

Cheshire Planning Solutions Ltd

Erection of two cattery buildings at
Bleakholt Farm, Bury Old Road, Ramsbottom, Bury, BL0 0RX

Green Belt Supporting Statement



Application reference 72122

Contents

Introduction	3
Proposal	3
Site Context.....	4
The Proposal	4
Planning Policy Context.....	5
National Planning Policy Framework (2024).....	5
The Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development plan document (DPD) (2024)	7
The Bury Council Supplementary Planning Document Note 8	8
Openness	9
Access.....	9
Noise, Air Pollution	10
Siting & Layout	10
Scale, Height & Massing.....	11
Design & Materials.....	11
Landscaping and Boundary Treatment	12
Associated Development / Cumulative Impact	13
Planning Benefits	13
Very Special Circumstances Justification	13
Conclusion.....	17

Introduction

This statement has been produced in support of an application for additional buildings at Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary. A supporting statement was submitted with the original application, but the case officer has requested further justification with specific regard to Green Belt Policy. This statement therefore primarily relates to the issues raised with regard to development within the Green Belt.

Bleakholt has been home to a variety of farm and small animals since the very early days of the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary started in 1957 when founder Olive Lomas saved a donkey officially forming the sanctuary at Bleakholt Farm; it later became a registered charity in 1968. Formerly part of a farm diversification scheme, Bleakholt continued to develop and grow in size and is now one of the largest of its kind in the North West of England, spreading over a fifty-five-acre site. It is not just a Sanctuary for animals that can be re-homed, they also provide a loving and safe environment for the retirement of animals, including those with ongoing medical conditions. Their aim is to provide the best care possible for animals in need.

The sanctuary is a long-standing facility that provides essential welfare services, rehabilitation and rehoming. The proposed buildings are required to expand and improve the sanctuary's capacity, providing safe, regulated and hygienic accommodation for cats in need.

Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary is a regionally important, previously developed, Brownfield site. As well as buildings to house the animals, there is a popular, dog-friendly community café and shop onsite, as well as a large stoned car park.

Proposal

Application reference 72122 is for two new buildings at Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary. One building is to be used as a new 'intake building' and one is to be used as an isolation unit, to ensure that animals assessed to have any spreadable diseases can be isolated, reducing the risk of disease to healthy animals. The new buildings will enable the sanctuary to increase the number of cats they can help, whilst providing the best welfare possible. There is a huge problem in the local area with stray and unwanted cats. By expanding the available housing, the sanctuary will be able to make a bigger impact in the local area. The isolation unit will also ensure the cattery is compliant with new cattery licensing rules.

Site Context

The site comprises a cluster of existing sanctuary buildings positioned well back from the road. The road frontage is lined with mature trees and vegetation, providing some visual screening, which is to be improved.

The proposed buildings would be positioned:

- behind the tree-lined boundary,
- set a considerable distance back from the highway,
- within close proximity to existing built form,
- and away from any sensitive open landscape edges.

A generous area of open land will remain between the new buildings and the road, preserving the site's visual openness from public viewpoints.

The site is set back from Bury Old Road and consists of existing buildings, parking and landscaped areas. The boundary with the road is defined by a stone wall, lined with trees. On entering the driveway to the site, to the immediate south is a seeded soil area, to be landscaped to provide a natural buffer between the boundary wall at the front of the site and the pathway leading southwards to existing buildings. Beyond the pathway, to the west, is a grassed quadrangle, bound by the driveway to the north and an existing pathway and buildings to the south and west. A timber post and rail fence separates the grassed area from a pathway to the east.

This area is gently sloping and contains a number of trees, all of which are to be retained, but replanted further east. The grassed quadrangle, subject of this application is effectively enclosed by existing built form and hardscaped access routes and the relocation of the trees with add further screening of the proposed buildings from the road.

The Animal Sanctuary includes a large stoned car park and existing buildings constructed from a buff coloured stone, some with timber cladding and grey metal profile sheet roofs.

The Proposal

The proposal consists of two small, single-storey cattery buildings, each with:

- a maximum ridge height of 2.7 metres,
- a depth of approximately 4.5 metres,
- and a modest footprint suitable for small animal housing.

Both buildings are designed to be low-profile, functional and sympathetic to their setting, in terms of scale, positioning and associated landscaping. External landscaping includes new timber fencing, hedging and shrubs to supplement existing natural screening.

