

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET - CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

AGENDA - ISSUE 3: GREEN BELT (THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY)

The overarching question explored below is whether there is realistic potential to accommodate a strategic scale of additional housing in the Green Belt by making main modifications to the submitted plan if I were to conclude that such a scale of housing was required.

On the basis of the present planned hearings, I would not be in a position to move directly to recommend a specific location in the Green Belt as a main modification, not least because parties (both existing and possibly new) who support the plan and oppose development in the Green Belt would not have had a right to be heard. I would need to advise the Council to undertake further work and consult on specific proposals which would, inevitably, be the subject of a further hearing. Parties need to bear this in mind in suggesting what they want me to do if I were to find unsoundness in relation to this issue.

The following questions generally seek to explore the most critical factors to be weighed in considering the possibility of development at various broad locations in the Green Belt being advanced by representors. They also seek to explore the possible procedural difficulties in pursuing a change in the Green Belt via this Examination at this time. The focus is on broad locations rather than specific sites.

Most representations on this issue have, rightly, avoided a critique of alternatives proposed by others in the Green Belt. This restraint is also required at the hearing since it is the soundness of the plan which is under consideration. Direct criticism of an alternative proposal amounts to support for the plan for which there is no right to be heard. Clearly, there may be common cause between representors on some matters.

For all locations, representors should be ready to succinctly clarify/confirm, where relevant, the broad scale of development that is being advocated (eg urban extension proposed in the Spatial Options Consultation 2009 CD5/4, a smaller extension, such as assessed by the Council in September 2011 CD4/A17 Annex K, or alternative scales of development.). Parties should also be ready to give clear references to their existing evidence when summarising their views on impacts.

I have not completed all the reading I need to do on this issue and so I may need to tweak this agenda, but the broad approach and likely questions should be clear from what is set out below.

Overview

What existing evidence/core document best summarises the purpose of the Green Belt in Bath & NES and any spatial variations in the importance of the Green Belt in relation to those purposes?

Odd Down

What is the degree of harm (or otherwise) in relation to the main issues, which appear to be:

Effect on the purposes of the GB.

Effect on AONB and the exceptional circumstances test in PPS7 (paragraph 22).

Effect on setting of WHS.

Setting of Ancient Monument (Wansdyke)

SAC (Bats)

The SCG notes that further work would be required to explore potential mitigation in relation to the SAC. How long (eg months) might be required for such further work? Would it require new surveys at different times of the year?

Twerton

What is the degree of harm (or otherwise) in relation to the main issues which appear to be:

Effect on the purposes of the GB.

Effect on setting of AONB. (Is the exceptional circumstances test in PPS7 applicable?).

Effect on setting of WHS.

(Duchy of Cornwall to note: The impact of an urban extension on the setting of WHS is most appropriately addressed here rather than under Issue 2 Bath - WHS which focuses on the compatibility of the submitted plan with the WHS and any need for a buffer.)

The hearing statement by Wolf Bond (Duchy of Cornwall) refers (at paragraph 1.19) to paragraph 4.1.27 of the Panel's Report on the EIP (CD3/5). To what area does this paragraph refer?

Ground conditions

How had the Council assessed this matter in proposing an urban extension here in 2009? What work would be required to resolve the different technical assessments which have been made?

Integration with the city.

Would a smaller development here significantly change the potential impacts?

Hicks Gate

What is the degree of harm (or otherwise) in relation to the main issues, which appear to be:

Effect on the purposes of the GB.

Integration with adjoining urban area and City Core Strategy.

Could a suitable development be brought forward within Bath and NES without development of the adjoining land within the City at Brislington? (The proposal has been consistently advanced as a single cross-border scheme.)

Would development here be an appropriate location to serve needs within Bath & NES rather than needs arising primarily in Bristol?

Given that the adopted Bristol Core Strategy identifies Brislington (adjoining Hicks Gate) as a long term contingency for further housing development should the Bath & NES Core Strategy make any reference to this location (irrespective of any conclusions on the other issues)?

Whitchurch

What is the degree of harm (or otherwise) in relation to the main issues, which appear to be:

Effect on the purposes of the GB.

Integration with adjoining urban area and City Core Strategy.

Adequate transport links.

Is the potential impact on the Maes Knoll Ancient Monument largely resolved by the masterplan included in Barton Willmore's statement (Taylor Wimpey/Bovis)? Is this primarily a matter for the detailed layout/precise scale?

Would development here be an appropriate location to serve needs within Bath & NES rather than needs arising primarily in Bristol?

There is no assessment by Bristol City Council of the implications of a major urban extension here on the City or of how effective integration could be achieved. What are the implications for the soundness of a possible main modification in relation to this broad location?

Around Keynsham (various sites)

What is the degree of harm (or otherwise) in relation to the main issues, which appear to be:

Effect on the purposes of the GB

Does the GB around Keynsham need to be reviewed on a consistent and comprehensive basis before particular locations might be identified as most appropriate for removal?

Would development here be an appropriate location to serve needs within Bath & NES?

Simon Emerson
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16 January 2012