

## Three Rivers District Council Core Strategy

### Statement in Response to Matter 3: Infrastructure and Delivery (CP8, Appendix 4), Green Belt (CP11), Employment and Economic Development (CP6)

#### Infrastructure and Delivery *CP8, Appendix 4*

**3.1 Policy CP8 makes it clear that the decision whether or not to set a CIL charging schedule has not yet been made. In these circumstances does the policy set out clearly the alternative methods for securing infrastructure to support development?**

3.1.1 Yes.

3.1.2 The Council intends to continue to secure infrastructure to support development through the use of planning obligations until such a time a decision has been made whether or not to adopt a CIL charging schedule.

3.1.3 The supporting text of Policy CP8 states that the Council will negotiate with developers through the use of planning obligations (Section 106 agreements) to contribute towards infrastructure as part of relevant development proposals and also specifies the types of infrastructure the Council and Hertfordshire County Council will seek provision for or contribution towards.

3.1.4 Policy CP8 also refers to specific planning documents and guidance which contain the detailed charges and formulae that will be used when calculating the amount/level of contribution.

3.1.5 Should the Council decide not to adopt a CIL charging schedule by April 2014, Section 106 Agreements will still be used to secure the infrastructure to support development as these can still be used provided the tests in the CIL regulations are met and no more than 5 contributions are pooled for one project or type of infrastructure.

**3.2 If the Council decides to use CIL will there still be a need for an Infrastructure and Obligations SPD?**

3.2.1 Yes.

3.2.2 If the Council decides to implement a CIL the Infrastructure and Obligations SPD will set out the charging schedule. It will also provide further guidance on planning obligations which fall outside of the CIL regime such as those for site specific mitigation measures.

**3.3 Will the Council continue to rely on the range of SPDs referred to in Policy CP8?**

3.3.1 Yes.

3.3.2 It is intended that the Council will continue to rely on the range of SPDs referred to in Policy CP8 and these will be used to inform the charging schedule in the Infrastructure and Obligations SPD. It is anticipated that these SPDs will be updated on an annual basis.

**3.4 The Risks/Contingency Planning column of the IDS (Appendix 4) is largely blank. Does this mean that risk and contingency planning have not been considered for many projects?**

3.4.1 No.

3.4.2 PPS12 advises that the infrastructure planning process should identify as far as possible, infrastructure needs and costs, phasing, funding sources and responsibilities for delivery, and where necessary contingency planning scenarios.

3.4.3 It recognises that the budgeting processes of different agencies may mean that less information may be available when the Core Strategy is being prepared than would be ideal and it is important therefore that the Core Strategy makes proper provision for such uncertainties and does not place undue reliance on **critical** elements of infrastructure whose funding is unknown. Contingency planning showing how the objectives will be achieved under different scenarios may be necessary in circumstances where provision is uncertain.

3.4.4 The findings of the Three Rivers Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) [SD13] that was prepared as evidence for the Core Strategy (developed using guidance from the Communities of Local Government, the Planning Advisory Service and other best practice guidance), shows that there are no elements of the infrastructure framework that would be considered as so essential that it will prevent the development outlined in the Core Strategy from occurring. It is therefore considered that there are no **critical** elements of infrastructure that require risk and contingency planning at this time. The Risk/Contingency column in the IDS Table in Appendix 4 only contains information on potential risks where known, as additional information which may be of interest/use. The IDP will be reviewed annually and where critical elements of infrastructure are identified in the future, risk assessments and contingency plans will be carried out where provision is uncertain.

