
North Hertfordshire District Council

Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031

Schedule of Further Matters, Issues and Questions

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Matter 30 – Barkway and Site BK3

Background and explanation of the issues

In the Local Plan as originally submitted, Barkway is identified within the 'category A villages' tier of the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy SP2. Three sites are proposed to be allocated for new housing development in the settlement. Of those, Site BK3 is the largest and is anticipated to deliver around 140 homes.

Following previous hearing sessions, the Council put forward a main modification, MM010, proposing to remove Barkway (along with four other settlements) from this tier and to include it in a new tier identified as villages 'for growth'. At that point, the Council also put forward two main modifications, MM216 and MM389, effectively proposing that Site BK3 be extended southwards to encompass land to be reserved for primary education.

The Council's position in respect of Site BK3, and consequently with regard to Barkway, has now changed. On 23 November the Council published a note [ED210] which, at paragraphs 15 and 16, says that Site BK3 (as proposed to be modified) should be considered for deletion and additionally excluded from the proposed village boundary, and suggests that, in this scenario, Barkway itself would revert to its originally proposed 'Category A' status within proposed Policy SP2.

The reasons for the Council's altered position are set out in detail in ED210. They are, as I understand it and in summary, because:

- it appears to the Council that the housing proposed on Site BK3 (and in Barkway overall) "*does not trigger a definitive need*" to use the land proposed for primary education; and that
- "*absent a requirement for the reserve school site to be utilised, there are significant concerns over the ability to satisfactorily integrate (the housing proposed on Site BK3) into the existing village in design and placemaking terms*"; and that
- without the housing proposed on Site BK3, the Council considers that residential development in Barkway would be of a modest level more commensurate with that of a 'Category A village' rather than that of a village 'for growth'.

I am examining the Local Plan as it was originally submitted. I will, therefore, only recommend main modifications to the originally submitted plan where they are necessary to rectify soundness problems. As such, it is necessary for me to consider the following:

- whether the Local Plan, as originally submitted, is sound in respect of the identification of Barkway as a 'Category A village' and the allocation of Site BK3 (I have already explored these issues at the original hearing sessions); or
- whether the main modifications previously put forward by the Council (MM010 proposing to include Barkway as a village 'for growth' in the settlement hierarchy, and MM216 and MM389 proposing that Site BK3 be extended southwards to encompass land to be reserved for primary education) are necessary for soundness and if so whether they are, in and of themselves, sound; or
- whether the main modifications suggested for consideration in the Council's latest note (ED210) are necessary for soundness and if so whether they are, in and of themselves, sound.

To enable me to reach conclusions on those matters, I set out specific questions below.

Questions

The justification for allocating Site BK3 for housing

- 30.1 Should the site be allocated for housing, either with or without the land reserved for education purposes? If so:
- Is there a reasonable likelihood that the land identified for primary education will be needed for that purpose during the plan period?
 - If the identified land were not to be developed for primary education purposes, is there a reasonable likelihood that housing on the remainder of Site BK3 would be capable of visually integrating into the existing village?
 - If not, would the deletion of Site BK3 be necessary for soundness, or would there be a more appropriate course of action?
- 30.2 If the site is allocated for housing, should the land identified also be allocated for primary education purposes?

The spatial strategy and Barkway's place within the settlement hierarchy

- 30.3 Depending on the preceding questions, what tier of the settlement hierarchy should Barkway be categorised as, and why?
- 30.4 If it were necessary for soundness to delete Site BK3 from the Local Plan and no alternative land were proposed to replace it:
- would this affect or undermine the Local Plan's spatial strategy and the aim of directing new housing development to the most sustainable locations?
 - would it be necessary for soundness to reject MM010 such that Barkway would remain a 'Category A village'?
 - would this affect or undermine the demonstration of the exceptional circumstances required to 'release' land from the Green Belt around other settlements for new housing?

The supply of land for housing

- 30.5 What bearing, if any, does this have on the supply of land for housing?
- 30.6 If it were necessary for soundness to delete Site BK3 from the Local Plan, would it also be necessary for soundness to allocate alternative land for housing, either in Barkway or elsewhere? If so, how much land, where and why?

Matter 31 – the main modifications put forward by the Council relating to Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability and in relation to the strategic housing site policies (Policies SP14 to SP19 inclusive)

The Council now considers that the aforementioned policies are not sound in relation to design, place-making and master-planning. It has put forward a number of main modifications to rectify matters. These are set out in document ED216, which can be found on the examination webpage. They are shown in **bold red text** within ED216, and the prefix 'FM' is used to identify them – this is to avoid confusion with main modifications that have already been consulted on and are also shown within ED216 to provide a complete picture of the changes proposed by the Council.

I am examining the Local Plan as it was originally submitted. I will, therefore, only recommend main modifications to the originally submitted plan where they are necessary to rectify soundness problems.

- 31.1 Are the main modifications proposed in relation to Policy SP9 and its supporting paragraphs (FM001, FM002 and FM003) necessary for soundness? Are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?
- 31.2 Are the main modifications proposed in relation to Policy SP14: Site BA1 (FM004) necessary for soundness? Are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?
- 31.3 Are the main modifications proposed in relation to Policy SP15: Site LG1 (FM005) necessary for soundness? Are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?
- 31.4 Are the main modifications proposed in relation to Policy SP16: Site NS1 (FM006) necessary for soundness? Are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?
- 31.5 Are the main modifications proposed in relation to Policy SP17: Site HT1 (FM007) necessary for soundness? Are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?
- 31.6 Are the main modifications proposed in relation to Policy SP18: Site GA2 (FM008) necessary for soundness? Are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?
- 31.7 Are the main modifications proposed in relation to Policy SP19: Sites EL1, EL2 and EL3 (FM009) necessary for soundness? Are they justified, effective and consistent with national policy?