

**Woking Site Allocations DPD Examination
Hearing Statement on Behalf of CALA Homes
(Respondent: 06748/2)**

Matter 3 - Is the SADPD's approach to allocations and safeguarded land in the Green Belt justified and consistent with national policy?

November 2019

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Responses to the Issues Raised: Matter 3	4
Appendix 1: Amendment Tabled at Full Council Meeting 18 th October 2018		12

Mervyn McFarland
mervyn.mcfarland@turley.co.uk

Client

CALA Homes

Our reference

CALW3004

13th November 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Turley, on behalf of CALA Homes (Respondent: 06748/2), for the Woking Site Allocations DPD (SADPD) Examination. It responds to the issues and questions outlined under Matter 3: “Is the SADP’s approach to allocations and safeguarded land in the Green Belt justified and consistent with National Policy?”
- 1.2 This statement follows our representations submitted in December 2018 in response to the consultation held on the Draft Site Allocations DPD (Regulation 19 version, November 2018). A list of representations and appendices submitted, on behalf of respondent 06748/2 in December 2018, is as follows (including the WBC consultation online database search references):
- Representations to the Woking Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Site Allocations DPD (Palmer_D2);
 - Meeting the Housing Needs of Woking: A Technical Critique (Palmer_D2);
 - Vision Statement for Land Adjoining Hillside, Woking (Palmer_D2); and
 - Land Adjoining Hillside, Woking: Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review (Palmer_D2).
- 1.3 This statement is prepared in support of all of, and refers to, the above representations and appendices. However, we have not considered it necessary to address every Issue or question set by the Inspector. Therefore, the responses provided below cover only those areas where CALA Homes consider a response is required to support or to elaborate on their original representations.

2. Responses to the Issues Raised: Matter 3

Issue (i) Does the Woking Green Belt Review provide a robust evidence base to support the policies and allocations of the SADPD?

Q1: Does the Green Belt Review's focus on land 'parcels' provide a sufficiently fine-grained assessment of the GB?

- 2.1 The process by which the land 'parcels' were identified is described at paragraph 3.12 and 3.13 of the Green Belt Review. Given the importance subsequently attached to the characteristics of each parcel, ensuring that parcels are credibly and appropriately defined will have been of paramount importance. The two paragraphs devoted to describing the approach to parcel identification confirm that consideration was given to 'broad landscape characteristics' however paragraph 3.13 acknowledges that there are 'anomaly areas' and that the process undertaken "gives some poorly defined unrecognisable boundaries to parcels". This admission does not give confidence that the process undertaken was robust.
- 2.2 A reading of the document as a whole also makes it clear that there are areas within the wider strategic parcels which have differing characteristics, be they landscape or sustainability characteristics, from the wider parcel they form part of. This is an inevitable consequence of looking at a strategic scale parcels however it has had the consequence (whether intended or unintended) of removing some smaller parcels of land from further consideration notwithstanding that their removal from the Green Belt would not compromise Green Belt purposes or objectives.
- 2.3 We would have expected WBC to carry out a second stage of their GB Review work to provide a more detailed and thorough assessment of smaller parcels of GB land in their areas. A more detailed or 'fine-grained' Stage 2 GB assessments is standard practice and has been undertaken by a number of Woking's neighbouring LPAs, including Runnymede (March 2017) and Spelthorne (December 2018).
- 2.4 We consider that if a finer grained approach had been undertaken different conclusions would have been drawn and further potentially suitable GB releases could have been proposed for allocation or safeguarding.

Q3: Does the Green Belt Review pay appropriate regard to the GB's purpose of preserving the setting and special character of historic towns?

- 2.5 We consider that appropriate regard has been given to this Green Belt purpose.
- 2.6 As set out at paragraph 3.23 or our Regulation 19 submission (Palmer_D2), with regard to CALA Homes' site at Egley Road, we consider that neither Woking, nor the village of Mayford, falls to be considered as a "historic town" within the meaning of NPPF para. 134.

Q4: Does the Green Belt Review's objective of identifying suitable, deliverable sites for 550 homes over the plan period provide an appropriate basis for assessment?

