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1. Introduction

What is the Supplementary Planning Document?

1.1 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides detailed guidance on the implications of applying for planning permission for development located within the Green Belt. The guidance will help to ensure consistency in decision making when determining planning applications in the Green Belt.

1.2 The SPD provides additional information to assist with the interpretation and implementation of policies set out in the Core Strategy and Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP), and is used by the District Council in determining planning applications.

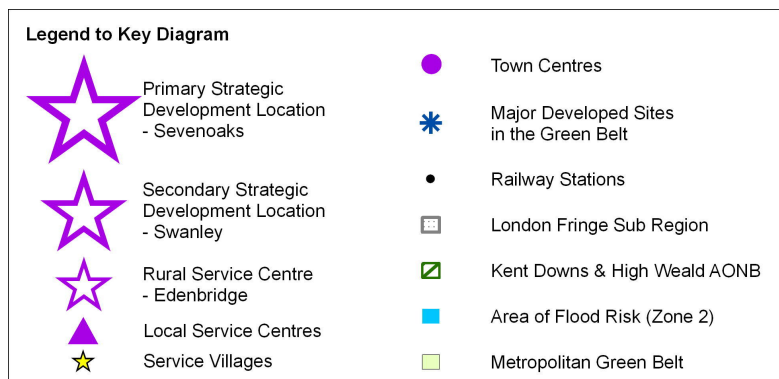
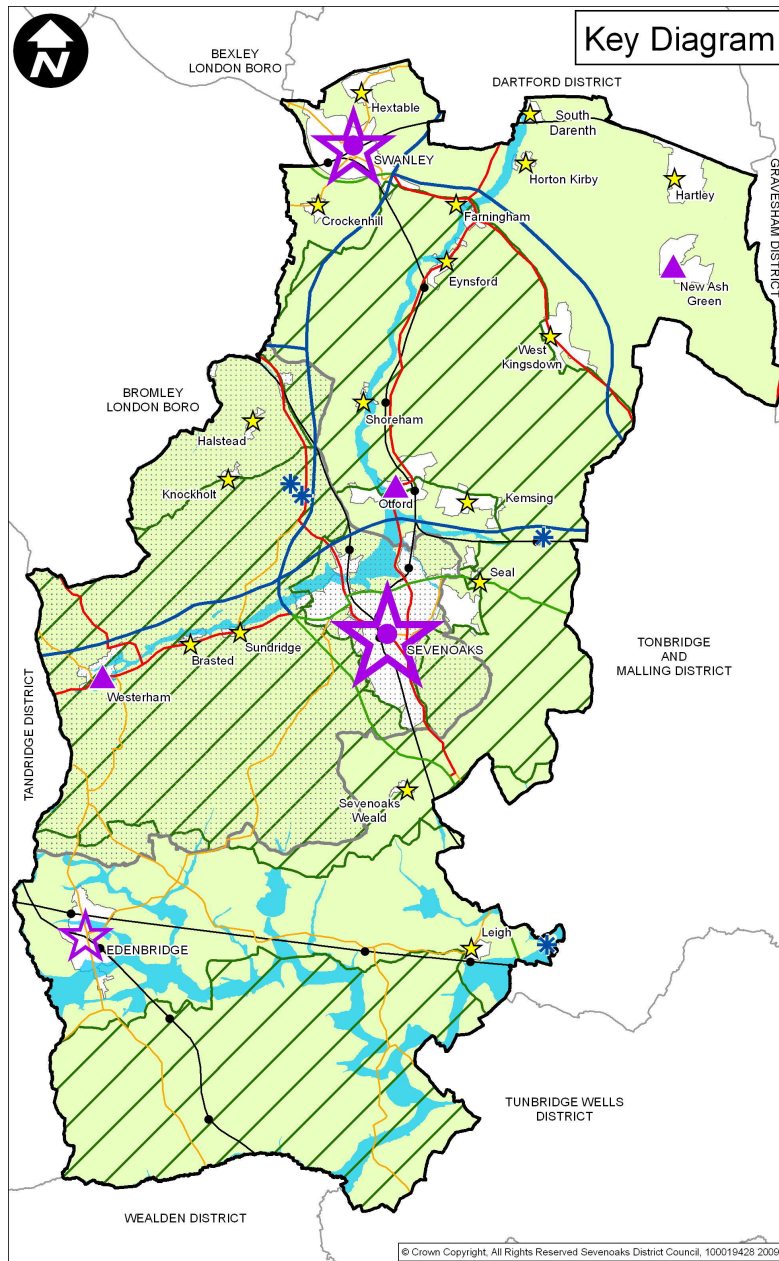
1.3 The District Council will take a positive approach to development in the Green Belt that accords with the Sevenoaks District Local Plan, including the guidance set out in this document and, where relevant, guidance contained within the Residential Extensions SPD (adopted August 2009).

1.4 Some minor development is permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No. 2) (England) Order 2008 without the need for a planning application (usually known as 'permitted development'). Home owners and developers who are considering such alterations are encouraged to refer to the guidance in this SPD when considering even minor development. This guidance clarifies the implications of development built as permitted development on future planning proposals in the Green Belt.

The Green Belt in Sevenoaks District

1.5 Sevenoaks is a large District lying to the south east of London with an overall area of just over 143 square miles (370 square km). Despite adjoining the outer edge of London it is predominantly rural in character with 93% of the District designated as Green Belt.

1.6 The Core Strategy Key Diagram outlines the extent of the Green Belt in Sevenoaks District whilst the Local Plan Policies Map illustrates the detailed boundaries.



The Core Strategy Key Diagram highlights the extent of the Green Belt

2. Overview of Green Belt Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent uncontrolled spread of urban areas by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and its permanence.

2.2 The Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns 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.

2.3 The Green Belt performs all these purposes in Sevenoaks District.

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 87) sets out that inappropriate development in the Green Belt is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in *Very Special Circumstances*. Inappropriate development in the Green Belt is harmful in principle, even if it is not visible from a public viewpoint.

2.5 Paragraph 89 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- *buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- *provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- *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;*
- *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- *limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan;*
- *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development; or*
- *local needs housing on rural exception sites in accordance with Core Strategy policy SP4.*

2.6 Paragraph 90 states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are:

- *mineral extraction;*
- *engineering operations;*
- *local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
- *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and*
- *development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order.*

The Sevenoaks Local Plan

Sevenoaks District Core Strategy

2.7 The Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted February 2011) is the key strategic development plan document produced by Sevenoaks District Council.

