

LAND AT MOUNT AVENUE, CHALDON CR3 5BB

GREEN BELT ANALYSIS

Prepared on behalf of

Sigma Homes

SIG1594gba



Placing development well

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Green Belt Analysis	
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The aim of this report is to provide an assessment of the Site's performance against the purposes of the Green Belt and assessment of the site contribution to the Green Belt openness from both a spatial and visual perspective as set out in the NPPF and by having regard to the Samuel Smith Old Brewery¹ case. It also considers the effect on the Green Belt as a result of development at the Site.
- 1.1.2 This analysis considers the development of the site for a residential scheme with associated landscaping. The site and its immediate context sit within a generally settlement fringe landscape which exhibits a strong relationship with the settlement edge of Chaldon. The site has enclosure from its surroundings provided by mature boundary vegetation and existing built form, but some limited short range visibility exists in places.
- 1.1.3 This document also includes analysis relating to the site's location within and relationship with Green Belt.
- 1.1.4 A desk based study will identify any primary constraints and will be considered alongside findings from site visits.

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¹ R (on the application of Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others) v North Yorkshire County Council [2020] UKSC 3. Judgment delivered by the UK Supreme Court on 5 February 2020. The case concerned the interpretation of "openness" in the context of Green Belt policy under paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.0 The Green Belt

The Green Belt Designation

2.1.1 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states:

The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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.

2.1.2 The fundamental aims of Green Belt policy are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.1.3 Section 13 of the NPPF reinforces that the principal aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent the sprawl of urban areas by keeping land permanently open. In particular, Paragraph 143 establishes the five key purposes underpinning Green Belt designations:

- (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 preserve 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.

2.1.4 It is important to note that while all five purposes are critical, the interpretation of purposes (a), (b), and (d) is primarily aimed at curbing the expansion of large towns or cities; villages and smaller rural settlements are not the intended focus and the Planning Practice Guidance is explicit about this. This distinction is pivotal when considering proposals that may involve development within the Green Belt.

2.1.5 An important component of the evaluation of the performance of any site in relation to Green Belt purposes, is consideration of the effectiveness of existing boundaries. The NPPF establishes that boundaries should be clearly defined, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

2.1.6 The following features are considered most likely to fulfil this requirement:

- Major transport infrastructure, motorways, main trunk roads and railways;
- Landscape features including woodland blocks and bands and watercourses; and
- Topography such as ridgelines.

2.1.7 Where these features are absent secondary boundaries could include historic field hedgerows or minor/private roads.

2.1.8 The site falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt, which covers roughly 516,000 hectares.

Tandridge District Green Belt Policy

2.1.9 Tandridge District Council's approach to Green Belt management is underpinned by a commitment both to the national standards of the NPPF and to locally tailored policies designed

to safeguard openness and prevent urban sprawl. In Tandridge, where over 93% of the land is designated as Green Belt, the local plan provides clear guidance on how development should take place in these sensitive areas.

Green Belt Protection and Defined Villages

- 2.1.10 The Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies contains specific provisions for development within the Green Belt. One notable section relates to "Defined Villages in the Green Belt" (Section 12 of the Detailed Policies). Here, the Council acknowledges that while infill or small-scale redevelopment in village contexts is permissible, it must occur within well-defined boundaries so that the intrinsic open character contributing to the overall Green Belt is preserved. The policy explicitly states that these defined village areas should retain their distinct identities and maintain the openness essential to the policy's objectives. Proposals must demonstrate that any development will not extend the settlement boundary or compromise the spatial and visual characteristics that define Green Belt land.
- 2.1.11 A Green Belt review was prepared as part of the emerging Local Plan—now withdrawn—which provided an evidence base on the spatial and visual qualities of the local Green Belt. Although this review was withdrawn, it remains instructive. Its conclusions about enclosure, openness, and the scope for limited development need to be considered in light of updated national guidance and new evidence.
- 2.1.12 Overall, the withdrawn review would likely conclude that the site serves as a limited functioning segment of the Green Belt based on both its spatial characteristics and its limited role in contributing to the key purposes of Green Belt protection.

3.0 The Site

- 3.1.1 The site and its immediate context are situated within a settlement fringe landscape that has a clear connection with the edge of Chaldon. Most of the interior of the site lacks significant vegetation excepting that which follows the boundary, which presents an opportunity for landscape enhancement through mitigation in future proposals. It features a simple landscape character, with nearby residential development, telegraph poles, and lighting columns contributing urban influences on the settlement fringe interface.



