

From: Derek Bromley – Bidwells
Subject: North Herts Local Plan. Further hearing Session. Matter 23
Date: 10 February 2020 at 13:58:26 GMT
To: PO Services <louise@poservices.co.uk>

Dear Sir

Bidwells acts for the landowners West of Stevenage identified as “safeguarded” land. As part of the Examination we have previously provided a Statement of Common Ground agreed with NHDC.

As an update we can confirm that the land west of the A1M within SBC boundary is subject to a legal agreement between the landowners, SBC, Homes England and private landowners (Neave and Watts) on the one hand, and Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon as developers on the other. This land was removed and released from the Green Belt following the earlier identification of the land within Stevenage B.C. and beyond in North Herts in the Herts County Structure Plan. The land within SBC is allocated for housing with policies which protect the further extension into North Herts in the future. The developers are under a legal obligation to submit and secure a planning permission at the earliest practical opportunity and have entered into a Planning Performance Agreement with SBC.

The history of West Stevenage and the Green Belt in this location should not be dismissed lightly. The Herts County Structure Plan proposed 2 essential parts. Firstly, considering all the evidence base of future housing need, the Green Belt and sustainable patterns of development before identifying the West of Stevenage location. Secondly, the enlargement of the Green Belt between Stevenage and Luton. Those 2 policies were interlinked and this is important, because the history raises the issue that it is questionable you should do one without the other. NHDC propose the enlargement of the Green Belt. The extent of the Green Belt between Luton and Stevenage will therefore be greater than it was in the 1990's and 2000's. The purpose of the extension was due to the loss of Green Belt created by the West of Stevenage proposals, this is compensatory Green Belt which ensures the purpose and functions of the Green Belt in this general area are maintained.

The Councils documents refers to the history of West of Stevenage and having been involved with it since 1996 I have some experience, even if the memory might need jogging. The release of this location from the Green Belt to meet a future housing need has been established through many processes which have examined it to enormous depth. Firstly, there was the Herts County Structure Plan process, then East of England Regional Plan, then Secretary of State's Decision and lastly for that part which lies within SBC, its Local Plan. All of which in one form or another have approved the area West of Stevenage should be removed from the Green Belt to meet a future housing need of 5,000 dwellings. This level of housing cannot be accommodated other than on land within NHDC. The reason the land West of Stevenage within NHDC has not been finalised, is because the Structure Plan left it to the 2 Local Authorities to

determine the precise boundaries. Whilst this function was largely performed by the Secretary of State when granting the permission it is only now after all these years is it proposed as part of the NHDC Local Plan.

The characteristics of the land both in Landscape terms and Green Belt functions has not changed, indeed as noted above the extent of the Green Belt between Luton and Stevenage is now to be greater, with what should be regarded as compensatory Green Belt inclusion. The fact there remains an undeniable need for housing in the future has not changed, the sustainable location adjoining a New Town (which has been planned rather than older towns which have evolved through the centuries) has not changed. The Boroughs of Stevenage, Luton and Watford are all tightly constrained and rely on neighbouring Councils to assist in meeting those Borough's housing need will not change.

The NPPF para 136 and 139 d) do not require Green Belt boundaries beyond the plan period or safeguarded land to be identified to meet future development needs of a particular Authority. To what extent the housing on the safeguarded land meets the needs of SBC or NHDC will be part of the Duty to Co-operate at the relevant time. The reasonable expectation is that additional housing need will inevitably arise and in all probability far sooner than beyond the plan period. To make provision for that need is what the NPPF seeks to achieve. The SBC Local Plan site specific policy for the land within SBC requires provision for the expansion into NHDC, not to make an interlocking provision within the NHDC Plan by the safeguarding of that land would be to make the SBC provisions obsolete, and enable the developers not to provide road corridors, land for services or the design of the scheme whereby it can be extended into NHDC. The safeguarding provides for joined up planning across the 2 Districts.

So landowners for whom we act endorse the Councils response ED 174.

Regards
Derek Bromley
Bidwells

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