

Lakeside School – Justification Statement for Proposed Classroom Building in the Green Belt (July 2025)

The site is located within the designated Green Belt where Chapter 13 of the NPPF (2024) - Protecting Green Belt Land applies and is an appropriate policy context for assessing the application. Paragraph 142 of the NPPF advises that 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.

Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 153 continues stating that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. '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 benefits of the proposal.

The proposals would meet 'very special circumstances' as demonstrated below – acknowledging the significant benefits towards the provision of SEN and de-minimis nature of the development which importantly would ensure the openness and permanence of the Green Belt is retained.

1. Educational Need and Very Special Circumstances

The facility is located at an existing school site and will support pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN); providing tailored learning environments that cannot be accommodated within the existing building envelope.

The proposed classroom building is essential for the school to allow for a reduction in overall classroom sizes (eg. reduced pupil numbers per class) – this ensures better therapy and educational outcomes with teachers and teaching assistants being able to provide for improved individual support. The absence of suitable facilities would compromise the quality of education offered on site in the future.

The introduction of additional classroom accommodation at an existing school site would also support NPPF Paragraph 100 which is clear that significant weight should be given in support for the improvement and extension of existing school sites to ensure the appropriate provision of school places is available to meet existing and future community needs.

2. Lack of Reasonable Alternatives

A review of the site has confirmed that there are no viable alternatives outside the Green Belt or within the existing built form that can accommodate the proposed classroom. The existing buildings are at capacity, and internal reconfiguration would not meet the specific spatial and environmental needs of SEN provision (given its recent redevelopment). Off-site alternatives outside the Green Belt would clearly not be feasible.

3. Minimal Harm to the Openness of the Green Belt

The proposed building has been carefully designed and sited to minimise its impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It is located adjacent to the existing large built form, ensuring visual containment and reducing encroachment into open land. The scale, height, and massing have been kept to a minimum, and the design is sympathetic to the rural character of the area utilising a cedar cladding to match in with the new secondary school building. Landscaping measures will be implemented to further soften the visual impact and enhance integration with the surroundings.

Following the recent redevelopment of the site in 2021, a significant amount of built development was demolished on the site (including hard standing which the application proposals are located upon). To confirm – as part of that application approved by the Council – total development was reduced across the site, with a net reduction of 5,487 m³. As such the current proposals would remain significantly below that of the previous development on the site and therefore would not represent a significant new built form within the green belt.

4. Site Photos

The following site photos provides a context of the site, its existing conditions and setting within the Green Belt. It is clear from the photos that the proposals will not have a detrimental impact upon the wider setting of the green belt. The proposals would preserve the sites' openness and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, as per the requirements of Paragraph 143.



Photograph 1: Location of Proposed Classroom (Looking East)



Photograph 2: Existing / Recent Site Ground Conditions