Image 1: Site Location on Aerial Photograph

- 3.1.2 Within the site lays a field in equestrian use that is defined by hedgerows with trees and linear landscape features. The landform is gently undulating
- 3.1.3 The site falls within a 'pocket' formed by a combination of Birchwood Road and vegetation to the south and by existing dwellings to the west, north and east. There is frequent presence of manmade elements and road noise and human activity is noticeable. Frequent vegetative and built features create enclosure.
- 3.1.4 This physical enclosure that is formed by the surrounding features which are associated with the surrounding settlement of Chaldon and further afield Caterham form strong boundaries to the land in which the site sits. The overriding character of this area is settlement fringe, which is formed by the road, vegetation and dwellings.
- 3.1.5 The site is not covered by any policies or designations of relevance to landscape.
- 3.1.6 The site would not likely be considered a 'valued' landscape in respect of NPPF paragraph 187a.
- 3.1.7 The vegetation, built form and landform of the local area prevent most potential views into or through the site, meaning that the area has a well enclosed character. The site is physically

separated from the more undeveloped landscape to the south by physical barriers formed by the dwellings and road.

4.0 Green Belt Analysis – Site Specific

- 4.1.1 Green Belt is not considered a landscape designation, but as highlighted by the Sam Smith decision (R (Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others) v North Yorkshire County Council [2020] UKSC 3) the visual effects of a development on the openness of Green Belt can be considered of relevance to landscape.
- 4.1.2 There is a difference between impacts on visual amenity, which are normally considered within the process of LVIA and the visual aspects of openness which are considered as part of Green Belt Assessment.
- 4.1.3 In LVIA an assessment is made on the effects of development on views available to people and their visual amenity and how this may affect character and scenic quality; this process has been undertaken in the LVIA which accompanies the application (reference SIG1594lvia). In consideration of Green Belt, an assessment is made on the effects of development on the visual openness of the Green Belt including impacts on views, links to the wider Green Belt, inter-visibility between settlements and whether measures could be proposed that would restore the baseline aspects of openness.
- 4.1.4 Openness can have both spatial and visual aspects meaning both visual impacts and volume of development can be of relevance. This is generally considered alongside the duration and remediability of the development and the degree of noticeable activity likely to be generated, such as traffic.

Visual Openness

- 4.1.5 The visual aspect of openness as it relates to the green belt is not measured in the same way as would be the case with a visual assessment. The change that is visible is proof of harm in terms of openness.
- 4.1.6 Consequently, if the proposals are visually intrusive they will affect openness regardless of residual visual effects. The site is currently seen in the context of the settlement fringe and its influences.
- 4.1.7 The geographic extent of the surrounding area from where visual change will be discernible will be very limited due to the local residential dwellings and vegetation. This means that there is unlikely to be a perceptible reduction in the visual openness formed by a residential scheme due to the current generally enclosed nature of the landscape.

Spatial Effects

- 4.1.8 Dwellings would be situated within the site, which would have the effect of reducing spatial openness as would occur with any development.
- 4.1.9 The increase in development as proposed will reduce spatial openness on the site and this part of the Green Belt to an extent. This spatial change is considered in more detail within the planning submissions provided by Montagu Evans.

Activity

- 4.1.10 As a result of the proposed additional dwellings within the green belt the area will not become discernibly busier, as any additional walkers and vehicular movements related to the site's change to residential development will be experienced within a busy local network of transport corridors.

Section Conclusions

- 4.1.11 As with any scheme of a residential nature within Green Belt, a level of spatial harm will occur as a result of development. However, this change will be localised and limited due to the existing residential context of the site and the settlement fringe in which it sits.
- 4.1.12 The visual aspect of the green belt will be affected in a very limited way, with any change localised and limited due to the enclosure formed by surrounding elements of the settlement fringe in which it sits.
- 4.1.13 The additional movement created as a result of the proposed residential site use would increase activity in the surrounding area, but this would not be perceptible due to the relatively busy nature of the current surrounding area.

5.0 Review of the Site Against NPPF Paragraph 143 Purposes

- 5.1.1 This Green Belt Analysis forms part of the study of effects of the development proposals to demonstrate whether bringing forward development on this site will support the key purposes of the Green Belt in the context of Chaldon. This analysis considers the current conditions on site and whether its development will detrimentally undermine the function and purposes of the wider designated Green Belt.
- 5.1.2 The site and the effect of the proposed development on it will be assessed against the national Green Belt purposes.
- 5.1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in section 13 Protecting Green Belt land sets out the following five purposes for the inclusion of land within Green Belt.
- 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 preserve 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.
- 5.1.4 The NPPF does not offer guidance on how to assess the performance of Green Belt land so a clear methodology will be adopted as detailed below.
- 5.1.5 To provide an analysis of the site's performance against the Green Belt purposes a five point scale will be used as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Level of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