2.8 The document sets out the strategic approach to the Green Belt and demonstrates that existing Green Belt boundaries should be maintained. The Core Strategy also states that Green Belt land is not required for the Council to meet development needs up until 2026. In line with the Core Strategy (Paragraph 4.1.17) the case for any small scale adjustments to cater for situations where land no longer contributes to the Green Belt is considered through the Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP).

Allocations and Development Management Plan

2.9 The ADMP sets out policies applying to development in the Green Belt:

POLICY GB1	LIMITED EXTENSION TO DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB2	BASEMENTS WITHIN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB3	RESIDENTIAL OUTBUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB4	REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB5	DWELLINGS PERMITTED UNDER VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OR AS RURAL EXCEPTIONS IN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB6	SITING OF CARAVANS AND MOBILE HOMES IN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB7	RE-USE OF A BUILDING WITHIN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB8	LIMITED EXTENSIONS TO NON RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT
POLICY GB9	REPLACEMENT OF A NON RESIDENTIAL BUILDING IN THE GREEN BELT

2.10 Advice about how the District Council interprets the policies of the NPPF and the Local Plan is set out in the subsequent sections of this document.

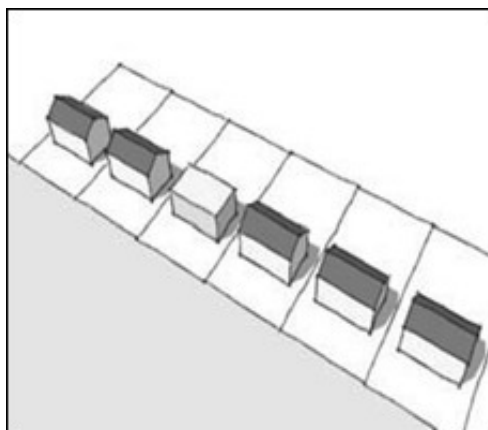
3. Limited Residential Infill in Villages in the Green Belt

3.1 Development in rural settlements is covered by Core Strategy Policy L07, which sets out that small scale redevelopment and infilling will be permitted in the Service Villages, which have defined Green Belt boundaries. Development within villages in the Green Belt is limited to small scale infilling only, due to the limited range of services and facilities in these settlements and the need to protect the openness of the Green Belt.

3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that limited infilling in villages, and limited infilling of brownfield sites which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

3.3 The District Council defines limited infill development as the completion of an otherwise substantially built up frontage by the filling of a narrow gap normally capable of taking one or two dwellings only.

3.4 The District Council defines a substantially built up frontage as an otherwise continuous and largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings visible within the street scene.



Edge of settlements with Green Belt boundaries

3.5 For settlements where a Green Belt boundary has been defined, the boundary usually marks the edge of the settlement where there is a break in development or a change in character to more loose-knit development. Where this is the case, infill development beyond a defined settlement boundary would compromise the purposes of the Green Belt and would constitute inappropriate development.

3.6 Where a change of character is not apparent between the defined settlement and development within the adjoining Green Belt, there may be circumstances where infill development is appropriate in the Green Belt, provided the purposes of the Green Belt would not be compromised.

Villages washed over by the Green Belt

3.7 Sevenoaks District contains villages which are 'washed over' by the Green Belt. Some of these have substantially built up frontages whereas others are loose knit. There may be opportunities for limited infill development within parts of villages washed over by the Green Belt which have substantially built up frontages. Limited infilling will not be acceptable in low density areas, where gaps between dwellings form part of the character of the area and contribute to openness. Limited infilling is also not acceptable in isolated or loose-knit groups of dwellings, where there is a break between the dwellings and the continuous built-up frontage of the village in order to protect the openness of the Green Belt.

Openness of the Green Belt

3.8 The NPPF states that one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness. Infilling should not therefore compromise the openness of the Green Belt.

4. Conversion of Buildings in the Green Belt

4.1 There is pressure in rural areas to convert existing buildings to residential or commercial use. The re-use of buildings in the Green Belt may be appropriate, providing there is no additional impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

4.2 In accordance with Core Strategy Policy SP 8 - Economic Development and Land for Business, the reuse of existing buildings for a commercial use that would make a positive contribution to the rural economy is preferred to residential conversion in the Green Belt.

4.3 The conversion of buildings in the Green Belt will be supported providing the proposal meets the criteria contained in Policy GB7 of the ADMP, which states;

POLICY GB7 - RE-USE OF A BUILDING WITHIN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals for the re-use of a building in the Green Belt which would meet the following criteria will be permitted:

a) the proposed new use, along with any associated use of land surrounding the building, will not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt or harm the existing character of the area; and

b) the applicant can demonstrate through a detailed structural survey and method statement that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete re-construction that would detract from their original character.

Where a proposal seeks the re-use of an agricultural building constructed within the last 10 years, it will be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that there is no longer an agricultural need for the building, or that the building is no longer fit for its agricultural purpose.

Where it is accepted that there is no future agricultural need for the building, the Council will resist future proposals for new agricultural buildings, unless it is apparent that they are of a different type and nature than that previously identified as being surplus to requirements.

4.4 Conversion of a building that requires substantial rebuilding in order to make it suitable for re-use will not be permitted. As a starting point when determining whether a proposal constitutes substantial new rebuilding, the Council will wish to see at least 75% of the original structure maintained to protect its character. However, the Council recognise that in some instances proposals may be able to protect the character of the existing building with a lesser proportion of the original structure being retained.

4.5 Further detailed guidance regarding information that should be submitted with a conversion application is included at **Appendix 1**.

4.6 To avoid increasing impact, conversions that involve disproportionate extensions will not be considered appropriate. Extensions to converted buildings may be controlled by the removal of Permitted Development Rights at the time of permission. Any proposals to extend a converted building will be reviewed with particular attention to ensure that the proposals do not detract from the character of the original building.

4.7 There is concern that permitted development rights in respect of agricultural buildings should not be abused as a way of obtaining residential or non-agricultural businesses development in the countryside. The Local Planning Authority will examine the history of buildings recently erected under agricultural permitted development rights where these come forward with proposals for change of use. Where a proposal seeks the re-use of an agricultural building constructed within the last 10 years, the applicant should demonstrate that the building is no longer required or fit for agricultural purposes.

4.8 In April 2014, permitted development rights were amended to allow the change of use of agricultural buildings and land to residential to be considered under prior approval, rather than the submission of a full planning application. This applies to agricultural buildings up to 450 square metres for conversion to a maximum of three dwellings, provided there is no increase to the external dimension of the existing building. Home owners and developers who are considering such conversions are encouraged to refer to this guidance.