- 2.7 It is our contention that the objective of delivering sites for 550 dwellings within the plan period did not provide an appropriate basis for the Green Belt Review. In essence the Council combined the task of reviewing the performance of Green Belt land with

the task of identifying sites for release for development. It appears that the brief given to the consultants undertaking the Green Belt Review (GBR) was constrained and that the consultants were only ever asked to identify sites suitable to deliver 550 homes by 2027 and a further 40 ha of land to assist in delivering the requirement from 2027-2040. We consider that, had the consultants been given an unconstrained brief, additional suitable sites would likely have been identified.

- 2.8 Our client's concern in relation to the GBR, and its influence on the Council's decision making process in relation to the identification of sites, is that the process has clearly resulted in the identification of insufficient land to meet the Borough's future housing needs. This being the case, the Site Allocations DPD singularly fails to achieve the Borough's stated objectives of providing sufficient land to meet identified (constrained) housing need and of identifying permanent and enduring defensible boundaries to the Green Belt.
- 2.9 Resolution of this issue this issue would require updating of the 2014 Green Belt Review, through a more fine grained review.

Issue (ii) Do the SADPD's GB allocations and policies accord with national policies and guidance, and do exceptional circumstances exist sufficient to justify the alteration of the GB's boundaries?

Q1. To what extent can it be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist sufficient to alter green belt Boundaries as proposed?

- 2.10 The release of sites from the Green Belt is a key component of the spatial strategy for the Borough as set out in the Core Strategy.
- 2.11 The Council is seeking to make as much use as possible of brownfield sites, as required by NPPF para.137, however it is clear that reliance on brownfield sites alone will not be sufficient to meet the Boroughs housing needs either numerically or in terms of the range and choice of accommodation that is required.
- 2.12 There is evidence that the Council explored the potential for adjoining authorities to provide for some elements of Woking's unmet housing need in the context of the original Core Strategy and that provision has been made, for example in the Waverley Local Plan, to accommodate elements of Woking's un-met need. The degree of engagement with adjoining authorities in relation to the Core Strategy Review has been discussed in our response to Matter 2 where it is clear that the Council did not co-operate sufficiently with adjoining authorities.
- 2.13 It is clear however that in a situation where adjoining authorities are similarly constrained by the Green Belt, the alteration of Green Belt boundaries around Woking is justified and that exceptional circumstances exist. These circumstances include the acuteness of the objectively-assessed need and the inherent constraints on the availability of land outside the Green Belt which mean that the Council will not be able to adequately accommodate its objectively assessed housing need without releasing land from the Green Belt.

Q3: Has the spatial distribution of the SADPD's GB allocations and safeguarded sites taken into account the need to promote sustainable patterns of development?

2.14 WBC has considered whether the sites proposed for GB allocations and safeguarded sites would represent sustainable development. This was taken forward through both the WGBR (2014) and the subsequent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) work.

2.15 With regard to CALA's site at Egley Road, which forms part of the GB7 allocation, issues of sustainability were considered in our Regulation 19 submissions (Palmer_D2, paras 3.13 – 3.17). The site is well located to access existing facilities and services and benefits from good accessibility by public transport.

2.16 The Regulation 19 SA (WBC/SA/005) includes (para 5.18, Table 7) a "List of Green Belt sites recommended for allocation/safeguarding and reasons". With regard to the GB7 site it states:

"That proposal will enable the delivery of housing, including Affordable Housing. It will make a contribution towards the overall housing requirement. The development of the site will also provide recreational, sports facilities to service the school and the local community. It will provide an educational facility (secondary school) to serve the local community and the wider area. The provision of the school will have a positive overall bearing on poverty and social exclusion. Site is within reasonable walking and cycling distance to the Mayford Neighbourhood Centre. Consequently, it will help reduce the need to travel by the car. Site is also adjacent to a bus stop. Site is in flood zone 1. However, it is acknowledged that the eastern boundary is adjacent to flood zone 2 and development will take account of that."

2.17 The Site Vision document (Appendix 2 to Palmer_D2) clearly demonstrated how the site could be developed in a sustainable matter, well-connected to existing development and visually contained through retention and enhancement of existing landscape planting.

2.18 We have commented in our response to Matter 2 that the SADPD fails to ensure that an appropriate housing mix will be delivered and in particular, that insufficient provision will be made for larger dwellings / family homes and for an appropriate level of affordable housing. Allocation of CALA Homes land interest within site GB7 for housing (as proposed in the Regulation 18 DPD), rather than as an area of local separation, will assist in meeting the acute need for family and affordable homes and assist in the creation of a more sustainable and balanced community.

