

Leaf House

Land at Leigh Lane, Bury BL8 1RJ

Greenbelt Impact Statement

Client: Mr and Mrs J Oestergaard

November 2025 (updated)

Planning Application References

This Greenbelt Impact Statement accompanies the full planning application for development of a single residence on land accessed off Leigh Lane, Bury.

This accords with a previous pre-planning application ref: 02380E – November 2019.

Proposal

A unique landscape and ecologically defined, climate-change resilient and future-proofed residence.

This Impact Statement focuses on the proposed development and aims to demonstrate that the project does not adversely impact the Greenbelt, nor does it present a negative influence on neighbouring properties.

The proposal is for the construction of a new house within a previously manmade landscape.

We believe that due to the previously developed nature of the site, its isolation and the care taken to design the building to promote links with nature that it accords with policies contained within the NPPF, Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and Bury Local Plan. We do not believe that the proposal adversely impacts the openness of the Greenbelt nor, due to the unique characteristics of the site, creates a precedent for other development on sensitive sites.

Location

The site is part of the previous Scholes plant nursery and has an established access off Leigh Lane from the north of the site, opposite Owlerbarrow Lane. The site is accessed off Leigh Lane approximately 1.5 miles West of Bury town centre and 500 metres North of the B6196.

The site is bounded by school playing fields and residential properties to the North, previously developed commercial land to the East, a reservoir to the South and residential properties and a commercial dog kennels to the West.

The site is essentially previously cultivated scrub land with a small number of specimen trees.

The site is in Greenbelt.

We believe that Greenbelt should be protected and that development within it should only be considered if it accords with policy and results in a net improvement to its quality and value. This document sets out why, in our opinion, the proposals set out in this application achieve these exacting standards.

It is not our intention to focus purely on policy detail as Bury Council planning officers are more experienced in this regard. This document therefore references how the design development of the proposed property enhances these key aspects and that the resulting submission will enhance setting rather than detracting from it. In simple terms we believe that the proposals demonstrate sustainable development in all of its multi-faceted forms.

‘At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking’.

We also include some specific references to the preceding pre-application feedback where appropriate.

Site History

The land has been subject to considerable direct and indirect change over the last 200 years. Industrial and commercial activity have directly impacted the land and its topography, flora and fauna.

The expansion of Owler Barrow, Elton Brook and Walshaw have had a significant and detrimental effect on the site and the quality and amenity of the greenbelt.



The site, highlighted above, is bounded by derelict properties and a commercial kennels.

The site is self-contained, and development of the property would not set a precedent in terms of new housing in the area as the site is clearly defined with strong boundaries.

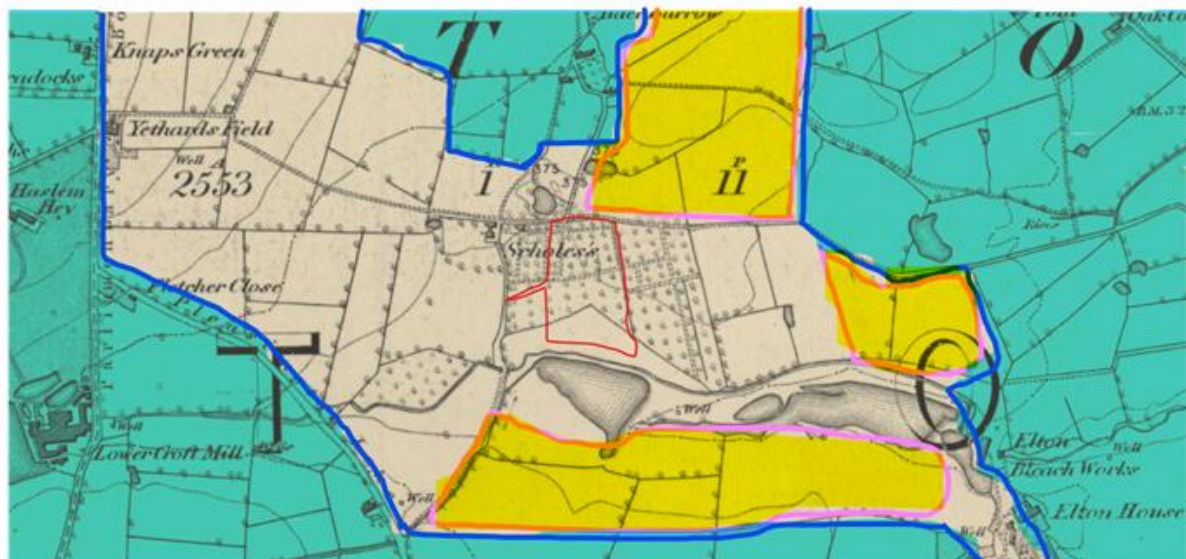
Notwithstanding, the site is heavily wooded and contributes significantly to the Elton Brook wildlife corridor. It is for this reason that the house is design to sit lightly on the site so as to encourage free wildlife movement. We believe this is a significant contributor to the buildings success and its minimal impact on the openness of the Greenbelt.

