>Implementation</u><br><br>By the use of development control powers. |
|           | <b>(a) that needed for the purposes of agriculture or forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area;</b>   |  |
|           | <b>(b) the rehabilitation and re-use of existing rural buildings where their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with the character of the surrounding countryside;</b>  |  |
|           | <b>(c) the re-use, refurbishment or replacement of institutional buildings and associated facilities set within their own grounds.</b>  |  |

Note: This policy is not in general conformity with the Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006 - see page 7.

Areas of Safeguarded Land

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| <b>C3</b> | <b>In the Areas of Safeguarded Land, as shown on the Proposals Map, development other than that permissible in the countryside (Policies C1 or C2) will not be allowed unless a review of the Plan identifies a need for the land to be allocated for a specific use.</b> | <u>Implementation</u><br><br>By the use of development control powers. |
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