Level of Contribution	Typical Indicators
Strong	Land makes a meaningful contribution to this purpose and should remain in the Green Belt
Strong/Moderate	Land performs well against this purpose.
Moderate	Land performs moderately well against this purpose
Moderate/Weak	Land makes some contribution to this purpose
Weak	Land makes limited contribution to this purpose
None	Land makes no contribution to this purpose

- 5.1.6 An important component of the evaluation of the performance of any site in relation to the Green Belt purposes, is consideration of the effectiveness of existing boundaries. The NPPF establishes that boundaries should be clearly defined, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

5.1.7 The following features are considered most likely to fulfil this requirement:

- Major transport infrastructure, motorways, main trunk roads and railways;
- Landscape features including woodland blocks and bands and watercourses; and
- Topography such as ridgelines.

5.1.8 Where these features are absent secondary boundaries could include historic field hedgerows or minor/private roads.

5.1.9 The five purposes of Green Belt as defined in the NPPF are outlined earlier in this document. The site and how it performs against to these purposes are detailed below.

Purpose (a)

To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

5.1.10 The Site falls within a 'pocket' formed by a combination of woodland, residential curtilage and Birchwood Lane to the south.

5.1.11 The site will not physically extend further into the countryside than the existing development boundary of Caterham in any direction, as the existing settlement edge extends further in the landscape than the site's extents given that the site is bound on three sides by existing residential scale development.

5.1.12 A combination of the scale of the site, its containment and relationship with the existing built development boundary, will help ensure that development of it will not result in urban sprawl. As a result, the site has no function when assessed against Purpose a.

Purpose (b)

To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.

5.1.13 The site currently has existing development, roads and woodland set around it that form strong physical enclosure. It also sits within the existing settlement of Chaldon.

5.1.14 The site's development footprint will result in development extending no further towards any other settlement and will not reduce the gap between the current built edge of Caterham and neighbouring settlements. Development of the site would not result in any merging of settlements and as a result has no function when assessed against Purpose b.

Purpose (c)

To assist in the safeguarding of countryside from encroachment.

5.1.15 The landscape in which the site sits is currently surrounded on three sides by existing residential development, a road to the south and vegetation, which form a 'pocket' that defines the site boundary within the existing settlement fringe.

5.1.16 Whilst development will normally inevitably cause an element of encroachment, the contained nature of the site and relationship within the established settlement fringe will minimise adverse impact in this respect. Development of the site would therefore result in limited encroachment and the site has a weak function when assessed against Purpose c.

Purpose (d)

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

- 5.1.17 The site sits adjacent to and within the current edge of Chaldon and very few views into the site from the local area are available. Further, Chaldon is not considered to be a historic town.
- 5.1.18 There is no intervisibility between the site and the core of Caterham, nor with listed buildings or other features of interest within the settlement or surrounding countryside. Development of the site would therefore have no impact upon the historic setting of the settlement and as a result no function when assessed against Purpose d.

Purpose (e)

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

- 5.1.19 The site sits adjacent to and within the current edge of Caterham and is a field in equestrian use.
- 5.1.20 As the site relates closely to the existing residential development that forms the settlement fringe, it will reduce this effect, but the site represents land related to marginal agricultural use rather than the residential use that sits in close proximity.
- 5.1.21 However, given that this site is being considered in the context that the local authority area is 93.9% Green Belt, there are likely circumstances to justify the release of GB land. All or most sites brought forward to meet housing need will be Green Belt and will have a level of effect on Purpose e. Therefore, purpose 5 should effectively be disregarded in the consideration.

5.2 Evaluation

- 5.2.1 What this review of the main purposes of Green Belt for the site shows, is that the site represents a very low functioning part of the Green Belt which does not contribute towards the main functions of keeping land permanently open, it is a very enclosed site and change would be experienced by a limited number of receptors.
- 5.2.2 In these regards, the site comprises a low or weakly functioning part of the Green Belt when assessed against the five purposes as set out in the NPPF.
- 5.2.3 The site sits in a landscape that is surrounded by defensible boundaries, formed by existing residential dwellings to the west, north and east and by Birchwood Lane and associated vegetation to the south. The proposals would not result in a protrusion of built form and would be strongly contained by existing settlement fringe features i.e residential curtilages, transport corridors, and by the dense landscape features that are situated around the site's boundaries.
- 5.2.4 Table 2 below details the assessed outcomes of the site specific analysis when compared with the five aims of Green Belt within the NPPF.

