

North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination

Matter 25:

New land proposed for allocation through the main modifications

Prepared on behalf of
Hertfordshire County Council

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Julie Mc Laughlin	Martin Herbert	Martin Herbert
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Prepared by	Checked by	Approved By
Julie Mc Laughlin	Martin Herbert	Martin Herbert

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 WYG represents Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Property and its land holdings around Baldock. WYG previously submitted representations to the Local Plan Examination in Public in January 2018, which covered the delivery of five draft local plan site allocations within Baldock, namely BA1, BA2, BA3, BA4 (part) and BA10.
- 1.2 In December 2017, WYG submitted two outline planning applications on behalf of HCC for the principle of development and means of access for these sites. Planning application reference no. 17/04420/OP covers land north of Baldock (allocation BA1); and planning application reference no. 17/04417/OP covers land south east of Baldock (allocations BA2, BA3, BA4 (part) and BA10). These two outline planning applications are pending while the Local Plan examination continues, however design work on the infrastructure and masterplans is ongoing in conjunction with stakeholder engagement.
- 1.3 This Statement responds to the Inspector's questions on MM386 (the proposed extension of BA2) and MM387 (the proposed extension of BA3 and amendments to the boundaries of BA3 and BA4).

2. Inspector's Questions and HCC Responses for Sites BA2, BA3 and BA4

Matter 25.1 Questions

- a) Is the inclusion of the new areas of land necessary for soundness?
- b) Is the new area of land proposed deliverable? In particular is it:
 - i. confirmed by all of the landowners involved as being available for the use proposed?
 - ii. supported by evidence to demonstrate that safe and appropriate access for vehicles and pedestrians can be provided?
 - iii. deliverable, having regard to the provision of the necessary infrastructure and services, and any environmental or other constraints?
- c) Is the inclusion of the new area of land justified and appropriate in terms of the likely impacts of the development?

Matter 25.1 Responses

- a) The inclusion of the new areas proposed in BA2 and BA3 will allow for the creation of clear and defensible Green Belt boundaries and will therefore reinforce the soundness of the Local Plan.
- b) As set out in our original Hearing Statement on Matter 10: The Housing Allocations and Settlement Boundaries (Baldock), and with no issues arising in the interim period, it is confirmed that the land is still deliverable and available for the proposed uses, including new housing. The outline planning applications demonstrate how safe and appropriate access for vehicles and pedestrians can be provided; and demonstrate a commitment to the provision of the necessary infrastructure. In the interim period, detailed design work has continued to ensure the delivery of the most appropriate infrastructure for those allocated sites.
- c) The extension of Site BA2 south-eastwards reflects land ownership and utilises the readily recognisable features of the adjacent A505 dual carriageway and a public right of way (Bridleway Weston 001) and accordingly presents a strong, effective and permanent boundary in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (Paragraph 85).
The extension of BA3 north-eastwards, incorporating an area of "white land" and that part of BA4 included within the Green Belt is justified in providing a practical solution for policy purposes and provides an appropriate defensible Green Belt boundary, which will be subject to detailed landscaping proposals. Accordingly, amendments to the boundaries of both BA3 and BA4 are necessary.

Matter 25.2 Questions

If/where the new area of land proposed for allocation is currently in the Green Belt:

- a) Do exceptional circumstances exist to warrant its allocation? If so, what are they?
- b) What is the nature and extent of the harm to the Green Belt of removing the new area of land from it?
- c) To what extent would the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent?

If/where relevant:

- d) If this new land were to be developed as proposed, would the adjacent Green Belt continue to serve at least one of the five purposes of Green Belts, or would the Green Belt function be undermined by its allocation?
- e) Will the Green Belt boundary proposed need to be altered at the end of the plan period, or is it capable of enduring beyond then?
- f) Are the proposed Green Belt boundaries consistent with the Plan's strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development?
- g) Has the Green Belt boundary around the new land been defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent? Does it avoid including land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open?

Matter 25.2 Responses

We do not wish to comment on matters of the Green Belt, and we leave those matters to North Hertfordshire District Council. However, the site allocations that are subject to the proposed Main Modifications of MM386 and MM387 (BA2, BA3 and BA4) are subject to an outline planning application, reference number 17/04417/OP, which includes an illustrative masterplan demonstrating proposals that would create strong and defensible Green Belt boundaries including perimeter landscaping, structural planting and consideration of topography, all of which will reinforce the function and purposes of the adjoining Green Belt.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The proposed changes to the Policies Map (MM386 and MM387) offer practical solutions for the provision of strong and defensible Green Belt boundaries in accordance with NPPF 2012; and the proposed changes to policy provide a clear and consistent policy framework for the allocated sites.