The historical development of the area is important. The maps above show how the landscape has changed as a result of the sub-division of land, the development of commercial land-use and the construction of new buildings to support the resulting changes in land management and community welfare.

The Leigh Lane site is now in a dilapidated, unmanaged condition, contributes little to the landscape and is increasingly becoming an overgrown and unmanaged eyesore.



Site changes Since 1850



Red line – the site
 Blue – housing
 Yellow – Sports and Education

Scottish National Archive

National Planning Policy Framework - References with key observations highlighted:

The NPPF specifies that the underlying aim of Green Belt policy is to **prevent urban sprawl** by keeping land permanently open. It specifies that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to **enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt**, such as looking for opportunities to **provide access**; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to **retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity**; or to **improve damaged and derelict land**.

Paragraphs 14

*Local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area; • Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, **with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change**, unless: - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

Paragraph 81

*Local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; **to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.***

Paragraph 109

- *The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: **Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes,***
- ***Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem[s]***
- ***Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.***
- ***Establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.***
- ***[Minimisation of] soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.***

Bury Plan Local Plan - Policy Directions

‘It is proposed that the Local Plan should include a policy that supports proposals for the beneficial use of the Green Belt, including those that seek to **improve access**; opportunities for active travel, outdoor sport and recreation; **the retention and enhancement of landscape character, visual amenity and biodiversity**; or **improve derelict land provided that they do not adversely impact on the openness of the Green Belt**’.

Key justifications of appropriateness

- **Improve access – introduction of a new ‘natural’ footpath to improve access to the land.**
- **Retain and enhancement of landscape character – the proposed house sits on piloti and is raised off the ground. The foundations will be small unobtrusive piles that are designed to minimize the impact on the existing trees – which are a key design component of what will be in essence a treehouse.**
- **Visual amenity and biodiversity – raising the building will allow the landscape to flow under and over the property and with minimal domestic garden, biodiversity will be enhanced – again visual and physical links to nature are a significant contributor to the building concept.**
- **Improve derelict land provided that they do not adversely impact on the openness of the Green Belt’ - the land has been previously developed, and the topography and landscape are manmade. The site is hidden from view and can only be glimpsed from Leigh Lane. As the proposed landscape matures the building will not be discernible from any off-site vantage point, save for occasional views of it from the proposed new public footpath running to the West (within the wider site boundary).**

12.8 Green Belts are characterised by their openness and permanence, **but this does not mean that positive steps cannot be taken to promote this land in a beneficial way such as enabling the increased use of land, improving visual amenity and its benefit to the natural environment.**

12.9 However, the proposed policy would be keen to ensure that in promoting the beneficial use of Green Belt land, thorough consideration is given to whether this would cause any harm to the openness of the Green Belt. **We do not believe this to be the case for the reasons set out within this document.**

Bury Council – Supplementary Planning Guidance

SPD 1 - Open space, sport and recreation provision in new housing development

Opportunities to access high quality open space can have a major influence on people's quality of life. It is not just about providing places for people to walk the dog or enjoy an informal kick about; high quality open spaces and sports and recreational facilities can help to ensure that Bury is a place where people want to live and can contribute towards:

- Regenerating deprived areas. **The proposal will upgrade a derelict piece of land.**
- Providing wildlife habitats. **The proposal will enhance ecology on the site and surrounding areas.**
- Adaptation to climate change by improving air quality and cooling. **The building will be zero carbon and entirely environmentally sustainable.**
- Promoting health and well-being by providing opportunities for exercise, leisure and relaxation. **The building design is focused on extolling the virtues of links with nature.**
- Offering learning opportunities, for example about biodiversity. **We see the potential of the site from an ecological perspective as being one of partnership and education.**

SPG 2 - Wildlife links and corridors

Design to avoid harm to the link or corridor.

Mitigation for the reduced integrity of the corridor.

Compensation measures where a proposal would harm a link or corridor.

The focus of the design is to enhance the quality of the landscape as noted above.

SPG 3 – Planning out crime in new development.

Use natural surveillance as a primary aid towards crime reduction.

Use defensible space.

Design for both the safety of people and the security of property.

Do not design to give the impression of safety where real danger exists.

The existing site has been subject to unauthorised access and vandalism. The use of the site is present uncontrolled and unrestricted. Allowing the development will significantly improve security along the length of Leigh Lane and for all neighbouring residents.

SPD 7 - Managing the supply of housing land in Bury

The principle here is not the supply of land for housing nor the housing numbers most developers focus on, but the quality of the properties in question. We believe the proposed property to be unique and a clear illustration of how to approach the design of buildings to enhance individual context.

