

LOCAL PLAN SUB COMMITTEE - 22 JUNE 2020

PART I – NOT DELEGATED

6. LOCAL PLAN – GREEN BELT (DCES)

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the issues which the new Local Plan will need to address in relation to the Green Belt policy and proposes policy wording to be contained within the new Local Plan.

2 Details

- 2.1 As set out in national policy, the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence, and Green Belts serve five purposes:
- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 2.2 Great importance is attached to the Green Belt in Three Rivers, and as highlighted by the National planning Policy Framework (NPPF), established Green Belt boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances and only when a Local Plan is being prepared or reviewed.
- 2.3 As noted in previous reports to the Local Plan Sub Committee, the need for housing and employment development together with supporting infrastructure to provide for the growth which is essential to deliver sustainable development and the Government's growth agenda means that the Council has no choice but to release some land within the Green Belt to meet these needs.
- 2.4 The main focus for development is making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land, and an exhaustive search of potential sites to accommodate development needs has been carried out as part of the SHELAA (2020). The policies of the new Local Plan also promote a significant uplift in the density of development in the District, and in all cases, proposals will need to make efficient and effective use of land.
- 2.5 However, even with these actions, there is insufficient capacity to meet needs for growth within the District's existing urban area. The Council has also been in discussion with neighbouring authorities to establish whether some of the identified need for development could be accommodated within these areas. However, all of Three Rivers' neighbours are also Green Belt authorities and are unable to meet their own needs without developing in the Green Belt. As such, there are no neighbouring authorities who are able to accommodate any of Three Rivers identified need
- 2.6 While the Council, and communities, attach significant weight to the Green Belt in the District, given the level of need for development and in housing and the acute requirement for affordable housing in the area, the impacts for sustainable

development of not planning to meet needs in the District are such that there are exceptional circumstances justifying alterations to the established Green Belt boundaries.

- 2.7 Detailed changes to the Green Belt boundary will be made in association with the allocations of sites in the new Local Plan to help provide for the needs of our communities and provide wider community benefit.
- 2.8 However, notwithstanding these changes which will be necessary, the remaining Green Belt in the District will continue to fulfil the purposes set out in the NPPF and will therefore need to be protected for the long term.
- 2.9 Paragraph 145 of the (NPPF) advises that the construction of new buildings is regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, although exceptions to this are:
- a) Buildings for agriculture and forestry;
 - b) The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
 - c) The extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
 - d) The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
 - e) Limited infilling in villages;
 - f) Limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
 - g) Limited infilling o the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings) which would
 - Not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than existing development: or
 - Not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt where development would re-use previously developed and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.
- 2.10 The Draft Green Belt Policy (Appendix 1) and more detailed criteria for certain development that may be considered an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt (Appendix 2) are proposed for inclusion in the Local Plan.

3 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

4 Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

4.1 None specific.

5 Recommendation

5.1 That the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of this report and recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee the Draft Green Belt Policy as set out in Appendix 1 and the detailed criteria for Development in the Green Belt set out in Appendix 2 are included in the Local Plan.

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Background Papers

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Green Belt Policy

Appendix 2 Development in the Green Belt