**Green Belt**

**CP11**

**3.5 Paragraph 5.107 sets out clearly the mechanism for making detailed changes to the established Green Belt boundary through the Site Allocations DPD. Policy CP11 (b) is less clear and relies on cross reference to other parts of the CS. It states that minor revisions will include, where appropriate, removal of sites to be identified through the SADPD. This implies that other revisions are planned. If so, how will these revisions be made?**

3.5.1 The intention is to only make revisions to the Green Belt boundary (and associated changes to the Proposals Map) where appropriate through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document that are required to meet the anticipated development over the plan period. To clarify the Council suggests the following wording for CP11(b):

Where appropriate, make minor revisions through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document ~~where appropriate~~ to the detailed Green Belt boundaries around the main urban area, to accommodate development needs, as detailed in the Spatial Strategy and Place Shaping Policies. This will include, where appropriate, the removal of sites from the Green Belt. ~~to be identified through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document~~

### **3.6 Should Policy CP11 provide information about the timing of the GB review?**

3.6.1 The revised wording clarifies that amendments to the Green Belt boundaries will be done through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document. The Local Development Scheme details the timetable for the production of this document and so it is considered unnecessary to provide further information on timing within Policy CP11.

### **3.7 Does the CS provide a clear strategy for the two existing Major Developed Sites in the GB?**

3.7.1 Yes.

3.7.2 The Core Strategy states that Major Developed Site in the Green Belt status for Maple Lodge Sewage Treatment Works will be retained, and that it will be reviewed at Leavesden Aerodrome.

3.7.3 In the case of Maple Lodge Sewage Treatment Works, the Core Strategy highlights that development may be necessary for strategic and operational reasons (paragraph 5.106). The Water Cycle Study (2010) [EB22] identifies that upgrades may be required to deal with growth in the wider catchment area, although the strategy depends on actual levels of growth in surrounding districts. Therefore it has not been possible for the Core Strategy or Infrastructure Delivery Plan to specify the upgrades required, and therefore include a specific strategy for the Major Developed Site.

3.7.4 However, PPG2 includes detailed advice about development in the Green Belt, including of Major Developed Sites. As Local Development Documents should not repeat national guidance, it is considered that in conjunction with national policy, the Core Strategy provides clear guidance for potential development at Maple Lodge.

3.7.5 The review of Major Developed Site status at Leavesden recognises the importance of the site in meeting future housing and employment needs (as discussed in the response to Issue 1.9). The Core Strategy makes provision for Major Developed Site status to be reviewed through the Site Allocations DPD to reflect these needs. The Core Strategy (through policies PSP2, CP2, CP6 and CP11) is therefore considered to provide a clear strategy for the Leavesden Aerodrome Major Developed Site.

### **3.8 Have representations suggesting new MDSs at Merchant Taylors School, Royal Masonic School, The Grove and Langleybury been considered? Is the decision not to designate any new MDSs supported by robust evidence?**

3.8.1 Yes.

3.8.2 Requests to consider The Grove and Langleybury have been considered. However the representation requesting their designation has now been withdrawn and a statement between the Council and Ralph Trustees Ltd has been agreed [Appendix 1]. A planning brief for the sites is to be prepared and the sites will be considered through the Site Allocations DPD.

3.8.3 Requests to designate new Major Developed Sites at Merchant Taylors School and Royal Masonic School have been considered, but as set out in the Core Strategy Preferred Options (2009) [SD03] at paragraph 8.12, the Council does not agree on the basis that the evidence does not justify their designation.