During the planning process, the proposed plans have been amended, with the proposed buildings being moved further away from the road and within closer proximity to existing buildings. This ensures that an area of green space remains as a landscape buffer between the road and the proposed buildings and the site frontage retains openness.

The proposed buildings will be a maximum of 2.7m tall and as such, will be considerably lower than the surrounding built form and easy to screen with the use of fencing, shrubs, hedging and trees.

The proposed buildings are of white uPVC. The reason for the choice of material relates to practicalities of maintenance and due to thermal properties, being double glazed with a Heatguard Polycarbonate roof. The buildings will be easy to disinfect, keep clean and heat at suitable temperatures, as required for the cats. Despite the material being inconsistent with the existing built form, the buildings are shallow and low in height and easy to screen.

Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports business growth and states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development, (paragraph 85).

With regard to supporting a prosperous rural economy, paragraph 85 states that planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings and support the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities.

Paragraph 89 continues support for business development in rural areas by acknowledging that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport and states that the use of previously developed land should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

The application site is previously developed, having been an animal sanctuary for over 50 years. It has expanded over that time to include a shop and café that provides vital revenue for the site.

With regard to proposals affecting the Green Belt (Section 13 of the NPPF), states that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 154 g) states that development in the Green Belt is not inappropriate for limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

The application site is a previously developed site within the Green Belt. The site is within approximately 1.6km of Edenfield, where there are bus stops and a convenience store. The main A56 and M66 are within approximately 1.3 km.

The sanctuary requires a countryside location in order to accommodate both small and large animals, where grazing needs have to be met. The key reasons for the suitability of a more rural area are as follows:

- Rural areas have less traffic, fewer people, and lower noise levels. Reduced noise from cars, sirens, and crowds helps animals feel safer and calmer, especially rescued or abused animals that may be anxious or traumatised.
- Calm surroundings support natural behaviours like grazing, resting, and social bonding.
- Large animals (horses, cows, pigs, sheep) need wide open spaces to move freely, graze, and exercise.
- Rural land allows for larger enclosures and pastures, which improves physical health and mental wellbeing and animals can live in conditions closer to their natural or instinctive habitats.
- Small animals also benefit from enriched, uncrowded environments.
- Cleaner air and less pollution improve respiratory health.
- More natural sunlight and terrain support stronger immune systems and healthier growth.
- Rural sanctuaries reduce the risk of animals being stressed or harmed by busy roads, strangers, or urban hazards.
- It's easier to maintain secure fencing and controlled access, protecting both animals and visitors, as unauthorised visitors are less likely in a rural area than in a busy urban environment.
- Lower population density means less exposure to contagious diseases from pets, pests, or urban wildlife.

- It is easier to quarantine and manage biosecurity when there is more space.
- Land is usually more readily available in rural areas, allowing sanctuaries to expand and improve facilities.
- Easier access to local hay, straw, feed, and veterinary services that specialise in farm animals.
- Rural sanctuaries allow visitors to see animals in natural, ethical settings, reinforcing respect and understanding.
- Ideal for rehabilitation, long-term care, and rehoming where appropriate.
- Sanctuaries can support biodiversity, conservation, and sustainable land management.
- They often integrate well into rural communities and landscapes.

A rural location offers animals peace, space, safety, and a more natural lifestyle, which directly improves their welfare and quality of life. For sanctuaries caring for animals that have already suffered hardship, this calm and spacious environment is especially important.

The proposed buildings are small in scale and will be positioned within close proximity of existing buildings, being set back a considerable distance from the road, screened by existing trees and proposed landscaping. Due to the positioning of the buildings, an area of green, undeveloped land will remain between the buildings and the boundary with the road, thereby retaining the openness and rural character when viewed from the highway.

[The Places for Everyone \(PfE\) joint development plan document \(DPD\) \(2024\)](#)

The Statutory Development Plan for the application site comprises The Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development plan document (DPD) (2024) and the saved policies of the Bury Unitary Development Plan that have not been superseded by PfE. Places For Everyone – Policies JP-G9 relate to Green Belt and reiterate the purposes of the Green Belt, as set out in national policy:

- 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.