Q4: Does the SADPD demonstrate that GB boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period and define boundaries clearly using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent?

2.19 WBC has adopted a consistent approach in arguing that it is necessary to identify and to safeguard a range of GB sites for housing deliver beyond 2027, that is to say in the next plan period, to ensure that the GB boundaries would not need to be altered again when the Core Strategy is reviewed.

2.20 As identified in our submissions to Matter 2, the SADPD fails to meet the evidence based housing need for Woking and the number of homes which will be provided on allocated or safeguarded sites has reduced significantly from the time of the 2015 Draft

SADPD to the current SADPD. In our judgement, it is no longer credible to believe that the currently proposed allocations and safeguarded sites would be sufficient to avoid further changes to the GB boundary when the Core Strategy is properly and fully reviewed.

- 2.21 No evidence has been presented to demonstrate that, when the CS is fully reviewed and modified, it will be possible to meet the entire housing need without further modification to the Green Belt boundary.
- 2.22 The misconceived approach to the Green Belt Review (see response to Issue (i) above) has given rise to the GBR being predicated on meeting a pre-determined level of need, without due regard to the changing pattern of housing need. We consider it inevitable that Woking will be required to undertake a further GB review and release additional sites to meet the housing needs of the next plan period and thus the Council cannot meet the requirement of NPPF para 139€ to demonstrate that GB boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period.

Q6: Is GB release appropriately phased to assist urban regeneration, and to ensure that as much use as possible is made of suitable brownfield sites and under-utilised land?

- 2.23 We acknowledge that the approach of seeking to prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land and brownfield sites is aligned with national policy guidance.
- 2.24 In the case of Woking however, it is clear that the development of brownfield sites is primarily delivering smaller dwellings and is making a very limited contribution to the delivery of affordable homes. The SADPD approach of delaying the delivery of GB Site allocations until 2022 -2027 is therefore contributing to and perpetuating the long-term, and severe, shortage of family homes. This is indirectly contributing to housing unaffordability by creating a significant market premium on the price of houses due to the lack of supply.
- 2.25 The shortfall in provision of both family housing and affordable homes indicates that there are dis-benefits from the phased approach taken in the SADPD and that the phased approach should be omitted so that dwellings can be delivered as soon as possible.

Q7: Do the allocations contain appropriate provisions to mitigate adverse effects to landscape character where this has been highlighted as an issue in the Green Belt Review?

- 2.26 The Green Belt Review did not undertake a detailed landscape character study. The approach used was to provide a 'strategic overview' of the prevailing character of the land parcels and their potential sensitivity to change and potential for accommodating a strategic level of development (see WBC/SA/E018, paragraph 3.4.5). As noted previously, we consider that the Green Belt Review was not sufficiently fine grained in any event.
- 2.27 With specific regard to CALA Homes' interest in the northern part of allocation GB7 (Land at Egley Road) our response to Issue (iii) Q.6 (below) specifically addresses the flawed proposal to introduce an 'area of local separation' landscape designation on the site and demonstrates that there is no evidenced support for such a designation.

- 2.28 The Vision Statement for the site (Palmer_D2 Appendix 2) demonstrates that development can take place within a robust and attractive landscape framework which will provide informal open space and play areas. Housing development will be set back behind the existing tree-lined boundary to Egley Road.
- 2.29 The Landscape, Townscape and Visual Resources Statement (Palmer_D2 Appendix 3) confirms that residential development could be accommodated on the site (in line with the Vision Document (Palmer_D2 Appendix 2) in such a manner as to prevent any significant harm to the landscape value of the character area. In terms of the transition from Woking to Mayford, a factor which has been raised by a number of respondents to the SADPD, “the perception of a wooded character, albeit closely associated with urban areas, would be preserved and the perception of passing through a comparatively rural landscape between the two settlements would be retained”.

Issue (iii) Are the GB Housing allocations deliverable or developable

Q2. To what extent would housing allocations in the GB anticipated to come forward in the next 5 years be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within 5 years.

