

Matter 8: Green Infrastructure and Open Space

Whether the Local Plan provides a sound strategy for the provision, protection, enhancement or designation of green infrastructure and open space

a) Does the Local Plan appropriately address development in the Green Belt in the context of national policy?

The Council is committed to the on-going protection of the Nottingham/Derby Green Belt and protecting land within it from inappropriate development. It is not considered that the lack of a specific Green Belt Policy undermines the Council's commitment to its on-going protection. It was intended at the outset of the process not to include a specific Green Belt Policy in the Local Plan as it would, like previous Local Plans, merely reiterate national policy. Having said that, the Inspector is directed to Policy CP16 which recognises that Green Belt is an important part of the wider Green Infrastructure network and, in criterion (c), states that the Council will “retain the principle of the Nottingham / Derby Green Belt and resist harmful and inappropriate development as defined by national policy”. In this instance, the Council considers that deferring to national policy will still ensure that inappropriate development in the Green Belt is resisted and that the principle of the Nottingham/Derby Green Belt is retained. This approach should also ensure that the policy is able to reflect any changes to what is, or is not, appropriate development within Green Belt in national policy.

b) Do the criteria in Policy CP18 provide an appropriate basis for the consideration of proposals for development in Green Wedges?

A strategic, city-wide Green Wedge policy was established in 1989, bringing together and enhancing a number of existing green wedge and similar policies set out in old style ‘District’ Local Plans. Boundaries were defined in detail, and policy set in subsequent city-wide local plans, most recently the City of Derby Local Plan Review. They have therefore been a consistent, long-standing and successful policy in Derby’s development plan. Their primary function is to define and enhance the sustainable urban structure of the City as a whole, in particular by reinforcing local identity by maintaining areas of open land between the City’s neighbourhoods. Policy CP18 seeks to reinforce the key role and function of Green Wedges but also updates the policy to reflect other key spatial priorities Green Wedges can assist in achieving, such as helping to create a City-wide network of Green Infrastructure, providing opportunities for recreation, spaces for ecology and agriculture; and playing an important role in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

It should be recognised that Derby’s Green Wedge policy has been successful in resisting inappropriate development thus ensuring their continued role and function. Given that Policy CP18 is an updated version of the existing policy in the 2006 City of Derby Local Plan Review, the Council considers that it is an appropriate basis for considering development proposals within Green Wedges.

c) Should Policy CP18 include a commitment to review Green Wedge boundaries in the Part 2 Local Plan in the context of the need to provide non-strategic housing allocations?

The Council has been clear throughout this process that non-strategic housing and employment sites will be considered through the Part 2 plan and that this will mean looking again, in some instances, at Green Wedges. It is also been made clear that the Part 2 plan will provide opportunities to consider Green Wedge boundaries not necessarily related to new development. The Inspector's attention is particularly drawn to the fact that Policies AC11, AC12 and AC16 make a specific commitment to undertake a review of Green Wedge boundaries as part of the Part 2 process.

The Preferred Growth Strategy (EB002) contains a number of possible strategic development sites (star sites) located in Green Wedges which may be considered in the Part 2 plan for residential development. The fact that the Council has indicated that it is willing to consider these sites in the Part 2 plan, should provide comfort that the Council will be carrying out a further review of green wedge boundaries. Finally, the Inspector is also directed to consider the Council's response to comments made at the pre-submission stage on Policy CP18 by a range of representors. Again, the Council has been clear of its intention to carry out further reviews of boundaries, where appropriate.

In summary, the Council's commitment to reviewing Green Wedge boundaries is set out in both specific policies and in response to representations made about this subject. However, on further reflection if a specific reference in this policy explaining the intent, and scope, of any review would provide further comfort and clarity then it is something that the Council would be happy put forward as an additional main modification to the supporting text. The suggested wording, which will also be added to the Modifications Schedule, is as follows:

New Paragraph after 5.18.5 to read:

"To prepare the Part 1 plan, the Council carried out an extensive review of Green Wedge boundaries to help identify strategic housing sites. The Part 2 plan process will use this evidence to further consider non-strategic housing and employment sites (if required), address the implications of existing or planned development on current boundaries and to take full account of all other issues and opportunities raised in the Green Wedge Review (2012).."

d) Is the green infrastructure strategy in Policy CP16 justified and deliverable?

The Council considers that the policy is both justified and deliverable and is supported by a robust evidence base. Given its overarching nature, the policy covers a wide number of subjects which will contribute to the Green Infrastructure network of the City, the Derby HMA and the wider region. It sets out the overarching aspirations of the Council over the provision of GI over the plan period; reflects national policy by planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure and the protection of Green Belt from inappropriate development, incorporates the aims of policies CP17, CP18 and CP19.