Furthermore, policy states beneficial use of the Green Belt will be enhanced where this can be achieved without harm to its openness, permanence or ability to serve its five purposes. In particular, the enhancement of its green infrastructure functions will be encouraged, such as improved public access and habitat restoration, helping to deliver environmental and social benefits for residents and providing the high quality green spaces that will support economic growth.

The proposed development will not result in unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, or prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. The site is not within a historic town and due to the positioning of the development, adjacent to existing buildings, within a previously developed site, within a small, confined area, the proposal would not cause an encroachment into the countryside.

The wider site is host to a community café and as an animal sanctuary, there is existing public access to the site. An area of the site, marked on the proposed plan as seeded soil is to be landscaped with shrubs, as part of a previous approval and retention and repositioning of trees within the grassed quadrangle will ensure limited impact on biodiversity.

Further shrub planting to screen the new buildings will also provide ecological benefits. Evergreen shrubs provide critical year-round support for wildlife by offering consistent shelter from predators and harsh weather, and serve as a reliable source of food when deciduous plants are dormant. Because they retain their foliage, evergreens offer nesting sites for birds that begin building nests before deciduous plants develop leaves, such as blackbirds, robins, and dunnocks. Suitable plants could include Holly, which produces berries that persist deep into the winter. These are a critical energy source for non-migratory birds like thrushes, robins, and waxwings. *Viburnum tinus* flower in late winter or early spring, providing early nectar for pollinators like bees.

A timber fence, with adjacent planting of a hedge, surrounding boundaries of the buildings will help to create a secure, calm area for the cats. The fence and planting will dampen noise from surrounding buildings and pathways and form a natural windbreak. Evergreen shrubs help to create stable microclimates which are vital for butterflies and other small insects that are easily buffeted by wind. The proposed planting will enhance the quality of the green space, create additional wildlife corridors and improved habitat for a host of wildlife, including birds, small mammals and invertebrates.

[The Bury Council Supplementary Planning Document Note 8](#)

The Bury Council Supplementary Planning Document, Development Control Policy Guidance Note 8, New Buildings and Associated Development in the Green Belt (2007) provides guidance on what is acceptable in terms of development within the Green Belt.

Generally, all proposals for new development will be assessed with regard to:

- the purposes of including land in the Green Belt and the potential impact upon the openness of the Green Belt;
- any traffic considerations;
- noise and air pollution issues;

- access for people with disabilities; and
- sustainable transport initiatives e.g. access to public transport and provision for cycle parking;
- Design, materials, scale and layout
- Landscaping and features of wildlife value and biodiversity

Openness

The retention of open land between the proposed buildings and the tree-lined frontage ensures that the visual openness of the Green Belt remains largely unaffected. Additional landscaping further reduces visual impact.

The land forming part of this application is a small area, enclosed by existing buildings and hardstanding pathways. The development is inherently small in scale. At only 2.7m high and with shallow depth, the buildings introduce minimal mass. Positioned adjacent to existing structures, they do not extend or sprawl the site outward.

As noted above, the proposed development will not create encroachment into the countryside and due to the low height of the buildings, surrounding landscaping and the proposed scheme of planting, the development will not significantly affect the openness of the land. The buildings will be considerably lower than those surrounding it and as such, views across the site will be unaffected.

Access

The scheme is to allow additional cats to be rescued and it is hoped some of those cats will be able to be rehomed. However, the additional cattery buildings should not create a significant increase in traffic generated at the site and as such, it is not envisaged the proposal will result in any highway safety concerns.

No alterations to the access or parking facilities are required and there is existing pedestrian access to the site area, without having to add further hardstanding pathways.

The wider site includes an existing stoned car park and hardscaped pathways. The proposal does not require significant additional hardstanding or any road alterations. Operational access remains safe and efficient, and the development will not introduce harmful clutter or extensive engineered surfaces. There are generally level access points providing access to all visitors, including those with mobility issues.

Being within a rural area, there are limited options for public transport access. However, due to the nature of the business, people visit to see the animals to potentially adopt them and as such, for practical reasons, people generally require a vehicle to transport the animals. The sanctuary is home to small and large animals and as such requires a countryside location and it would be unreasonable to expect the charity to move to premises closer to the urban area to enable links to public transport. Nonetheless, the site is within easy reach of the motorway which makes it a suitable location, being readily accessible by car, whilst being situated in a rural, quiet location which is more conducive for the health and welfare of the animals.