- 2.30 With regard to CALA Homes land interest at Egley Road, we can confirm that the site is available now, is suitable for development (as confirmed in the SA of the Reg. 19 DPD) and could deliver homes within the next 5 years.
- 2.31 Had the Council not made a change to the proposed allocation of the site at the Full Council meeting of October 2018, a planning application for the redevelopment of the site for residential use would already have been brought forward by CALA Homes.

Q6. Is the boundary of the ‘area of local separation’ within GB7 justified, and would the related restriction on “built development” within it act as a constraint on the wider deliverability of the site (i.e. through prevention of flood mitigation measures etc.)? Should the GB designation remain in place for the area of local separation?

- 2.32 We consider that the question is too narrowly framed in that it is not only the boundary of the local area of separation which needs to be justified but the principle of introducing the “area of local separation” at all.
- 2.33 Whilst we strongly disagree with the proposed ‘area of local separation’, we consider that it is clear that the northern part of allocation GB7 should be removed from the Green Belt even if it were to be so designated. To do otherwise would be contrary to NPPF guidance with regard to defining boundaries that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.
- 2.34 The SADPD Regulation 19 consultation Issues and Options Topic Paper (WBC/SA/003 pages 123 – 125) provides the Council’s response to our Regulation 19 submissions (Palmer_D2) in which we dispute the appropriateness of the proposed area of local separation (paras 3.25 – 3.35). The Council’s response states:

“However, the Council is satisfied that the part of the site allocated as an area of local separation rather than residential development is justified and based on sound planning judgements. It is acknowledged that the GBBR report has recommended that the northern section of the site be released from the Green Belt to meet future development needs of the Borough.

Since publication of the Regulation 18 draft of the DPD, the circumstances on the site have changed due to the completion of the secondary school and leisure centre. The orientation of buildings pursuant to the planning permission has resulted in buildings to the south of the playing fields; thus the recommendations made in the GBBR that the school buildings be located to the north, adjacent to the urban area of Woking, retaining open fields to the south to maintain openness, cannot be accommodated. It is therefore logical to encourage development to the south of the site and leave the north of the site to maintain the integrity gap between Mayford and Woking, which is considered by the Council to reflect the advice within the GBBR in light of the situation on the ground. The Council is confident that this decision is well informed by the careful consideration of all the available evidence, including that of the GBBR, and is defensible.”

- 2.35 The Reg. 18 DPD (WBC/SA/014) identified the site as GB8 and proposed that it be allocated for “Residential including Affordable Housing, recreational/open space and education”.
- 2.36 Whilst the Council asserts that “the circumstances of the site have changed due to the completion of the secondary school and leisure centre”, the proposals for the school and leisure centre were known to the Council, a key partner in the delivery of the school and leisure centre, well in advance of the publication of the Reg.18 DPD. The Statement of Community Involvement for the Hoe Valley School (HVS) and Leisure Centre Development demonstrates that there was a series of engagements with the LPA from February 2018 and a public exhibition of the proposals in May 2018. The Council would therefore have been fully aware of the intended layout of the school and leisure centre buildings at the time the Reg. 18 DPD was prepared and published.
- 2.37 The HVS planning application was also accompanied by an EIA which included a full LVIA and thus the landscape and visual impact of the development was known and assessed long-before the built development completed.
- 2.38 The proposed allocation under GB8 (WBC/SA/014page 296) identified two alternatives with regard to the location of the school buildings:
- “Potential to focus development at the north end of the site, leaving the southern end (adjacent Mayford village) as open space/playing fields, providing a visual break;”*
- Alternatively shared school and community sports playing fields positioned within the central portion of the site would provide a green corridor, allowing views to be retained through to the railway embankment and rising escarpment beyond, whilst accommodating development to the north and south ends of the site”*
- 2.39 Either of these alternatives was considered acceptable and the draft allocation went on to require that development should:

“Retain protected trees and tree belts and strengthen with planting to create a wide landscape frontage along Egley Road, to enhance the sense of separation between the two settlements;”