- 3.8.4 Representations to the requests to designate Merchant Taylors and Royal Masonic Schools as Major Developed Sites were received in October 2007 in response to the Core Strategy Supplemental Issues and Options consultation [SD05], again in March 2009 in response to the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation [SD03], and again in July 2010 in response to the Core Strategy Proposed Submission consultation [CD01]. These responses were reported to Executive Committee on 26 November 2007 [SD06], 5 October 2009 [SD04] and 31 January 2011 [SD23].
- 3.8.5 The representations considered that as educational establishments, pre-dating the Green Belt, generating significant activity and with potential for infilling or redevelopment that would not injure the purposes of the Green Belt, the schools and their characteristics are befitting of Major Developed Site Status.
- 3.8.6 While PPG2 provides guidance on what may constitute a Major Developed Site, this is not exhaustive and there is no guidance on when a site should be designated as a Major Developed Site, notwithstanding practice in other authorities. There are no requirements for all developed sites within the Green Belt to be designated as Major Developed Sites.
- 3.8.7 The Council considers that while PPG2 recognises that education establishments may be Major Developed Sites and that they may predate the town and country planning system and Green Belt designation, there is no requirement that all such educational establishments are designated as Major Developed Sites.
- 3.8.8 The Council does not view these sites in the same context as the existing Major Developed Sites at Leavesden, a substantive (partly redundant) site of strategic economic importance, and Maple Lodge, a site of strategic and operational importance in terms of the area's sewerage infrastructure requirements.
- 3.8.9 Whilst the Council acknowledges that the schools in question have future development needs, these are not considered to be unique when compared to all other schools within the District which do not have Major Developed Site status.
- 3.8.10 In principle, limited new development of the sites for continued educational purposes could represent very special circumstances justifying the inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Allocation as Major Developed Sites is therefore not considered to be the most appropriate approach in order to facilitate improvements to educational facilities. If the development required is not limited infilling or redevelopment, it would still be considered inappropriate even if the site were designated as a Major Developed Site.
- 3.8.11 The Merchant Taylors and Royal Masonic Schools are both located in sensitive locations outside the urban area and are highly visible.
- 3.8.12 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy set out in PPG2 is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and one of the key purposes of including land in Green Belts as set out in PPG2 is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 3.8.13 The designation of these sites as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt is not required to ensure the delivery of the Core Strategy Vision or to meet Strategic Objectives.

- 3.8.14 Core Strategy Strategic Objective 1 sets out that there remains a strong commitment to the protection of the Green Belt and that where changes to the Green Belt are required to meet identified development needs, these changes will be limited to the most sustainable locations on the edges of existing urban areas.
- 3.8.15 The Merchant Taylors and Royal Masonic Schools are located in sensitive countryside locations which are highly visible. It is therefore considered that the designation of the sites as Major Developed Sites would not be consistent with the aims of national policy to keep land permanently open and particularly the key purpose of including land in Green Belts to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. It would also not be consistent with the aims of the Core Strategy to protect the Green Belt. The designation of Merchant Taylors School and the Royal Masonic School, would therefore not be the most appropriate strategy for the sites, particularly when considered against the alternative option of not-designating them and therefore requiring development proposals to be justified by very special circumstances.
- 3.8.16 The provisions of Annex C of PPG2 do not impose an obligation on local authorities to identify and designate all Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt. Rather, they are a mechanism to facilitate appropriate infilling or redevelopment on these sites where there are good planning reasons for doing so. While designation of the Royal Masonic and Merchant Taylors Schools may provide benefits for the landowners in facilitating future development, it is not considered that there would be good planning reasons to justify their designation.
- 3.8.17 The Council as the Local Planning Authority will work constructively with the owners of the Royal Masonic and Merchant Taylors Schools in the future and where appropriate and where a case for very special circumstances for inappropriate development, including for operational reasons, can be made, it will carefully consider any proposed development on the School sites. It is not however considered appropriate to designate these sites as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt as this would effectively reduce development management that can be exercised in these sensitive locations.

## **Employment and Economic Development            CP6**

- 3.9     Does the CS provide sufficient detail about the level of employment growth that is planned/expected?**
- 3.9.1 Paragraph 5.59 of the Core Strategy details the findings and recommendations of The South West Herts Employment Land Update (2010) [EB04]. In quantitative terms it states that the District has an over supply of office floorspace, a slight undersupply of industrial and warehousing space and recommends that additional land should be developed at Maple Cross to meet demand.
- 3.9.2 Paragraph 5.48 of the South West Herts Employment Land Update (2010) [EB04] states that 3.5 hectares of floorspace will be needed to address the deficit of industrial and warehousing space to 2026 and 2031.
- 3.9.3 To clarify the level of employment growth the Council propose that paragraph 5.59 of the Core Strategy should incorporate additional text to clarify this:

For Three Rivers, the Study broadly reflects the findings of earlier studies and considers that:

- There is an oversupply of office floorspace in the District. In particular, land at Leavesden does not have potential as a large scale office park and a range of uses should be permitted on the site.
- There is a slight under supply of industrial and warehousing space amounting to 3.5ha and loss of industrial and warehousing land should generally be resisted unless they are no longer attractive to the market and suitable. Where industrial and warehousing sites are lost to other uses, these should where possible be replaced. Additional land should be developed at Maple Cross to meet demand.