4.9 Where the conversion of existing buildings would lead directly to a need for a replacement building and this could have a significant detrimental effect on the Green Belt, the Council will not generally permit the future construction of new agricultural buildings of the same type and nature and will consider the need to attach a condition to the permission removing permitted development rights for the erection of new buildings. The purpose of this control is to ensure that new agricultural buildings in the Green Belt are not permitted solely for the intention of subsequent conversion.

5. Residential Extensions and Replacement Dwellings

5.1 The NPPF and ADMP policies allow additions and alterations to buildings in the Green Belt provided they do not result in disproportionate additions in relation to the original building.

5.2 This section relates solely to proposals for residential buildings and outlines the approach to determining whether a proposal is proportionate to the original building. Guidance on the policies for non residential buildings is included at Chapter 6.

What is the Original Dwelling?

5.3 In determining proposals for residential extensions or replacement dwellings in the Green Belt an assessment will be made against the impact of the 'original' existing development.

5.4 Establishing what the Council deems to be the 'original dwelling' depends on when the property in question was first built and whether it pre-dates the modern planning system. In many cases the 'original dwelling' will refer to the floorspace of the dwelling when it was first constructed.

5.5 However for older homes constructed prior to July 1st 1948, the 'original dwelling' refers to the floorspace of the dwelling as it was on this date, when the Town and Country Planning Act was first introduced.

5.6 In either case any additions that have occurred since the 'original' dwelling date will be considered cumulatively and will be counted as part of the overall increase in floorspace of the dwelling when new additions are being assessed. This is because small reductions in openness, repeated many times, can have a cumulatively detrimental effect.

5.7 The original dwelling relates solely to the main dwelling and does not include ancillary outbuildings, whether subsequent or original, more than 5m from the dwelling. Any original outbuilding within 5m of the original dwelling may be included in the floorspace of the original dwelling.

5.8 Applications that seek the development of a former historic dwelling site, which has been demolished and the land returned to open use, will be resisted unless *Very Special Circumstances* have been demonstrated (see section 12).

Approach to Considering Residential Proposals

5.9 Policy GB1 of the ADMP is the policy by which a residential extension in the Green Belt will be considered. The policy states that;

POLICY GB1 - LIMITED EXTENSION TO DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals to extend an existing dwelling within the Green Belt which would meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) the existing dwelling is lawful and permanent in nature; and
- b) the design is in keeping with the original form and appearance of the building and the proposed volume of the extension, taking into consideration any previous extensions, is proportional and subservient to the 'original' dwelling and does not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive scale, bulk or visual intrusion; and

If the proposal is considered acceptable when considered against criteria a) and b), the following criterion will then be assessed and must also be met for the proposal to be considered appropriate:

- c) the applicant provides clear evidence that the total floorspace of the proposal, together with any previous extensions, alterations and outbuildings would not result in an increase of more than 50% above the floorspace of the "original" dwelling (measured externally) including outbuildings within 5m of the existing dwelling.

Planning applications that include the conversion of loft space through the addition only of roof lights will be permitted and will not be subject to the floorspace allowance in criterion c), provided there is no increase in volume or bulk to the existing building as result of the proposal. Proposals for loft conversions that include the addition of dormer windows or other alterations that create volume or bulk will be subject to criterion c).

5.10 Policy GB4 of the ADMP is the policy by which replacement dwellings in the Green Belt will be considered. The policy states that;

POLICY GB4 - REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals to replace an existing dwelling within the Green Belt which would meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) the existing dwelling is lawful and permanent in nature;
- b) the design and volume proposed does not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive scale, bulk or visual intrusion;
- c) the proposal adheres to the "original" dwelling curtilage; and
- d) the applicant provides clear evidence that the total floorspace of the replacement dwelling, together with any retained extensions, alterations and outbuildings would not

result in an increase of more than 50% above the floorspace of the "original" dwelling (measured externally).

Construction of permanent dwellings as replacements for mobile homes or caravans will not be permitted.

Lawfulness and Permanence

5.11 Policies GB1 and GB4 adopt a sequential approach to considering proposals for extensions or replacement dwellings in the Green Belt.

5.12 Criterion a) for both policies requires that the existing dwelling is lawful and permanent in nature.

5.13 The term lawful means that planning permission was granted for the original construction of the dwelling, that the dwelling was constructed prior to the introduction of planning controls or that the dwelling was constructed unlawfully but a certificate of lawfulness has since been granted. An existing dwelling can also be lawful if created through an approved change of use or conversion.

5.14 Criterion a) also requires the dwelling to be permanent in nature. For the purpose of these policies permanent in nature means it must be built on permanent foundations with connections to water supply and electricity. Non permanent buildings such as summerhouses or portacabin buildings, even though they may have such infrastructure connections, do not constitute permanent buildings and consequently Policies GB1 and GB4 do not apply to such buildings.

Consideration of Volume, Scale and Bulk

5.15 The volume, scale and bulk of an extension or replacement dwelling should not result in a large, bulky or intrusive building which would adversely impact on the character of the countryside or the openness of the Green Belt.

5.16 The impact of the development on the countryside is clearly greater if located in a highly visible location. However, the test of impact still applies even if there are limited or no public views of it as, if allowed, the argument could be repeated, with a potentially more serious cumulative impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the urbanisation of the countryside and for these reasons would be unacceptable. In some locations any extension or replacement dwelling may be inappropriate.

5.17 Where a development is acceptable in principle, its form should be well proportioned and present a satisfactory composition with the house. Rural buildings often have a simple form or may possess a visual symmetry which should not be significantly altered.

Floorspace Increase

5.18 National and local policies allow for a limited extension or moderately increased replacement dwelling directly related to the original dwelling. The size of the original building rather than the size of the plot will be used in assessing the appropriate size increase that is likely to be acceptable.

5.19 An appropriately proportioned enlargement, for the purpose of dwellings in the Green Belt is considered to be a floorspace increase of no more than 50% of the original floorspace of the dwelling and does not constitute a 50% increase per planning application. This is consistent with the approach of the previous Local Plan, but Policies GB1 and GB4 also emphasise the scale, bulk or visual intrusion; impact on openness and any cumulative impact.

5.20 Development proposals that increase the floorspace of the original dwelling by 50% are likely to be substantial in size, and most likely to increase the impact of the dwelling on the Green Belt.