- 2.40 The Regulation 18 DPD therefore clearly anticipated that, in the event that the HVS buildings and community sports playing fields were located centrally on the site, as is the case, it would still be possible to accommodate development to the north and south ends of the site with the sports pitches providing a green corridor.
- 2.41 This remained the position until the Council meeting of 18 October 2018 when an amendment was tabled by Cllr Bowes. The amendment document is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.42 The reason for the amendment is set out in five paragraphs the substantive reasoning being in para. 4. “The actual orientation of buildings pursuant to that permission has resulted in buildings to the south of the playing fields. It is therefore logical to encourage development to the south of the site and leave the north of the site to maintain the integrity of the gap between Mayford and Woking and the separate identities of these distinct settlements within the Borough.
- 2.43 No evidence was adduced to demonstrate that it was necessary or desirable to introduce a gap, or that doing so was necessary to retain the separate identities of Mayford and Woking. In our judgement the introduction of an ‘ area of local separation’ (a designation which is not proposed for any other site within the Borough and has no clear definition) is not necessary and is at variance with the approach advocated by the Council in the Reg.18 DPD (which is not referenced in the amendment).
- 2.44 It is our contention that the “area of local separation” designation should not be applied and that housing should be permitted on the northern area of allocation GB7 as originally proposed.
- 2.45 A Landscape, Townscape and Visual Resources Statement was submitted as Appendix 3 to Palmer_D2 and provides an objective assessment of the intention to allocate the northern part of GB7 as an area of local separation. The assessment notes:
- That the proposed designation is inappropriate as it does not sufficiently contribute to the setting of Woking or Mayford and their separate identities (para 2.2)
 - The intention for the area of local separation to provide a visual gap between Mayford and Woking has limited viability within the townscape context (para 5.3)
- 2.46 Paragraph 5.4 confirms that residential development could be accommodated on the site (in line with the Vision Document Palmer_D2 Appendix 2) in such a manner as to prevent significant harm to the value of the character area. Paragraph 5.5 confirms that in terms of the transition from Woking to Mayford, “the perception of a wooded character, albeit closely associated with urban areas, would be preserved and the

perception of passing through a comparatively rural landscape between the two settlements would be retained.

- 2.47 The evidence-based analysis of the LTV Resources Statement provides a clear basis on which the unsubstantiated request for the allocation of a local area of separation should be set aside and the northern area identified as suitable for housing development as originally intended.
- 2.48 The need for the housing, in particular family and affordable housing which would result has been clearly set out in our response to Matter 2.

(No. of words, not counting the issues and questions = 3,505)

Appendix 1: Amendment Tabled at Full Council Meeting 18th October 2018

Agenda Item 8

COUNCIL – 18 OCTOBER 2018

AGENDA ITEM 8 - SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD)

AMENDMENT

Cllr Bowes will PROPOSE and Cllr Bittleston will SECOND that Resolve (ii) of Agenda Item 8 be amended as follows:

