

Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Planning Services	Development Control Committee	30/08/05

## CARAVAN USES IN THE GREEN BELT

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise Members of existing national, regional and local planning policy with regard to caravan uses in the Green Belt.

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2. The policies highlighted in this report will help maintain the openness and visual amenity of the countryside in Chorley. This directly relates to the Council's priority for a greener, cleaner, safer Chorley.

### RISK ISSUES

3. The report contains no risk issues for consideration by Members.

### BACKGROUND

4. Since local planning authorities were first invited to consider establishing Green Belts in 1955, the purposes of Green Belt policy and related development control policies set out then remain valid today with little alteration. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open as openness is considered its most important attribute. Along with many other development pressures on the Green Belt, caravan uses present a threat to this openness, particularly as they can appear prominent in the countryside.

### GREEN BELT POLICY

5. **Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts** – Current Government guidance on Green Belts is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 2, revised in 1995. The guidance describes the purposes of including land in Green Belts as:
  - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
  - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The designation of land as Green Belt does not necessarily infer high landscape quality or nature conservation value and reflects only that the openness of the land is important and should be maintained. Within the Green Belt there is a presumption against inappropriate



development unless there are very special circumstances. Inappropriate development prejudices the purposes of including land in Green Belts and is harmful to its open character. Development, which by virtue of its siting, materials or design would be visually detrimental to the Green Belt, is also inappropriate. PPG2 defines the types of development which are appropriate in the Green Belt. These are reflected in Local Plan Policy DC1 set out in Paragraph 7 below.

6. **Adopted replacement Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016** – The general extent of Green Belts across Lancashire was first established in the late 1970s/early 1980s. Policy 6 of the replacement Joint Lancashire Structure Plan, adopted 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005 states that the general extent of Green Belts will be maintained and outlines the purposes served by Green Belt in Lancashire:
7. **Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review** – The Local Plan defines the precise boundaries of the Green Belt in the Borough. Policy DC1 restricts development in the Green Belt to:
  - for agriculture and forestry;
  - essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries or other land uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes;
  - limited extension, alternation or replacement of existing dwellings;
  - re-use of existing buildings;
  - limited infilling;
  - affordable housing to meet a local need;
  - re-use, infilling or redevelopment of Major Developed Sites.

Development not falling within one of these categories of appropriate use but would be justifiably located in the countryside maybe permitted if the applicant proves very special circumstances exist and the proposal would not harm the openness of the Green Belt.

## CARAVAN USES

8. A significant number of people in the United Kingdom spend their holidays touring with caravans or staying at static caravan holiday sites. The National Caravan Council estimate that there are over 4,000 such sites in the UK and that there are 498,000 touring caravans, 112,000 motorhomes and 335,000 static caravan holiday homes in use. This presents a number of planning issues, particularly in the countryside, regarding the storage of touring caravans when they are not in use and the demand for new and expanded caravan sites. In addition there are 'static' caravans on 'park homes' sites which are permanently occupied as residences.
9. **Storage** – Many private touring caravans are stored upon driveways or otherwise in the gardens of domestic properties when not in use. Under the General Permitted Development Order this does not require planning permission in most circumstances. This also applies to the to houses in the Green Belt. The number of caravans that can be stored at a residential property is not expressly limited, however, it is unlikely many more than two could be allowed without planning permission as they should be 'incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse'.
10. Outside the curtilage of residential properties, proposals for caravan storage in the Green Belt will be assessed principally in terms of their impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The open storage of caravans in the Green Belt has been held to be inappropriate development and is thus only acceptable in very special circumstances. There may be proposals where there will be little or no impact on openness – for example storage inside former agricultural buildings – and storage in the Green Belt would be likely to be

permissible in such cases unless there were other site-specific concerns - such as regarding access. Caravan storage can be quite feasible in built up areas and represents good use of otherwise un-used land providing it is well screened and has adequate road access.

11. **Holiday sites** – The Local Plan (Policy LT4) sets out criteria for permitting touring caravan sites as a means of attracting visitors to the Borough, particularly as they represent less formal and less permanent rural accommodation and therefore do not have a lasting impact on the countryside. It is however essential that they are appropriately located in order to have minimal impact on the local environment and proposals in the Green Belt also must be acceptable in terms of openness.
12. Static caravans used as holiday homes, even if they are only occupied in the summer months, represent a permanent impact on the countryside. There is no Local Plan policy covering these. The previous Lancashire Structure Plan did contain such a policy but it has not been carried forward to the latest Plan. However such developments are clearly inappropriate in terms of Green Belt policy.
13. **Residential uses** – Permanent occupancy of caravans in the Green Belt constitutes the creation of a new dwelling. The Council's policies on development in the Green Belt and new housing preclude this although exceptions may occur where there is clear agricultural justification. In accordance with Policy HS15 of the Local Plan, temporary permission may be permitted for a residential caravan in the Green Belt where there is a reasonable prospect of a new farming enterprise becoming viable within the medium term and other factors justify an agricultural workers dwelling.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

14. No comments.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

15. There are no apparent Human Resources implications from this report.

#### **CONCLUSION**

16. The aim, purpose and objectives of Green Belt policy are well established. There are robust development control policies set out in the Local Plan that are effective in preventing inappropriate development in the Green Belt, including caravan uses which harm openness and visual amenity. Caravan storage, new caravan sites and the extension of existing sites are not completely ruled out prevented in the countryside, however, proposals must not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

17. That the report be noted.

ALAN CROSTON  
HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

<b>Background Papers</b>			
<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>
Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts	January 1995	-	Gillibrand Street Offices, Chorley
The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995	June 1995	-	Gillibrand Street Offices, Chorley
National Caravan Council – Frequently Asked Questions	accessed June 2005	-	www.thecaravan.net

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