5.21 Applicants should be aware that an addition may be considered 'disproportionate' or 'materially larger' as a result of unacceptable design even where it is below a 50% floorspace increase, depending on the other individual circumstances of the site, and what type of development is proposed.

The conversion of loft space through the inclusion of roof lights

5.22 Whilst the 50% floorspace approach has been successful in principle, the Council acknowledges that the floorspace does not always fully reflect the impact of extensions or replacement dwellings on the size of the original building. Alterations to the roof can be made to a building that increase the floorspace without significantly affecting the size of the building. For example the use of loft space that includes roof lights can create extra accommodation in the roof space without any significant harm in terms of height and bulk, and consequently without any significant impact on openness. Consequently, planning applications that include the conversion of loft space through the addition only of roof lights will not be subject to the floorspace allowance.

Residential Curtilage Restrictions for Replacement Dwellings

5.23 To ensure replacement dwellings do not result in a significantly greater impact on the Green Belt, Criterion c) of Policy GB4 restricts the replacement of dwellings to the originally defined residential curtilage to ensure the wider extent of the Green Belt is protected.

Basements

5.24 The introduction of basements to residential properties is covered in AMDP Policy GB2.

POLICY GB2 - BASEMENTS WITHIN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals to extend or replace a dwelling in the Green Belt that includes the provision of a basement which would meet the following criteria will be permitted and will not be subject to the floorspace allowance as set out in Policies GB1 and GB4:

- a) The basement would not exceed the footprint of the original dwelling (based on the footprint of the original building as at 1st July 1948 or, when it was first constructed, if this is later;
- b) The basement would be situated entirely underground with no part of it visible at any point externally;
- c) There would be no external windows, entrances or exits to the basement;
- d) The extension or replacement dwelling would not be artificially raised above natural ground level to accommodate the extension; and
- e) The elements of the proposal situated above ground would comply with Policy GB1 (extension) or GB4 (replacement dwellings) in all other respects;

For basement proposals that do not comply with the above, the floorspace of the basement shall be included within the calculation for the purpose of Policy GB1 or GB4.

5.25 The policy restricts basements to the footprint of the extension or replacement dwelling in order to ensure that only an acceptable proportion of accommodation is provided underground and that basement accommodation does not expand beyond the extent of the dwelling. For this reason basements will also be restricted to single storey underground.

5.26 The policy supports basements which would be situated entirely underground with no part of it visible at any point externally, no external windows, light-wells, entrances or exits and no artificial raising of the building above natural ground level to accommodate a basement. Compliance with these three criteria is essential if an applicant wishes to have the basement floor space excluded from the 50% floor space increase criterion. Where these criteria are not met the Council will include any floorspace created by the inclusion of a basement as counting towards the floorspace increase.

5.27 Where a basement is accepted as an exclusion to the 50% increase allowance, permitted development rights for further extensions may be removed to prevent unreasonably large sized dwellings (by controlling their scale and appearance) and to prevent any potential negative impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Residential Outbuildings in the Green Belt

5.28 The ADMP recognises that permitted development rights exist for certain outbuildings and that many proposals will not require planning permission.

5.29 For those outbuildings which would need planning permission, Policy GB3 states:

POLICY GB3 - RESIDENTIAL OUTBUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals for residential outbuildings, within the curtilage of an existing dwelling in the Green Belt, will be treated as an extension under Policy GB1 if the proposed outbuilding would be located within 5m of the existing dwelling.

Outbuildings located more than 5m from the existing dwelling will be permitted where the building, including the cumulative impact of other outbuildings and extension within the curtilage of the dwelling, would be ancillary to the main dwelling in terms of function and design and would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive bulk or visual intrusion.

5.30 Where planning permission is required for these structures in the Green Belt, and where the outbuildings are more than 5m from the existing dwelling, outbuildings will be permitted in addition to the allowance under Policies GB1 or GB4 if the design and cumulative impact would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive bulk or visual intrusion. The outbuilding should be well designed in relation to the dwelling, compatible with the character of the area and designed and sited to minimise visual intrusion. In order to minimise the impact of outbuildings on the openness of the Green Belt, the Council will seek to restrict any outbuildings to a limit of 40sqm (measured externally).

5.31 Clusters of buildings would have a more intrusive impact on Green Belt openness and therefore, if the proposed outbuilding would be located within 5m of the existing dwelling, proposals for residential outbuildings will be treated as an extension under Policy GB1, or as part of the replacement dwelling under Policy GB4.

5.32 The Council will seek to ensure that such proposals do not dominate the main dwelling or its setting. Their scale should not exceed what might reasonably be expected for the function of the building. Garages and outbuildings for domestic purposes should not normally need to exceed a single storey in height or have excessive volume. Such buildings should be clearly ancillary to the main dwelling in terms of function and design.

5.33 Whether planning permission is required or not, the design of outbuildings should not impact detrimentally on the space surrounding buildings and should be limited in scale.

5.34 Outbuildings should not compete with the main house. Often secondary buildings were traditionally erected with a simplicity of design. This may be used to good effect to reinforce the distinction between the original building and the secondary building. The

form of garages and outbuildings (including roof pitches) and architectural features should be in keeping with the existing and surrounding properties.

5.35 Where permission is granted for an outbuilding, a suitably worded condition may be imposed, or legal agreement required, to ensure that outbuildings are retained for purposes ancillary to the main dwelling and to prevent their conversion without the approval of planning permission. Consideration will also be given to the need to remove permitted development rights.

Dwellings Permitted Under Very Special Circumstances or As Rural Exceptions

5.36 The NPPF provides opportunity for applicants to pursue development in the Green Belt based on a *Very Special Circumstances* case if proposals are contrary to national and local Green Belt policy (see section 12). Where developments are, or have been, allowed under *Very Special Circumstances* they have been permitted in instances where development would not usually have been allowed, and it is reasonable that further extensions or a replacement dwelling that would impact on the openness should be resisted. Policy GB5 of the ADMP therefore removes permitted development rights for developments allowed under *Very Special Circumstances* and will refuse future proposals for extensions and outbuildings that impact on Green Belt openness in any way. Consequently Policies GB1, GB2, GB3 and GB4 will not apply to dwellings permitted under Very Special Circumstances or as rural exception (local needs) affordable housing schemes.

5.37 Similarly, the NPPF allows the construction of agricultural workers dwellings in the countryside, where there is an 'essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside'. As above, the Council will remove permitted development rights and refusal future proposals for extensions and outbuildings that impact on Green Belt openness.