The policy also states its support of the aims and objectives of our partner organisations such as the Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. It also specifically supports a number of projects such as OCOR and the restoration of the former Derby Canal; projects which are already being implemented or have support from the Council. For

example, the OCOR project has consent and Package 1 of the scheme is currently underway; the restoration of the former Derby Canal is a long-term allocation; an outline application (03/07/00495) for the complete restoration of 20 km of the former Derby Canal was granted conditionally in 2011.

Finally, the policy reflects the recommendations of other studies such as the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Study (EB059) which provides key priorities for GI for the wider region. The Council would also draw the Inspector's attention to the success the Council has had in securing S106 funding for the provision of new, or the improvement of existing, Public Green Space and contributions towards enhancing existing GI assets. This is provided in the site-by-site schedule in Appendix X to this response.

e) Are the standards for the provision of public green space in Policy CP17 and Appendix D justified?

A core aim of the plan is to ensure that everyone has access to high quality open space and the Council considers that the approach, and the inclusion of two sets of standards, will help achieve this. It should be remembered, however, that the policy is not meant to be prescriptive. A whole range of factors are expected to be considered in determining applications on open space, and the quantity and accessibility standards should be considered alongside a range of qualitative factors.

Policy CP17, criterion (a), provides an overall quantity standard of 3.8 hectares per 1000 people. This figure is carried forward from the previous City of Derby Local Plan Review. However, the open space elements which contribute to this figure have changed to reflect the NPPF. Previously, Policy L2 of the CDLPR stated that the 3.8 hectares comprised of 1.4 hectares of incidental open space and 2.4 hectares of major open space. Reflecting the Council's aspiration to provide a more diverse network of public green space, the NPPF and the results of the Open Space Policy Consultation undertaken in 2012, the Council took the opportunity to widen the types of open space which contributed to the 3.8 hectares. This approach reflects the findings of the Council's Open Space Study (EB060).

It is also worth noting that the Open Space Policy Consultation undertaken in 2012 showed strong public support for the retention of the 3.8 hectares in the new Local Plan. It is also considered that the retention of this standard, and the more general approach to open space suggested in the policy, will ensure that, rather than putting pressure on existing spaces, future growth will positively contribute to both the quantitative and qualitative provision of open space over the plan period.

The accessibility standards contained in Appendix D are taken from the Council's Open Space Study (EC060). The Study was undertaken in-line with the requirements of PPG17 and its companion guide. The standards included in the Study were derived from a wide-ranging public consultation exercise, discussions with Council officers and representatives from partner organisations, an examination of current provision, consideration of future growth and best practice.

The review of open space intended for the Part 2 plan (see paragraph 5.17.12 of the Core Strategy) will enable the Council to not only consider existing and proposed open spaces and their boundaries, but will also allow the standards to be 'sense checked'. The review may allow further guidance or detail to be published to assist in the implementation of the policy.

f) Is the Local Plan based on an appropriate assessment of the need for new sports facilities? Does the Local Plan, and Policy CP17 in particular, provide an adequate framework for the protection and development of sports and recreation facilities?

The Council considers that Policy CP17 does provide an adequate framework for the protection and development of sport and recreation facilities over the plan period as it is considered to be consistent with the NPPF. I would also draw the Inspector's attention to the representation submitted by Sport England (78/3713 and 78/3714) which confirms that they consider the wording of the policy to be consistent with the NPPF.

The Inspector will have noted Sport England's representations regarding the status of the Council's Outdoor Sports Strategy. The Council considers that the Strategy provides a robust assessment of outdoor sports provision in the City and was prepared in-line with Sport England guidance at the time. Although the guidance changed part way through the process, the Council considers that it is still robust. However, officers from the Council's Leisure and Cultural Development Department have, since the representations were made, discussed the status of the Outdoor Sports Strategy with Sport England and have agreed that further work needs to be undertaken. The Council is committed to undertake a review to broaden the scope of the Study but, as yet, no clear timescales and no funding is in place. The Council has been proactive in this respect and has submitted a funding request to Sport England to facilitate a full review of the strategy. However, all their funding processes are on hold until after they release their new Plan for Sport due in April or May 2016. This does not alter the fact that we believe the policy framework set out in CP17 is robust and effective. Any aspects of the revised Sports Strategy can easily be addressed in the Part 2 plan if need be.