### **3.10 Does the CS provide sufficient direction for the SADPD to allocate sites for additional employment floorspace?**

3.10.1 Yes.

3.10.2 Paragraph 5.59 details the findings of the South West Herts Employment Study Update (2010) [EB04] which will be used to inform the SADPD. It specifically states additional employment land should be developed at Maple Cross.

3.10.3 PSP3 c) also refers specifically to the redistribution of employment floorspace through mixed use development in Kings Langley Employment area and an extension of floorspace at the Maple Cross Employment Area.

3.10.4 Policy CP6 j) – o) set out the principles to support sustainable economic growth in the District. These set out in locational terms, where growth will be directed and where change is expected to take place. Reference is also made to the South Oxhey regeneration area. The last paragraph of Policy CP6 sets out how sustainable growth principles will be translated into specific sites through the SADPD. The relevant sites (Leavesden Aerodrome, Kings Langley Employment Area, Delta Gain, Maple Cross and South Oxhey town centre are all encapsulated on the Key Diagram (Figure 5).

3.10.5 The Site Allocations 'Issues & Options' Consultation Document (November 2010) [DL06] informed by the Core Strategy, identified issues relating to our likely future employment land requirements. It looked at the revision of existing employment land boundaries reflecting the changes to these sites over the last 10 years and identified in some detail the extent of the extension to the Maple Cross employment area and the scope for mixed use development in the Kings Langley Employment area.

3.10.6 It is, therefore, considered that the Core Strategy gives sufficient direction for the SADPD to allocate sites for additional employment floorspace.

**APPENDIX 1:****RTL and TRDC Agreed Statement on RTL's Withdrawal from the Core Strategy Examination on Matter 3 (Green Belt - Major Developed Sites)**

RTL and TRDC have agreed that it is not necessary to consider the merits of whether The Grove and/or Langleybury should be identified as Major Developed Sites within the Green Belt in this emerging Core Strategy, on the basis that the parties agree that the more appropriate way forward for the planned future of both RTL sites is as follows:

- TRDC to prepare separate Site Allocations for The Grove and Langleybury sites, for inclusion in the Site Allocations DPD Preferred Options consultation stage (Autumn 2011). The Langleybury Site Allocation will specifically examine the suitability of the site for housing and economic development uses.
- To inform the Site Allocations DPD, TRDC, in conjunction with RTL and other stakeholders, is to prepare a Planning Brief for both The Grove and Langleybury sites (during June to August 2011) to set out the parameters for development and the types of uses envisaged. This Brief would address the unique characteristics of each site and the economic development opportunities which exist.

RTL is currently exploring the potential at The Grove and Langleybury site to enhance its hotel offer as a result of the significant national and international demand at The Grove, and in light of the nearby Leavesden Studio commitment, which creates a very specific additional opportunity for leisure and tourism development in the District.

TRDC agrees that, as RTL own both sites, there is potential to develop a holistic approach covering the two sites through a Planning Brief, to address the following aims:

- Significantly reduce the impact of the former Langleybury School on the Green Belt openness and landscape;
- Create an enduring use for Langleybury House and result in the restoration and enhancement of this heritage asset;
- Meet the identified business needs of The Grove and exploit the potential for further developing this key business and leisure attraction in the District;
- Enhance the tourism infrastructure which will complement and support the Leavesden Studio commitment;
- Result in significant economic benefits in terms of capital investment, additional direct and indirect employment and additional supply chain benefits; and
- Contribute to meeting housing needs, insofar as is necessary and suitable.

On the basis of this agreement, the LPA will not specifically address the issue of the Grove and Langleybury at the Core Strategy Examination.