5.38 Policy GB5 states:

POLICY GB5 - DWELLINGS PERMITTED UNDER VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OR AS RURAL EXCEPTIONS IN THE GREEN BELT

Where new dwellings are permitted in the Green Belt on grounds of very special circumstances or as part of a rural exception scheme, the Council will remove permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings to prevent future additions that cumulatively impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

Applications to extend dwellings or erect or extend outbuildings to dwellings that have or are permitted on grounds of very special circumstances or as part of a rural exception scheme will not be permitted.

5.39 A worked example of how the Council will consider planning applications against Policies GB1 and GB3 is included at Appendix 2, whilst an example against Policy GB4 is included at Appendix 3.

6. Non Residential Extensions, Replacement Buildings and Redevelopments

6.1 Commercial buildings vary widely in form, size and function and a general floorspace increase allowance would not be appropriate or workable for the extension or replacement of non residential buildings.

6.2 Instead, the Council will adopt a design based approach to assess proposals against the impact that they would have on Green Belt openness, as detailed within this chapter.

Approach to Considering Non Residential Extensions and Single Replacement Buildings

6.3 Policy GB8 of the ADMP sets out how the Council will consider extensions to non residential buildings in the Green Belt. It states that:

POLICY GB8 - LIMITED EXTENSION TO NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals to extend an existing non-residential building within the Green Belt which would meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) the existing building is lawful and permanent in nature; and
- b) the design and volume of the proposed extension, taking into consideration the cumulative impact of any previous extensions, would be proportional and subservient to the 'original' building and would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive scale, bulk or visual intrusion

6.4 Policy GB9 of the ADMP sets out how the Council will consider non residential replacement buildings in the Green Belt. It states that:

POLICY GB9 - REPLACEMENT OF A NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING IN THE GREEN BELT

Proposals to replace an existing non-residential building within the Green Belt which would meet the following criteria will be permitted:

- a) the existing building is lawful and permanent in nature;
- b) the design and volume of the proposed replacement building would not be materially larger than the 'original' building and would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive scale, bulk or visual intrusion; and
- c) the replacement building would be within the same use as the building to be demolished.

Lawfulness and Permanence

6.5 Criterion a) for both policies requires that the existing dwelling is lawful and permanent in nature.

6.6 The term lawful means that planning permission was granted for the original construction of the building, that the building was constructed prior to the introduction of planning controls or that the building was constructed unlawfully but a certificate of lawfulness has since been granted.

6.7 Criterion a) also requires the building to be permanent in nature. For the purpose of these policies, permanent in nature means it must be built on permanent solid foundations. Portacabins, caravans and mobile homes are not considered to be permanent buildings and are not considered to be entitled to rights to extend or be replaced under Policies GB8 or GB9.

Consideration of Volume, Scale and Bulk

6.8 The volume, scale and bulk of an extension or replacement building should not result in a large, bulky or intrusive building which would adversely impact on the character of the countryside or the openness of the Green Belt.

6.9 The impact of the development on the countryside is clearly greater if located in a highly visible location. However, the test of impact still applies even if there are limited or no public views of it as, if allowed, the argument could be repeated, with a potentially more serious cumulative impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the urbanisation of the countryside and for these reasons would be unacceptable. In some locations any extension or replacement building may be inappropriate.

6.10 Where a development is acceptable in principle, its form should be well proportioned and present a satisfactory composition with the building. Rural buildings often have a simple form or may possess a visual symmetry which should not be significantly altered.

Future Use of a Replacement Building

6.11 In order to comply with National Planning Guidance, criterion c) of Policy GB9 requires that the replacement building would be within the same use as the building to be demolished.

7. Previously Developed Brownfield Site Redevelopment

7.1 Sevenoaks District has a number of historic previously developed brownfield sites within the Green Belt, including sites identified as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt in the Core Strategy.

7.2 Paragraph 89 (Bullet 6) of the NPPF considers exemptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, including:

'limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development'.

7.3 In line with the NPPF the Council will consider redevelopment proposals of brownfield sites based on whether they would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The Council will consider the impact of proposals on a case by case basis and the unique circumstances of the site but in order to maintain the same impact on the openness of the Green Belt and fulfil its purpose, the Council would generally expect redevelopment proposals to:

- a. have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and where possible have less;
- b. not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and
- c. not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings.

7.4 The most relevant area for the purpose of (c) is the aggregate ground floor area of the existing buildings (the "footprint"), excluding temporary buildings, open spaces with direct external access between wings of a building, and areas of hardstanding. However the Council will consider alternative approaches to determining impact where there is justification to do so.

7.5 The character and dispersal of proposed redevelopment will need to be considered as well as its footprint. For example many buildings may together have a much smaller footprint than a few large buildings, but may be unacceptable because the dispersal of the buildings and their curtilages over a large part of the site may have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt and its purposes.

7.6 Proposals for protected employment sites and designated Major Developed Employment Sites in the Green Belt will also be subject to relevant policies contained in the ADMP and the Core Strategy, including Policy SP8 that seeks to protect existing employment sites.

8. Agriculture and Forestry

8.1 New buildings that are demonstrably essential for agriculture or forestry purposes are considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt.

8.2 Where possible these buildings should normally form part of a group, rather than stand in isolation and should relate to existing buildings in size and materials. However, where new buildings of modern design are proposed, they may be best separated from a group of traditional buildings to avoid visual conflict.

8.3 Where it is at an acceptable distance, the site selected should be close to an existing highway in order to avoid long obtrusive driveways. The development should respond well to landscape features such as local topography, woodland or hedgerows and not harm views of the skyline.

8.4 Applicants should include arrangements for siting, access, curtilage, boundary treatment, materials and landscaping in their plan proposals.

8.5 Although many agricultural and forestry related proposals may benefit from permitted development rights, the Council may request details of siting, design and external appearance to be submitted prior to approval for works to commence.

Agricultural and Forestry Workers Accommodation

8.6 Applications for agricultural or forestry workers dwellings are excluded from permitted development and therefore always require full planning permission in addition to fulfilling relevant functional and financial tests of their business.

8.7 If the proposal is to enable an agricultural or forestry worker to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work on a temporary or permanent basis, as part of their planning application, applicants should demonstrate that they have first examined the possibility of providing the accommodation by alternative means other than locating it on the land.

8.8 Where workers accommodation cannot be provided in the local area or by conversion of an existing building on site, there will be a requirement to provide evidence in support of both financial and functional tests. For permanent accommodation, the Council will need to be satisfied that there is a long term need for such accommodation.

