

North Hertfordshire District Council and Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Planning Group – Response to Examiners Questions

July 10th 2020

1. The Qualifying Body: can you please advise me if the Planning Group is the QB and what their legal status is, given the plan area is a mix of parish and un-parished areas? A quote from legislation would help me [I've got the Group's constitution].

And/or please send me a copy of the NHDC designation letter and the report on which it was based (which may answer the question anyway).

The Qualifying Body is Bygrave Parish Council.

The Neighbourhood Planning Group is made up of a group of residents who have been undertaking the neighbourhood planning work, with its membership and steering arrangements including representatives from all three constituent areas (the parishes of Bygrave and Clothall with Luffenhall, and the town of Baldock).

The report which was considered by Cabinet on 25 July 2017 is attached and the relevant guidance which was used came from the Planning Practice Guidance – [Paragraph 026 Reference ID: 41-026-20190509](#)

2. The Development Plan: can you please confirm what it is; and which policies are considered to be strategic? And please confirm the adopted green belt boundary (a plan would also help).

The current [Development Plan is the District Local Plan No.2 With Alterations 1996 – Saved Policies](#). The saved policies do not explicitly include “strategic policies”. The green belt boundary for the District can either be viewed online using the [pdf of the key diagram on the website](#). A screen shot of the green belt boundary is also attached for ease of reference.

3. The new Local Plan: can you confirm where it has got to now (has the examination resumed?); which policies are considered strategic; and what weight you consider I should afford it, given its progress?

The emerging Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in June 2017. The Inspector held Hearing Sessions over a period between November 2017 and March 2018. Consultation on the Main Modifications took place between 3 January and 11 April 2019. The Inspector wrote to the Council in July 2019 stating that additional hearing sessions would be required – these were arranged for March 2020 but have been postponed as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

The Council set out what weight can be given to the policies in the emerging Local Plan in the [report to Cabinet](#) (December 2018) prior to consultation on the Main Modifications. The report stated at paragraph 12.5:

In this regard, and as a matter of general principle, it is considered that the Plan as proposed to be modified, is capable of attracting greater weight than the version of the Plan submitted for examination. There is no standard approach to the weight to be attributed to relevant policies of the emerging Plan; it is a matter for the decision-maker having regard to facts of each individual application.

4. The Green Belt: Can you please confirm my understanding that the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) incorporates a number of allocated sites that the new Local Plan (LP) will remove from the green belt?

The designated neighbourhood planning area does include sites allocated in the emerging Local Plan for development (although it makes clear that it is not allocating these itself). The table summarises whether the sites are currently in the green belt.

Site Ref.	Site Description	No. of dwellings (as amended in the Main Modifications)	Currently in the Green belt Y/N
Policy BA1	Land North of Baldock (<i>see</i> Policy SP14)	2,800 homes	Y
Policy BA2	Land south-west of Clothall Road (Clothall parish)	200 homes	Y
Policy BA3	Land south of Clothall Common (Clothall parish)	245 homes	Y
Policy BA4	Land east of Clothall Common (part in Clothall parish)	50 homes	Y – part N - part
Policy BA5	Land off Yeomanry Drive	25 homes	N
Policy BA6	Land at Icknield Way	26 homes	N
Policy BA7	Land rear of Clare Crescent	20 homes	N
Policy BA11	Deans Yard, South Road	20 homes	N

Site Ref.	Site Description	Employment Site (hectares)	Currently in the Green belt Y/N
Policy BA10	Royston Road	19.6	Y

On the basis they are currently in the green belt, if the LP is not adopted before the NP what is the status of those sites for the purposes of my examination - do they remain in the green belt? I assume so; therefore, how can the NP effectively re-draw the green belt and allocate those sites for housing?

The neighbourhood plan does not allocate sites, or indeed propose to change the green belt boundary around the proposed development sites. The policies in the neighbourhood plan have been drafted to supplement the policies in the emerging Local Plan and help guide development on those allocated sites and to secure the “best outcome for Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall from whatever development does take place.” (BBC NP – Introduction, page 1)

It follows that if the neighbourhood plan is adopted prior to the local plan, those sites will remain in the green belt until such time as the local plan is adopted. The preface to the neighbourhood plan makes clear that some of its policies will only be relevant to the extent that proposals in the new local plan are eventually adopted, with more detail on the interrelationship being set out in the basic conditions statement (see page 69 of the evidence report which accompanies the neighbourhood plan).

Screen shot of the Green Belt boundary for Baldock

