

## Matter 2: Green Belt

### 1 *Is the proposal to make limited changes to the Green Belt justified?*

2.1.1 The NPPF, paragraph 83, directs local authorities to consider Green Belt review only through local plan review; as such the Council's approach is fully justified in this respect. In addition it is clear that, in reviewing boundaries, consideration should be had of the "*need to promote sustainable patterns of development*". The proposal to make limited changes to the Green Belt is clearly justified by the exceptional circumstances, as demonstrated by the councils, in terms of the need to deliver new homes to meet need and provide that new housing is delivered in sustainable locations, well related to existing urban centers, where other absolute environmental constraints, such as the flood plain and the Dorset Heathlands are avoided. In meeting needs, there is no justification to change all of the boundaries, including the boundaries around smaller settlements where strategic growth would be unsustainable. This would be contrary to the aims and objectives of the NPPF and of the overarching strategy for East Dorset.

2.1.2 By its very nature, as a consequence of its purpose, the Green Belt bounds key settlements in East Dorset. However, this means that its inner boundaries form the most sustainable part of a district, in location terms, to deliver growth. For many years now, East Dorset District Council has acknowledged that in order to provide for future development needs in sustainable locations and to ensure an adequate supply of land for housing, sites must be released from the Green Belt.

2.1.3 The potential to release land to the north of Wimborne (the Cranborne New Neighbourhood) was originally identified in 2005, as part of the evidence base to the draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy. A Green Belt review, published by Colin Buchanan in 2006, summarised the work of the South East Dorset JSA, establishing the need for Green Belt review, and suggested the removal of land where this would present the "*most sustainable solution for accommodating future development requirements*" (paragraph 2.2.1, Strategic Green Belt Review – Final Report, 2006). Whilst this work dates back to 2005, the housing requirement has not reduced and the strategy to direct growth to sustainable locations, including channeling it to urban areas within the Green Belt, remains a valid approach within the current policy context including paragraph 84 of the NPPF. The work therefore remains up to date and robust.

2.1.4 In regard to the South East Dorset Green Belt, areas of search were identified as being capable of release without compromising the main purposes of the Green Belt in the area. The main purpose of the South East Dorset Green Belt were originally set out in the South East Dorset Structure Plan (1980) as:

- Protection of the physical identify of individual settlements by maintaining corridors of open land between them; and
- To maintain open land around settlements.

2.1.5 The South East Dorset Joint Study Area report (SED 04) "Development Options" concluded that a new neighbourhood area of search should be established to the north and north west of Wimborne, specifically because the area does not form part of any of the key strategic gaps that separate settlements.

2.1.6 Taking this justifiable position as a base, the East Dorset Housing Options Masterplan Report (2010) considers the area of search, refining the capacity to accommodate growth. Key to this is the ability to access the town, by walking, cycling and bus, as well as the ability to contain development within the local topography and landscape so that the continued designation of the remainder of the Green Belt is not compromised. The report confirms that land, now allocated as the Cranborne New Neighbourhood, is identified because:

- It is not within the AONB or in the rural edge and transition point between the town and the AONB
- It is contained with the ridgeline to the north of the town, beyond which it would encroach on views
- There are no coalescence issues provided a sufficient green gap is left between Wimborne and Dogdean Lane / Furzehill
- It can deliver comprehensive development including housing and community facilities
- Development can be contained by the hedgerows to the north, east and west
- It lies within close proximity of the town centre and the services and facilities on offer there

2.1.7 The Sustainability Assessment (Sustainability Report, November 2012) discusses the development proposed through policy WMC5, the assessment concludes:

*"The Core Strategy aims to deliver a supply of houses to address local needs and demands. This policy supports the Objective by delivering 600 homes on a site close to the town centre. Due to its location and the mitigation policy in place, the site scores positively in this assessment."* (Appendix 1, table 138, page 133).

2.1.8 There are no other credible or more suitable alternatives that could deliver the level of housing needed, in combination with SANG land (necessary to mitigate potential impacts on the Dorset Heathlands) and an appropriate site for an extended replacement first school.

## ***2 Have the GB boundaries been assessed to consider their capability to endure beyond the plan period, as advised in NPPF paragraph 83?***

2.2.1 The Green Belt boundaries will follow the extent of the built form of the new neighbourhoods, leaving the SANG within the Green Belt as a defensible long-term boundary.

2.2.2 These boundaries should be identified on a map in the document or detail should be provided as to how they will be secured through the policy making process.

2.2.3 The plan has not considered where development might be needed beyond this plan period, in accordance with paragraph 85 of the NPPF. Arguably though, given the generally rural nature of East Dorset, it would be inappropriate to identify safeguarded land at this time, without clear evidence of need.

2.2.4 Therefore, whilst the boundaries are defensible, the next review of the plan is likely to need to consider the requirement for further land to be safeguarded for future development.

**3 *Does the Core Strategy set out a precise timescale and clear process for the Green Belt boundary changes?***

2.3.1 The Core Strategy lacks clarity as to the mechanism that will be used to update the proposals maps with the new Green Belt boundary, including a clear timescale for that process to take effect. It is unclear as to whether individual site boundaries will be updated on the approval of planning applications, but this would always provide some policy conflict in the determination of those applications. The NPPF directs that boundary changes should be a matter for the local plan process.

**4 *Are the green belt boundaries for every development proposal clearly defined on proposals maps?***

2.4.1 When defining boundaries, paragraph 85 of the NPPF, requires local planning authorities to define them clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

2.4.2 The new Green Belt boundary for the Cranborne Road New Neighbourhood is not clearly defined on a map or plan in the core strategy. The wording of the core strategy makes it clear that the Green Belt boundary will follow the urban edge of new developments and not include SANG land. A clearer mechanism is required to enable this boundary to be amended through the plan making process to avoid policy conflict in the determination of planning applications. This could be achieved through further policy wording.