8.9 Workers accommodation should be sited close to existing farm buildings wherever possible. An occupancy condition tying the accommodation to the employment use will be applied as a matter of course. Permitted development rights from the proposed new buildings are likely to be removed, in order to safeguard the openness of the Green Belt from further development.

9. Leisure, Tourism and Equestrian Development

Leisure Proposals

9.1 Sevenoaks District has a wide range of natural and cultural attractions throughout the area. They form the basis of the tourism industry that is vital to the local economy.

9.2 The Core Strategy has an objective to safeguard existing open spaces, sport and recreational facilities that meet community needs and improve provision where necessary.

9.3 The erection of new buildings for the purpose of leisure or tourism would be considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless it would provide essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation that preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its overall purpose. Where this would not apply, *Very Special Circumstances* must be demonstrated for any proposals for tourism.

9.4 The Council will encourage the conversion, extension or replacement of buildings into tourism facilities providing the proposal complies fully with respective Policies GB7, GB8 and GB9 of the ADMP. Any proposal should also comply with the other relevant general policies set out in the ADMP and the Green Belt design guidance contained within this document.

Equestrian Development

9.5 The Core Strategy identifies horse riding as a significant recreational activity in rural areas of Sevenoaks District, which offers benefits to local communities.

9.6 Horse and other equestrian-related activities are popular forms of recreation in the countryside that can fit in well with farming activities, and help diversify the rural economy.

9.7 The Council will support equine enterprises in the Green Belt that maintain environmental quality and countryside character.

9.8 Policy LT2 of the ADMP covers Equestrian Development in the Green Belt and states:

Proposals for equestrian development in the Green Belt will be permitted where the scale of the development is appropriate to a Green Belt setting, and where the cumulative impact of other buildings, does not harm the openness of the Green Belt. Where stables or associated equestrian buildings are proposed they should be designed and constructed in materials appropriate to a rural area and should not be of a size and degree of permanence that they could be adapted for other use in the future.

Buildings would be appropriate in scale to their setting and would be closely related to existing farm buildings or other groups of buildings that are well screened from public view;

9.9 Any proposal for equestrian development should also comply with the other relevant general policies set out in the ADMP.

10. Change of Use of Green Belt Land

10.1 Permission is required if a proposal would result in the change of use of land. The use of land can by its very nature have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the current authorised use, for example the use of land as a car-park or domestic garden and therefore impact would need to be assessed. A common change of use in the Green Belt is from an agricultural use to a garden / curtilage extension or recreational use such as horse riding. The following section explains how change of use applications will be considered.

Garden / Curtilage Extensions

10.2 Owners of homes in the Green Belt sometimes want to extend their garden, or 'curtilage', into the surrounding countryside. These types of extensions are considered to be a change of use and can detrimentally impact on the openness of the Green Belt. This process can be cumulative and over time can lead to suburbanisation and urban sprawl.

10.3 For these reasons, the Council consider garden and curtilage extensions in the Green Belt to be inappropriate development which will not be permitted.

Recreation

10.4 Use of land in the Green Belt can provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and outdoor sporting activities near urban areas. Provision may be made for structures related to outdoor recreation as long as they are considered to be appropriate.

10.5 Where outdoor recreation activities are acceptable in principle, they may still result in unacceptable adverse impacts. The landscape character and the visual amenity of the countryside may be affected as well as other possible impacts from noise, traffic generation, car parking, lighting, and disruption to residential amenity.

10.6 New buildings should be limited to facilities that are the minimum essential for the operation of the associated activity, for example small changing rooms. 'Appropriate Facilities' means that they are genuinely required for uses of land that preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

10.7 The erection of horse related structures such as stables, fences, and jumps can fall within the definition of appropriate Green Belt development provided that they are small in scale. Such developments may not require the benefit of planning permission subject to certain criteria being met, providing the use of the land is authorised for the keeping of horses.

11. Design Guidance

11.1 The following considerations are applicable to all development in the Green Belt, unless otherwise stated. These issues should be considered thoroughly by the applicant when preparing any proposal and Design and Access Statement within the Green Belt.

Siting

11.2 Careful consideration should be given to the impact of the proposal when viewed from locations in both the immediate vicinity and the wider countryside. The view of the proposal from roads, public footpaths and settlements will be given significant weight when assessing planning applications.

11.3 Applicants should give careful consideration to the siting of proposed buildings.

11.4 Buildings located on the crest of a hill are visually intrusive. If such a location is unavoidable, special consideration will be necessary to minimize the impact.

11.5 On sloping sites it is normally best to align a building parallel with the contours and use cut and fill as opposed to underbuilding. If different floor levels are practicable, the building should be stepped down the slope.

11.6 Existing trees and hedgerows should be retained and new buildings should respect the existing field boundary pattern.

Form

11.7 Where an extension is acceptable in principle, its form should be well proportioned and present a satisfactory composition with the original building. Rural buildings often have a simple form or may possess a visual symmetry which should not be significantly altered.

11.8 Extensions should not overwhelm or destroy the original form of the building, but should appear secondary to it. The scale of an extension should fit unobtrusively with the building and its setting. An extension which infills a void between existing parts of a building, such as a space in an 'L' shaped house, may be less obtrusive and could reduce impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

11.9 Roof shape is critical to creating a successful built form. The pitch of extension roofs should be as, or similar to, the main house roof pitch. It should be noted that a flat roof extension in the countryside designed in order to reduce the bulk of the proposal is unlikely to be acceptable in appearance. The pitch of replacement dwelling roofs should be as, or similar to, the original house roof pitch to reflect the character of the original dwelling and surrounding area. Roof shape also determines the rate at which run-off enters the drainage system in periods of intense rainfall and this should be taken into consideration.

11.10 Particular account will be taken of the cumulative impact of extensions, including the effect on the character of the original property. Repeated extensions to properties impact significantly on the original form and can have a cumulatively detrimental effect.

Landscape Features and Setting

11.11 The landscape is very important to the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. All applications for development in the Green Belt will be required to demonstrate how they protect the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt, through the form and design of buildings and all external areas, landscape works and planting. Further information on the landscape character of the area in which the proposed development is located can be found in the Sevenoaks District Countryside Character Assessment SPD.

11.12 Consideration must be given to the best way of integrating a new building with its immediate surroundings and landscape.

