

WBC Core Strategy Examination (March 2012)

Matter 2: Does the CS take a justified and effective approach to issues relating to the Green Belt (GB) and the natural environment which is consistent with national planning policy?

CS6 – Green Belt

1. Is the Council's approach to GB consistent with the advice of PPG2? What evidence underpins the approach advocated within Policy CS6? Should the GB be an area for potential growth?

We refer to our statement in respect of Matter 1 for avoidance of repetition on such matters. In conclusion we consider there is compelling evidence for the need for green belt releases in the borough, with available information indicating a need for greater growth from such sources than currently indicated. We contend the WBC decision to defer consideration of such matters to 2016/2017 is contrary to PPS2 (Para 2.12) and PPS3 (para 55) and fails to effectively plan for the social and economic needs of the borough to 2027. In addition, this approach does not enable WBC to effectively plan for the infrastructure needed to facilitate such growth in a timely manner, contrary to PPS12 (para 4.8).

The SEP acknowledged the need for a review of the green belt to accommodate growth in the borough. In the absence of such a review, WBC was / is unable to indicate the most sustainable locations for such growth. This review should be undertaken to inform the CS and should include the areas currently safeguarded for release at Brookwood Farm and Moor Lane. Specific strategic sites or at least defined search areas based on a green belt and sustainability appraisal should be included in the CS, or at the very least within the subsequent Site Allocations DPD should the Inspector not concur with our contentions.

WBC CS approach has and continues to focus growth south of Woking at Brookwood Farm and Moor Lane (700 dwellings in total) and now directs substantial growth to the town centre (2500 dwellings). In light of this, we contend there is a case to look at the role and benefits of growth at and around other settlements. We therefore support WBC stance to reviewing the green belt holistically, rather than focused on just Woking itself.

TWWE have submitted a GB review of land west of Byfleet, indicating lands that are capable of release without harm to the objectives of GB policy and represents a sustainable location for growth in all other respects. This provides comfort that land west of Byfleet remains suitable to include as a search area for future green belt releases (see appendix 1). In addition, this represents one of the few locations at Byfleet not impacted by flooding. This therefore provides an opportunity to accommodate growth to meet the social and economic needs of Byfleet within the context of the borough as a whole. The adjacent lands controlled by West Estates are also available to provide additional community and leisure facilities and SANG provision in close proximity to such development (see appendix 2). The community benefits arising directly from this and related s106/CIL and New Homes Bonus related sources of funding will benefit Byfleet residents and the wider community as a consequence of development at this location. We commend this location for inclusion as a strategic site for release or location for a search area for release from the green belt in the CS.