SPD 8 - New buildings and associated development in the Green Belt

PPG2 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.”

The five purposes of including land in the Green Belt listed are:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. **The site is isolated and due to its unique design features is incapable of replication.**

- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another. **The proposed building sits on a previously developed piece of land with clear boundaries.**
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. **The proposed scheme enhances the ecology of the site and its natural attributes and protects against further development in the area.**
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. **The proposal promotes site improvement of what is previously developed ‘urban land’ within a greenbelt setting.**

3.2 PPG2 also recognises the positive role that land identified in the Green Belt has in fulfilling the following land use objectives:

- To provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population. **A new managed footpath will be created.**
- To provide opportunities for outdoor recreation near urban areas.
- To retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live. **The established and mature landscape features present on the site will be maintained and enhanced. The building has been designed specifically for this purpose.**
- To improve damaged and derelict land around towns. **The proposal will reduce anti-social behaviour and enhance the security of the area for the public in general.**
- To secure nature conservation interest. **This is a clear focus of the proposals.**
- To retain land in agricultural, forestry and related use.

Although important, the Green Belt land use objectives are not a material consideration for the inclusion of land within the Green Belt, or for its continued protection. The most important attribute of Green Belts is the purpose of including land in the Green Belt (paragraph 3.1), regardless of their landscape quality. 3.3 PPG2 sets out criteria-based policy advice for new buildings in the Green Belt. The list includes the following categories of development as normally being acceptable in the Green Belt:

- Agriculture and forestry
- Essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation
- Limited extension or replacement of dwellings
- Limited infilling in existing villages.

We recognise that the proposals do not directly align with the above criteria but nonetheless believe that the true value of the proposal is greater than the sum of its parts and the improvements that will be afforded by the application approval will enrich the area and positively enhance the existing community.

3.4 PPG2 regards development including engineering and other operations, and the making of any material change in the use of land as inappropriate development unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. **We believe that the openness of the greenbelt will be unaffected by the development for the reasons stated in this document and also the accompanying Design, Access and Innovation Statement.**

3.5 PPG2 also states that the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in the Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of siting, materials or design. **Care has been taken to ensure that the**

proposals do not compromise the setting by virtue of good design and the use of appropriate materials which accord with the woodland setting.

3.6 In cases where development is regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, PPG2 states that it is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. **The proposals are entirely site-specific and the utmost care has been taken to design a property who's multi-stemmed benefits create a cumulatively effective solution to a demanding and derelict site.**

SPD 16 - Design and layout of new development.

Good design ensures economically viable places and spaces that are resource efficient, adaptable, durable, inclusive and fit for purpose. **The proposed property is site-specific and truly sustainable.**

Design-related Details

Biodiversity and Green Corridors

The proposals include for the enhancement of the sites ecology. This is presently restricted to a number of individual trees and the diversity of the ecology is therefore limited. Having reviewed the context of the site, we believe that the suggested design and landscape enhancements will not only increase biodiversity on the site, but they will also contribute significantly to mending (in-filling) the fractured wildlife corridor.



Landscape Design

Focus on the ‘on-site’ landscape has formed a critical aspect of the overall design proposals with the building very clearly being treated as just the covered part of the site. A number of detailed plans are submitted with this application.

Care has been taken to show improvements to existing landscape features such as hedgerows as well as the planting of new trees and the introduction of water. These will form a dual purpose, enriching the biodiversity of the site, softening building form and enhancing the visual security of the building from both off and onto the site. They will also contribute significantly to the wider environmental credentials of the building.

Proposed materials.

The intention is to create a building of mature character and to avoid the visually intrusive ‘newness’ of many developments. We are aware that the climate has changed and that improvements in air quality will not encourage materials to mature and weather in the same manner that older buildings would have done. To that end, a pallet of subdued materials has been chosen to accord with and visually merge with the existing barn.

References

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Bury Plan Local Plan – Principles

Principles:

Sustainable Development

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Change

Air Quality and Pollution Control#

Flood Risk Management

Efficient Use of Land

Design and Layout of New Development

Amenity

Planning Conditions and Obligations

Housing:

Self-build and Custom Housebuilding

The Form and Layout of New Housing Development

Natural Environment

Green Infrastructure

Biodiversity

Geology and Geodiversity

Water Resources

Landscape Character

Greenbelt

Development in the Green Belt

Beneficial Use of the Green Belt

Supplementary Planning Documentation

SPD 1 - Open space, sport and recreation provision in new housing development

SPG 2 - Wildlife links and corridors

SPG 3 - Planning out crime in new development.

SPG 4 - Percent for public art

SPD 7 - Managing the supply of housing land in Bury

SPD 8 - New buildings and associated development in the Green Belt

SPD 11 - Parking standards in Bury

SPD 12 - Travel plans in Bury.

SPD 16 - Design and layout of new development.