11.13 Existing trees, shelterbelts and other biodiversity features (e.g. ponds, unimproved grassland, etc) should be retained, and where appropriate enhanced.

11.14 Wherever possible, native trees should be used for new planted areas, rather than fast growing conifer hedges. Any new planting should be first agreed with the Council. Any areas proposed for new planting should take account of any plans for future development.

11.15 Sustainable drainage systems should be included as part of on site green infrastructure to reduce the risk of surface water flooding. Any systems should have appropriate management arrangements. Planting assists in water retention and amelioration of any flooding.

11.16 Waste material and redundant machinery should be removed, as should obsolete buildings except where those constructed in the local style and are worth retaining.

11.17 Consideration should be given to how hard-surfaced areas will link together and where resurfacing is needed, materials that are in-keeping with the surrounding area should be used. Non-porous surfaces that aggravate water run-off should be avoided where feasible.

Materials

11.18 Materials should be sympathetic with the location, minimising visual impact. Applicants should take into consideration any local vernacular when selecting materials and colours for their building.

11.19 The use of dark colours for window and door frames, guttering and other such elements is often preferable to lighter colours but this will also depend on the materials used within the building fabric. The use of overly bright colours should generally be avoided.

11.20 In relation to agricultural buildings, with a wide range of cladding materials and colours available, applicants should consider using materials and colours that have been used on similar buildings, if located within a farm complex. There should be an emphasis on materials and colours that have the least visual impact on the surrounding area.

12. Very Special Circumstances

There are some situations that may allow certain developments to take place in the Green Belt, which under any other circumstances would not be allowed. These are known as '*Very Special Circumstances*' and if proven, are treated as a departure from the Development Plan.

12.1 When attempting to prove *Very Special Circumstances* the onus is on the applicant to prove that the exceptional nature of the proposal outweighs the harm that it would cause to the Green Belt.

12.2 Circumstances that are accepted as being "very special" are very rare, but will usually involve a specific judgement being made that no other option is available in light of the unique circumstances and individual case. These circumstances are not common and are unique 'one-offs' that are rarely likely to be repeatable.

12.3 If a proposal is against Green Belt policy it would therefore be inappropriate development. In such circumstances an application may still be submitted, however the Council would have to judge there to be *Very Special Circumstances* for it to be permitted.

12.4 Each '*Very Special Circumstances*' argument will be judged on its own unique set of circumstances. Any accepted case would not necessarily result in a precedent for similar arguments on the same or alternative sites.

12.5 Where new dwellings are permitted in the Green Belt on grounds of very special circumstances or as part of a rural exception scheme, the Council will remove permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings to prevent future additions that cumulatively impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

'Departures' from the Local Plan

12.6 If the Council receives an application considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, yet considers approving it, the decision is considered to be a departure from the Development Plan. The Council may need to send the planning application to the Secretary of State giving them the opportunity to 'call it in' to make their own determination.

12.7 This process ensures that the Secretary of State has the opportunity to consider whether to call-in the more significant and potentially most harmful proposals for inappropriate development, thereby helping to strengthen planning controls in the Green Belt.

12.8 Applications will be referred to the Secretary of State if:

- the Council does not plan to refuse the application; and
- the application is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and involves either:

12. Very Special Circumstances

- a) the construction of a building or buildings with a floor space of more than 1,000 square metres; or
- b) any other development that, by reason of its scale or nature or location, would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Glossary

Explanation of some planning terms commonly used:

Amenity - positive element that contributes to the overall character or enjoyment of an area.

Cumulative Impact - A number of developments in a locality or a continuous activity over time that together may have an increased impact on the environment, local community or economy.

Curtilage - The enclosed area immediately surrounding a building.

Departure - A proposed development that is not in accordance with the Development Plan, but for which the local planning authority proposes to grant planning permission.

Development Management/Control - The process whereby a local planning authority receives and considers the merits of a planning application and whether it should be given permission.

Development Plan Documents (DPD) - The documents that a local planning authority must prepare (to make up its Local Plan), and which have to be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination. Should include the following elements:

- Core Strategy;
- Site specific allocations of land and development management policies; and
- Policies Map (with inset maps, where necessary).

Dwelling - A self-contained building or part of a building used as a residential accommodation, usually housing a single household.

Floorspace - The total floor area enclosed by the exterior walls of a building.

Green Belt - A designation for land around certain cities and large built-up areas, which aims to keep this land permanently open or largely undeveloped.

Infill Development - The completion of an otherwise substantially built-up frontage, by the filling of a narrow gap normally capable of taking one or two dwellings.

Local Plan - The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

Local Planning Authority - The authority entitled to make a particular planning decision. Sevenoaks District Council determine all planning applications in their administrative area.

National Planning Policy Framework - Produced by the Government in March 2012 to guide Local Authorities when they are producing their Local Plans and determining planning applications. The NPPF replaced most of the guidance previously contained in Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Policy Statements (PPGs/PPSs).

Planning Permission - Permission to carry out development issued by a local planning authority.

Rural Exception Sites - Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.

Supplementary Planning Documents - Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Urban Sprawl - The uncontrolled or unplanned extension of urban areas into the countryside.

Very Special Circumstances (VSC's) - unique and rare situations that may allow certain developments to take place in the Green Belt, which under any other circumstances would not be allowed. If proven, VSC's are treated as a departure from the Development Plan.

Washed Over - If a settlement is 'washed over' by the Green Belt, it is treated as being part of the Green Belt and the Green Belt policies apply to any development in the village.

Appendix 1 - Conversion Guidance

For any proposed conversion the Council needs to be satisfied that:

- A building is structurally sound at the time the application is submitted.
- That it is capable of being converted without significant re-building, and
- Can remain standing as existing throughout the construction process.

Minimum information required:

- A structural survey of the existing building, to include an internal inspection.
- Attached to the survey should be plans and elevations of the existing building highlighted to show any remedial work such as under-pinning or replacement roof timbers that would be required and to show any areas that would or may need re-building, even if this is only localised, such as demolition of the wall under a window to make it a door. Clarify whether the roofing material and structure is to be removed and replaced.
- Where there are concerns about the stability or amount of re-building proposed, this should be clarified or the application refused due to lack of information to confirm whether the building is capable of conversion.
- A method statement should set out how you intend to keep the building standing and stable in its current state throughout the construction process. They may need to refer to how vulnerable walls will be protected when new openings are formed or when there is under-pinning. If the existing structure is not going to be load bearing, will it be strong and stable enough to remain standing whilst the new structure / foundations are built around it. Identify which parts of the existing structure and materials will remain, be repaired or replaced.