Noise, Air Pollution

The proposal is for two additional cattery buildings within an existing animal sanctuary. The proposed cattery buildings would be in excess of 180m to the nearest dwelling to the south, Top o' th' Lea Farm and nearly 300m to Brookbottom Farm to the north. The dwellings on Bleakholt Road to the south east would be in excess of 300m away and properties to the north west and west (Hollins Lane and Whalley Road would be in excess of 400m away.

The site has an existing waste management plan in place and the additional animals should not cause significant noise or air pollution issues.

Siting & Layout

SPD8 encourages new buildings to be sited close to existing ones to minimise intrusion. This proposal does exactly that—both buildings are clustered with existing sanctuary buildings, avoiding the impression of new isolated or sporadic development. The siting represents the least visually intrusive position within the sanctuary grounds.

The scheme proposes to erect the cattery buildings within close proximity of existing buildings, within the south west corner of the red lined area; thereby retaining the cluster of buildings and avoiding sporadic development. There will be no excessive curtilage expansion, lighting, equipment or paraphernalia associated with the scheme.

Due to the low height of the buildings and existing, surrounding buildings, they will not be visible from the west or south. The buildings will be set back from the road and open land between the buildings and highway is to be retained; thereby reducing visual intrusion.

The buildings will face the road to the east, but the eastern boundary with the highway is lined with trees and additional shrub planting is proposed to the seeded soil area immediately adjacent to the road, which will provide further screening. In addition, existing trees are to be repositioned within the grassed quadrangle to the east of the proposed buildings and timber fencing and evergreen hedging is proposed to be planted to the boundaries of the buildings.

Not only will the additional planting create a natural screen, it will provide significant biodiversity benefits.

Scale, Height & Massing

With regard to scale, height and massing, the buildings are modest in scale, low-profile and proportionate. The buildings will be just 4.3m deep, with a lean to roof having a maximum height to the front of just 2.72m. The buildings will sit below surrounding built form and existing landscape features.

Due to the construction materials and design, with large glazed sections, the overall bulk and volume of the cattery buildings are limited, preserving openness. They do not challenge nearby structures nor alter the perceived scale of built development within the site.

Design & Materials

The buildings have been designed to be fit for purpose, of a suitable scale and constructed to allow for practical management, including relevant biosecurity. The uPVC construction will enable the pens to be disinfected with ease and the regular washing of the building will not cause damage to the structure. uPVC is widely considered a superior material for cattery construction due to its high hygiene standards, thermal efficiency, and long-term durability. Unlike traditional timber, uPVC does not rot, warp, or harbour germs, making it a low-maintenance and welfare-focused choice for commercial catteries.

The buildings are of a simple construction and with large amounts of glazing, the buildings will appear as quite open structures, reducing the overall appearance of bulk and mass. Furthermore, sympathetic timber hit and miss fencing, along with proposed landscaping will assist in blending the buildings into the site.

As noted within the supporting planning statement, there is a huge problem in the local area with stray and unwanted cats. By expanding the housing for cats, the sanctuary will have a bigger impact in the local area. There is clearly an increased demand for the facility, which will help to improve animal welfare and provide a service to the local community by reducing the number of feral cats on the area.

It is not feasible to find an alternative site. Staff and volunteers need to be based within one main site in order to maintain the site and care for the animals. There are operational and welfare benefits to the facility being at the existing sanctuary. It would not be sustainable if individuals were having to drive to multiple sites to care for different animals. Furthermore, having all the facilities at one base means that people who attend the site to view animals can

do so within one location. The additional and improved facility will also ensure the cattery is compliant with new cattery licensing rules.

Landscaping and Boundary Treatment

The existing vegetated boundary to the east provides strong screening. The proposal enhances this through:

- new native hedging,
- shrubs,
- and timber fencing.

SPD8 notes that landscaping cannot make inappropriate development acceptable, but it can mitigate visual impact. Here, the landscaping works with the small scale and restrained design to ensure very limited harm.

Example image of the buildings with hit and mis timber fencing, with shrubs and trees



The timber hit and mis fencing provides gaps for wildlife access and is a sympathetic material for this rural location. It will blend in well with the local landscape. Evergreen hedging surrounding the fencing will soften it, create a natural windbreak, enhance wildlife habitats and mitigate the visual impact of the buildings.