Table 2: Level of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

The Site	Assessment of GB Purposes					Overall Rating
	P(a)	P(b)	P(c)	P(d)	P(e)	
Findings of this report	None	None	Weak	None	None	Weak/ None Function

Section Conclusions

- 5.2.5 Overall, it is the conclusion of this report that the site performs as a Weak/None functioning part of the Green Belt and does not contribute to the fundamental aim of Green Belt; preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The current site boundaries and surrounding landscape features mean that the site is strongly enclosed and not experienced as open land.

6.0 Recent Revisions to NPPF

6.1.1 Recent revisions to the NPPF have introduced the concept of "Grey Belt," which refers to areas within the Green Belt that do not contribute significantly to its purposes and are thus candidates for immediate development through development management decisions and or release through local plan reviews. This concept is relevant to the site, which, due to its enclosed nature and minimal contribution to Green Belt purposes, could be considered under this policy.

6.1.2 The NPPF within Appendix 2: Glossary, defines Grey Belt as:

For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

6.1.3 Given the definition and given that the site makes no contribution to Green Belt purposes a, b and d, the site qualifies as Grey Belt under the emerging NPPF. {

6.1.4 Additionally, it is important to note that Chaldon is a village which has the following consequences. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) clarifies that purpose (a) relates to the sprawl of large built up areas and as a village, Chaldon should not be measured against this aim. Purpose (b) relates to the prevention of merging of towns, not villages. Purpose (d) relates to the setting of historic towns, Chaldon is not a historic town and is a village. }

6.1.5 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF provides a test to define inappropriate development:

155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

6.1.6 Other parts of paragraph 155 are related to Planning and are addressed in the Planning Statement prepared by Montagu Evans.

6.1.7 The development would not fundamentally undermine the Green Belt as a whole. The enclosure of the site by strongly defensible physical barriers is clearly demonstrated on the ground.

6.1.8 Any spatial change as a result of the development would be restricted to the site only. Any change to visual openness would be seen from only the area surrounding the site and no long range views of the development would be available. Therefore, development of this parcel would not fundamentally affect the overall Green Belt.

Commented [BD1]: Think we need to stronger about wording and the impact of Chaldon being a village

Commented [DM2R1]: The NPPG clarifies that:

- Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas:
 - o It has been clarified that this purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.
- Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another:
 - o It has been clarified that this purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.
- Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns:
 - o It has been clarified that this purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1.1 What this review of the purposes of Green Belt for the site shows, is that the site represents a generally weakly functioning part of the Green Belt which does not contribute towards the main function of keeping land permanently open. It is a generally enclosed site and is experienced by few receptors.
- 7.1.2 In these regards, the site comprises a Weak/None functioning part of the Green Belt when assessed against the five purposes as set out in the NPPF.
- 7.1.3 The proposed use of the site for residential development would only be experienced from a very limited geographic extent, as it would be strongly contained by the existing settlement fringe elements and the dense landscape features that sit around the site boundaries and in the local landscape.
- 7.1.4 Overall, the site performs as a Weak/None functioning part of the Green Belt and does not contribute to the fundamental aim of Green Belt; preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The current site boundaries and local landscape features mean that the site is strongly enclosed and not experienced outside of a very limited geographic extent.
- 7.1.5 The site plays a limited or no role in fulfilling the core purposes of the Green Belt. It does not significantly prevent urban sprawl due to its containment by existing dwellings and Birchwood Road, nor does it contribute to the merging of settlements, given the clear separation provided by natural and built features. Additionally, the site's proximity to urban development means it does not safeguard the countryside from encroachment in a meaningful way. As such, its development would not undermine the fundamental purposes of the Green Belt, particularly when compared to other, more open and rural parcels within the wider Green Belt.
- 7.1.6 The revisions to the NPPF introduced the concept of the "Grey Belt," which refers to areas within the Green Belt that are already influenced by urban infrastructure and contribute less to the Green Belt's primary purposes. The site fits well within this "Grey Belt" designation. Its development would be consistent with the emerging policy direction, which recognises the need for flexibility to accommodate sustainable growth in areas where the contribution to Green Belt objectives is minimal. The strong physical boundaries and the site's proximity to existing residential development make it a logical candidate for development under the Grey Belt criteria.

7.2 Section Conclusions:

- 7.2.1 In conclusion, the site forms a limited impact on openness, has a minimal role in fulfilling Green Belt purposes, and aligns with the emerging "Grey Belt" concept. The site's specific characteristics, strong physical boundaries, and proximity to existing residential dwellings make it a logical parcel of land to consider for development of this nature. By adhering to both the current and emerging planning policy frameworks, development can be achieved in a way that respects the overarching aims of the Green Belt.



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