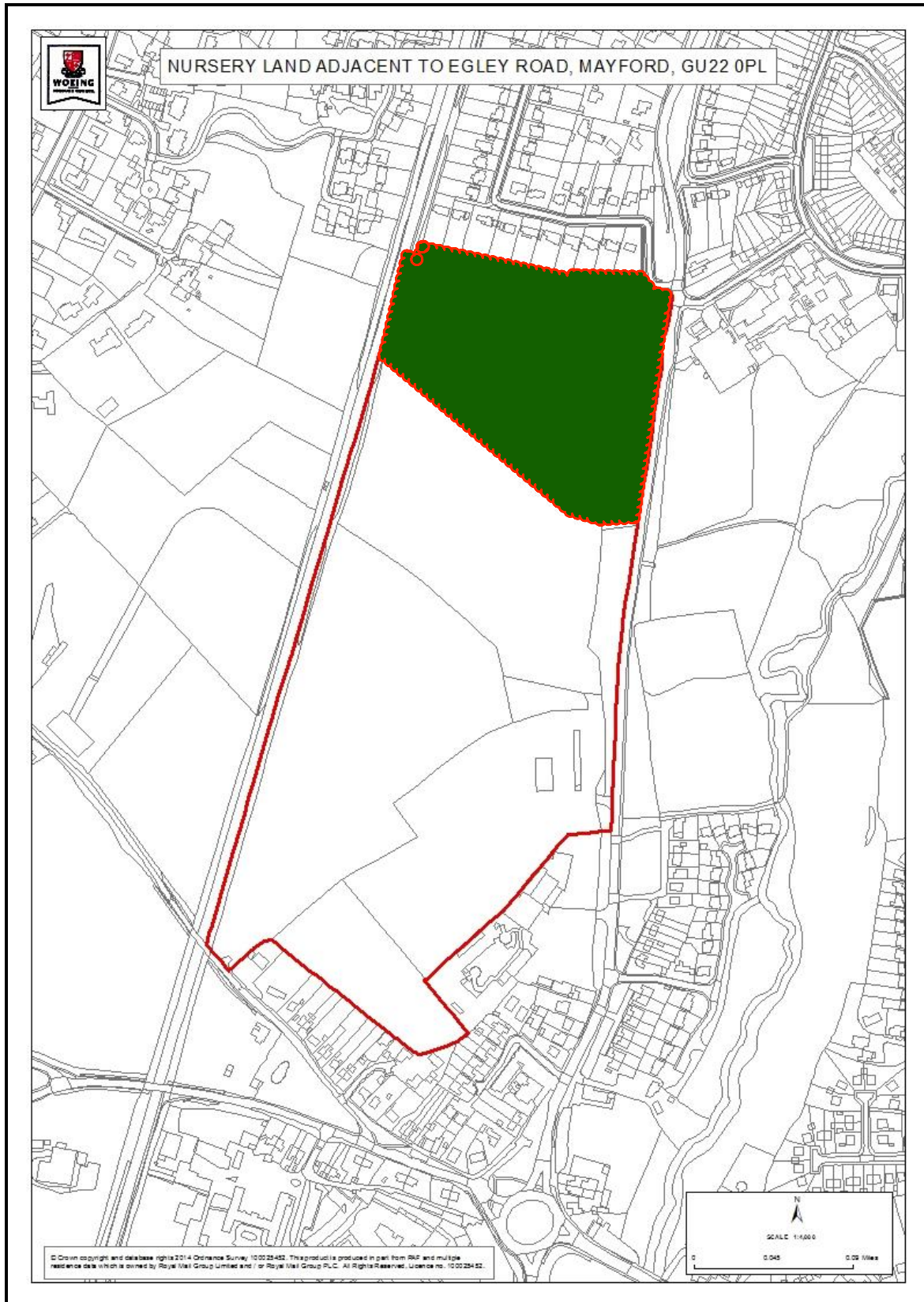
- (ii) **Save as for proposal sites GB9 (Land north east of Saunders Lane), GB10 (Land to the north west of Saunders Lane) and GB11 (Land rear of 79-95 Lovelace Drive) which are not to be released from the Green Belt in order to be safeguarded for future development needs or otherwise, and save that as for proposal site GB7 (Nursery Land adjacent to Egley Road), development is to be focused to the south end of the site, leaving the north end, beyond the playing fields of the Hoe Valley Free School and colored green on the attached plan, as open space not to be developed, the draft Site Allocations DPD (Appendix 5) and the accompanying revised Sustainability Appraisal report and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (copies are in the Members' Lounge) be supported for the purposes of Regulation 19 consultation to give the public an opportunity to make formal representation.**

REASONS FOR THE AMENDMENT:

1. As noted within the Green Belt Review, this location is sensitive to development as “there is a risk the integrity of the gap between Woking and Mayford will be compromised” (para.4.3.14).
2. The Green Belt Review advised that the school buildings should be “located to the north, adjacent to the main urban area of Woking, leaving a wide landscaped verge along Egley Road, and retaining open fields to the south, closer to Mayford ... thus maintaining their openness”.
3. Planning permission has been granted on part of the site for the erection of a new secondary school and leisure centre, formation of an 8 lane athletics track and sports pitches (PLAN/2015/0703). That permission has now been implemented.
4. The actual orientation of buildings pursuant to that permission has resulted in buildings to the south of the playing fields. It is therefore logical to encourage development to the south of the site and leave the north of the site to maintain the integrity of the gap between Mayford and Woking and the separate identities of these distinct settlements within the Borough.
5. Mindful of the advice within the Green Belt Review that “separation on [Parcel 20’s] northern side may be achieved through the masterplanning process and local green space policy” (para.7.2.3.), we are of the view that this amendment would reflect the advice within the Review in light of the situation on the ground which has resulted from the implementation of PLAN/2015/0703.

Proposal reference: GB7

Site address: Nursery Land adjacent to Egley Road, Mayford, GU22 0PL



Turley Office
6th Floor North
2 Charlotte Place
Southampton
SO14 0TB

T 023 8072 4888