The new catteries will be within a separate location, close to other buildings, but separated from the surrounding infrastructure by the proposed landscaping, which will create a calm, secure environment for the newly rescued animals, some of which may be traumatised and in poor health. The site has been designed to create a calm, tranquil setting in which the animals can recuperate.

Associated Development / Cumulative Impact

There is no expansion of domestic curtilage or creation of suburban character. The cumulative effect alongside existing buildings is minimal due to the small scale and tight clustering within the developed part of the site.

Planning Benefits

The proposed erection of two new cattery buildings on the existing animal sanctuary site within the Green Belt will deliver significant benefits to animal welfare, operational standards, and the local community. The new facilities will provide improved care for animals, addressing the rising demand for rescue and temporary housing while enhancing animal wellbeing through better disease control, hygiene, and overall environment.

These buildings will also strengthen the sanctuary as a vital community asset, relied upon by local residents, volunteers, and rehoming organisations. By efficiently utilising the existing site, the proposal reduces the pressure for new sanctuary locations within the Green Belt, ensuring no significant harm to openness, landscape character, or amenity. These advantages should carry substantial weight in the planning balance..

Very Special Circumstances Justification

National policy states that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in Very Special Circumstances (VSC). VSC exist where harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

As established by case law, *Basildon District Council v Secretary of State* [2004] EWHC 2759 (Admin) In the High Court Justice Queen's Bench Division The Administrative Court [10], there is no reason why a number of factors ordinary in themselves cannot combine to create something very special. When combined together, the individual circumstances noted below are believed to be very special.

With regard to Very Special Circumstances the benefits outweigh the harm, as follows:

- Enhanced animal welfare and improved housing standards.
- Support for a community-serving sanctuary.

- Efficient use of existing infrastructure.
- Minimal harm to openness due to modest scale, screening and clustered layout.

The sanctuary provides care, rehabilitation and rehoming for vulnerable animals. Demand for cat accommodation has increased substantially. The new buildings are required to meet statutory welfare standards to segregate animals safely, preventing overcrowding in order to ensure the provision of disease-controlled housing,

There is no realistic alternative location because these units must operate adjacent to staff, veterinary facilities and existing enclosures. Locating additional cattery buildings on a separate satellite site would raise several management, sustainability, and welfare concerns when compared with expanding the existing sanctuary site.

From a management perspective, operating multiple sites would require staff, volunteers, and veterinary professionals to travel between locations, resulting in less sustainable travel patterns, increased vehicle movements, higher carbon emissions, and greater operational costs. This fragmentation of activity can reduce staff efficiency, limit supervision, and make it harder to maintain consistent care standards.

In terms of animal welfare and health and safety, a satellite site would be further removed from established veterinary facilities, quarantine areas, and trained personnel already present at the existing sanctuary. This could delay emergency treatment, complicate disease control procedures, and increase biosecurity risks. Managing lone working, safeguarding, and emergency response would also be more challenging at a remote or secondary location, particularly outside normal hours.

For visitors and volunteers, multiple sites can create confusion, discourage engagement, and increase travel demands, undermining the sanctuary's role as a sustainable community asset. Overall, a satellite site would represent a less efficient, less sustainable, and potentially higher-risk approach, whereas consolidating facilities on the existing sanctuary site allows for better management control, reduced environmental impact, and improved animal welfare outcomes.

Using the existing multi-building sanctuary site for the proposed expansion represents the most appropriate and least harmful solution, particularly within the sensitive context of the Green Belt. Concentrating development within an established sanctuary avoids the creation of new visual intrusion elsewhere, as the site already contains buildings and associated activity that are accepted as part of the local landscape. Introducing similar facilities on a new or satellite site would extend built form into previously undeveloped areas of the Green Belt, resulting in a greater and more dispersed impact on openness and landscape character.

Developing a fresh site would also require additional land-take, including access arrangements, parking, services, and security infrastructure, all of which would compound the loss of undeveloped land and increase environmental disturbance. By contrast, the existing sanctuary can accommodate the proposed buildings within its operational footprint, making efficient use of land that is already in use for animal welfare purposes.

Furthermore, expansion at the established site avoids the duplication of infrastructure, such as utilities, waste management, drainage, staff facilities, veterinary support, biosecurity measures, and access routes. Duplicating these elements elsewhere would not only increase construction impacts and costs but would also lead to higher long-term energy use, maintenance demands, and vehicle movements, reducing overall sustainability.