Typical Brief for Structural Survey

Outline: The survey should include:

- The inspection of visible, exposed and accessible parts of the fabric of the building.
- Refer to building services, drainage, outbuildings as well as the load bearing structure and general fabric of the building.
- Details of all defects or potential defects.
- If the survey indicates that the condition of the building's structure or the potential for future movement or deterioration cannot be accurately predicted, this should be stated.

Detailed requirements to consider:

- Are the walls, roof and any other load bearing elements adequate on their own and in their current condition to allow for the conversion of the building for the purpose intended? If not, what remedial work is required e.g. repairs, replacements of some parts, a new roof structure, an independent internal load bearing structure.
- Confirm whether there are any existing foundations and if so, whether they are adequate to allow for the conversion of the building for the purpose intended.

- If new foundations are required in whole or part or the existing foundations need to be re-enforced, comment on the impact this may have on the existing structure. For example, could such work affect the stability of a wall?
- Do any parts of the structure require work to guarantee structural stability?
- Is the structural stability of the building sufficient to be maintained whilst work is undertaken to convert the building for the purpose intended?
- A defects drawing and report is required.
- A drawing and report to confirm the extent of remedial works is required.

When considering the structure and whether it is adequate for the purpose intended, consideration should be given to the requirements of the Building Regulations.

Please note that for conversion of buildings in the Green Belt the Council needs to be satisfied that any conversion can be carried out without the need for significant rebuilding and without additions. The survey should need to bear this in mind.

Appendix 2 - Practical Example of how the Council will determine an application against Policies GB1 and GB3: Limited Extensions or Outbuildings to Existing Dwellings in The Green Belt

The Council will require full floorspace and elevation drawings of the existing and proposed dwelling, clearly indicating, if applicable, the extent of any previous extensions in order to calculate the floorspace. Failure to submit such drawings may make the application invalid.

The Council will also require a breakdown of the applicant's floor space figures detailing how the proposals comply with the details of the policy.

Upon receipt of a valid planning application, the Council will assess an application based on the following steps;

Step 1: The Council will determine whether the existing dwelling is lawful and permanent in nature.

Step 2: The case officer will visit the site and determine whether the design and proposed volume of the extension, taking into consideration any previous extensions, is proportional and subservient to the 'original' dwelling and would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive bulk or visual intrusion.

If the proposal is considered acceptable when considered against steps 1 and 2, the council will review the floorspace figures as detailed below.

Step 3: The Council will determine what they believe to be the floorspace of the original dwelling **(A)**.

Step 4: The Council will determine the total floorspace that the proposed extension or alteration seeks to add **(B)**

Step 5: The Council will determine the floorspace of any previous extensions or alterations **(C)**.

Step 6: Calculation

If the floorspace of the dwelling as proposed, plus the floorspace of any previous extensions are equal or less than the total floorspace of the original dwelling plus 50% increase, then the proposal will be considered to comply with criterion c) of the policy.

If it is greater than an 50% floorspace increase, the Council will consider the proposal a disproportionate addition contrary to the policy unless *Very Special Circumstances* apply.

Appendix 3 - How the Council will determine an application against Policy GB4: Replacement Dwellings in The Green Belt

The Council will require full floorspace and elevation drawings of the existing and proposed dwelling, clearly indicating, if applicable, the extent of any previous extensions in order to calculate the original floorspace. Failure to submit such drawings may make the application invalid.

The Council will also require a breakdown of the applicant's floorspace figures detailing how the proposals comply with the details of the policy.

Upon receipt of a valid planning application, the Council will assess an application based on the following steps;

Step 1: The Council will determine whether the existing dwelling is lawful and permanent in nature;

Step: 2: The case officer will visit the site and determine whether the design and proposed volume of the replacement dwelling would materially harm the openness of the Green Belt through excessive bulk or visual intrusion.

Step 3: The Council will ensure that the curtilage of the proposed replacement dwelling adheres to that of the original dwelling.

If the proposal is considered acceptable when considered against steps 1, 2 and 3 the council will review the floorspace figures as detailed below.

Step 4: The Council will determine what they believe to be the floorspace of the original dwelling **(A)**.

Step 5: The Council will determine the total floorspace of the replacement dwelling **(B)**

Step 6: The Council will determine the floorspace of any retained extensions, alterations or outbuildings **(C)**.

Step 7: Calculation

If the floorspace of the replacement dwelling, plus the floorspace of any retained extensions, alterations or outbuildings are equal or less than the total floorspace of the original dwelling plus 50% increase, then the proposal will be considered to comply with criterion d)

If it is greater than an 50% floorspace increase, the Council will consider the proposal a disproportionate addition contrary to the policy unless 'Very Special Circumstances' apply.

Appendix 4 - Pre-Application Advice

Pre-Application Advice

Pre-application advice is valuable in ensuring the best possible development outcomes for the community. It is also of benefit to any prospective applicant for the following reasons:

- It gives you an opportunity to understand how our policies will be applied to your development and you can identify and resolve potential problems before an application is submitted. This can help prevent costly and time-consuming amendments to schemes later;
- It may indicate that a proposal has little or no realistic chance of success, thus saving you considerable time and money;
- It may lead to a reduction in time spent by your professional advisers in working up the proposals in more detail;
- It can identify at an early stage whether any specialist advice is necessary (e.g. listed buildings, trees, landscape, transport, ecology or archaeology);
- We can give advice that can help you prepare a better planning application so we can process it more quickly and give you a decision sooner.

The Council introduced charges for pre-application meetings and letters from 1 July 2008. These charges apply to enquiries or meeting for planning officer advice prior to the submission of a new application or following the refusal of planning permission. For up-to-date details or the fee required for pre application advice, please visit the Council's website via the below link;

http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/environment/planning/pre_application_enquiries/3373.asp

What information we require for pre-application advice

All proposals;

- Site location plan with the site clearly marked (to a recognised scale, Nth point etc)
- Written details of the address and proposal
- Sketch block plan for any built development (to a recognised scale)
- Photographs showing key features of the site (directions shown on plan)

Residential extensions or replacement dwellings in the Green Belt;

- Existing floor plans and proposed floor plans to scale and detailed calculations of original floorspace and resulting floorspace

How to submit your pre-application

There are a few ways in which you can submit your pre-application:

By email to: planning.preapplication.advice@sevenoaks.gov.uk

By post or in person: Community and Planning Services, Sevenoaks District Council, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1HG.