
Planning Statement: Executive Summary

Land at Great Birchwood, Lytham Road, Bryning with Warton, Preston, PR41TE

1. Executive Summary

The Proposed Development

- 1.1. The proposal is to redevelop the site of the former Birchwood Country Park into a well-designed residential area, that will enhance the character and appearance of the site and transform it from its current derelict state. The objective is to create homes in a carefully designed landscape setting, that will also improve and make good use of established natural features. The proposal includes footways that will allow both new residents as well as the wider public to enjoy the site as a whole, in an informal recreational way, but also, by providing linkages to the proposed play areas that form part of the application. The intention is to integrate the site with the surrounding areas – but to retain visual separation so that the development does not cause visual harm to the Green Belt.

Site Description

- 1.2. The various buildings located across the site are all in various states of disrepair. The tarmac road is badly potholed, and the concrete bases, surface area car parking and other hard surfaces are obtrusive, even if not in similar states of disrepair. There has been widespread agreement during discussions with councillors, the local MP and other parties during the pre-application process that the site makes a negative contribution to both the Green Belt as well as its surroundings

Policy Context – Green Belt

- 1.3. The site is within the designated Green Belt as allocated in the Fylde Local Plan. Government advice in the Framework is that great importance is attached to Green Belt. As set out at Paragraph 137 of the Framework¹ the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping the land within them permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

¹ The Framework is reference to National Planning Policy Framework, 2021

1.4. In this case, the site is not open. It is a previously developed site, and contains a number of permanent and semi-permanent structures. In addition, there are extensive areas of hard surfacing right across the site. The site does not therefore possess the essential characteristic of Green Belt, namely openness.

1.5. Paragraph 148 of the Framework states that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that very special circumstances would not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Accordingly, the government advises at Paragraph 149 of the Framework that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development.

1.6. However, the same Paragraph lists a number of exceptions where the construction of new buildings would not constitute inappropriate development. Subparagraph (g) Of Paragraph 149 sets out the following circumstances that also constitutes an exception where the construction of new buildings is not inappropriate development:

Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
- *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would reuse previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority*

1.7. Although the proposal in this case is for housing and is to reuse previously developed land, the housing proposed is not intended to meet an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority. Accordingly, the second part of subparagraph (g) is not relied on in this case.

1.8. Rather, it is the first part that is relevant. Namely, that the proposal is for the complete redevelopment of previously developed land, and that the effect of the proposal on the Green Belt will not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the full extent of the existing development.

- 1.9. The assessment of the impact on the openness of the Green Belt in the planning statement concludes that the proposal will not have a greater impact on the openness than the existing development.

Policy Context – Planning History

- 1.10. Our opinion is that the approach to the planning assessment in this case as outlined above is not controversial. It seems to us that it is the same approach used by the planning authority in coming to decisions on previous proposals to redevelop the site. That is, the decisions to grant planning permission for extensive redevelopment of the site, separately for a care village and for use as a caravan park, were made on the basis that the site constitutes previously developed land in the Green Belt.
- 1.11. It is also an approach adopted by a Planning Inspector at Appeal, and which in turn was supported by the Secretary of State. The case is referred to in detail in the Statement, which decided that a site in Oxfordshire that was previously used as university sports pitches and included circulation space could be properly treated as previously developed land as defined in the Framework. In this case, extensive parts of the site are developed by buildings – both disused as well as in residential use - circulation areas, and hard surface areas from previous uses. The boundaries of the site form a single curtilage to the whole area – and accordingly, the site is properly described as previously developed land.
- 1.12. It is that context that has directly resulted in the promotion of this application. It is unusual for any developer to promote residential development in the Green Belt, given the normal strong presumption against such development. not only is the starting point in this case that the site as a whole constitutes previously developed land, but also the nature of the existing development that is a detractor from the character of the surroundings.

Viability of Previous Proposals

1.13. In addition to the context as referred to above, namely that previous decisions to grant planning permission for this site have been made on the basis that the site constitutes previously developed land, the other factor driving the planning application in this case is that the previous proposal to develop the site as a care village is not viable. There have been extensive efforts to market the site to be developed for the purposes on which that planning permission was granted, but the financial arrangement for care in the UK, as well as specifically to the local area, is such that it is not an economically viable proposition to develop the site for such a use. That conclusion had been reached prior to the pandemic, and some of the consequences of healthcare requirements arising from the pandemic have worsened the viability equation.

Wider Planning Balance and Any Other Harm

1.14. In short, not only does the site make a negative contribution to the Green Belt and the character of the surrounding area, but the extent planning permission cannot be developed. There is a need therefore to promote an alternative development and that is what is proposed by this application. The developers have had significant regard to the need to limit the impact of development on the Green Belt, and accordingly, the scheme proposed has been sensitively designed to ensure there is such minimum impact. The Design and Access Statement prepared by KTA (December 2021) that accompanies the planning application sets out the approach that has been adopted in ensuring that the design of the scheme, layout and the use of materials will ensure that not only will the development to be of the highest standard, but that its impact on the Green Belt has been reduced to its minimum.

Conclusions

1.15. Not only will the proposal have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development on the site, but it will have less of an impact than the effect of the proposed schemes, both the caravan park and the care village. It seems to us therefore, that as the impact of this proposal is less than the impact of the previous schemes, and is no greater than the impact on the openness of the existing development, that the proposal fully accords with the requirements of sub Paragraph (g) of Paragraph 149 of the Framework.

Planning Statement

Land at Great Birchwood, Lytham Road

The Savills logo consists of a yellow square with the word "savills" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, colored in a dark red or maroon shade.

- 1.16. In addition to the design and access statement and this planning statement, the planning application is supported by the following suite of further documents.
- 1.17. Together, the series of documents supporting this application demonstrates that not only will there not be harm to the openness of the Green Belt, but that also, they will not be any other harm to other matters of importance. As such, there are no obstacles as to why planning permission should not be granted, and we hope that in accordance with the general advice in the Framework that planning permission can be granted without delay.