Taken together, these factors demonstrate that extending the existing sanctuary is the most logical, efficient, and environmentally responsible approach. It allows necessary operational growth to be met while minimizing harm to the Green Belt, reinforcing that this location represents the least harmful and most sustainable option for the required expansion.

The animal sanctuary delivers a range of important public, social, and community benefits that extend well beyond the site itself and are highly valued by the local community. At its core, the sanctuary provides essential animal welfare outcomes, offering rescue, rehabilitation, and safe temporary accommodation for vulnerable animals that might otherwise face neglect, abandonment, or euthanasia. These outcomes reflect strong public support for high standards of animal care and responsible animal management.

The sanctuary also functions as a hub for volunteering and educational activities, providing opportunities for local residents, students, and community groups to gain skills, experience, and awareness around animal care, welfare, and responsible ownership. These activities promote social inclusion, learning, and wellbeing, while strengthening community engagement and stewardship.

In addition, the sanctuary plays a critical role in providing emergency rehoming placements, responding to urgent situations such as sudden owner illness, housing crises, or welfare enforcement cases. This flexible capacity is particularly important during periods of increased demand and directly supports vulnerable people as well as animals.

By undertaking these roles, the sanctuary helps to reduce pressure on statutory animal services, including local authority facilities and animal welfare teams, allowing public resources to be used more effectively elsewhere. Collectively, these functions represent clear and tangible public benefits that carry meaningful weight in the planning balance and strongly support the case for the proposed development.

Any potential harm to the Green Belt and its openness is extremely limited in this case due to the careful design and siting of the proposed development. The new buildings are small, low, and compact, ensuring that they are subordinate in scale to the existing structures and do not dominate the site or surrounding landscape. By being sited tightly within an existing cluster of buildings, the development consolidates built form rather than extending it into previously undeveloped areas, maintaining the overall sense of openness that is characteristic of the Green Belt.

The impact on views is further mitigated by screening from established trees and additional new planting, which will soften the visual presence of the buildings and help them blend into the surrounding landscape. Additionally, the buildings are set well back from the road and are lower than the adjacent buildings, meaning that they are largely hidden from key vantage points and will not impact distant views across the site.

Taken together, the spatial and visual impacts are minor, and the proposal does not encroach upon or compromise the character of the open countryside. By concentrating development within the existing sanctuary footprint and applying sensitive design measures, the scheme ensures that the openness, visual amenity, and fundamental purposes of the Green Belt are preserved.

The proposed development offers clear environmental and sustainability benefits, supporting both the effective operation of the sanctuary and the wider landscape. By providing purpose-built cattery buildings, the scheme will significantly improve biosecurity and disease management, enabling animals to be housed, cleaned, and treated in a controlled and hygienic environment. This reduces the risk of illness spreading between animals and supports overall animal welfare standards, ensuring that all residents receive care in line with modern best practice.

Operational efficiency will also be enhanced, as the consolidated facilities allow staff and volunteers to manage care, feeding, and medical treatment more effectively, reducing unnecessary movement and duplication of effort. This contributes to more sustainable operations, lowering energy use, vehicle trips, and staff travel compared with operating multiple or dispersed sites.

In addition to operational improvements, the scheme positively impacts the local landscape and biodiversity. Open green space between the building and the road will be retained, and new planting is proposed, which will soften the visual impact of the development, provide additional habitats for wildlife, and enhance ecological value. These measures demonstrate that the proposal not only supports high standards of animal care but also contributes positively to environmental sustainability and the character of the surrounding Green Belt landscape.

Conclusion

The sanctuary is a long-standing facility that provides essential welfare services, rehabilitation and rehoming. The proposed buildings are required to expand and improve the sanctuary's capacity, providing safe, regulated and hygienic accommodation for cats in need.

Although the proposal constitutes new development in the Green Belt, it results in very limited harm to openness, is modest in scale, well-sited and well-screened. The substantial animal welfare and community benefits, combined with the operational need and the selection of the least intrusive location, amount to Very Special Circumstances that clearly outweigh any harm.

The proposal is consistent with the aims and principles of SPD8, national Green Belt policy, and good planning practice. Approval is therefore justified.