

Agenda Item IMD37

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: 2015/37

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council's response to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Edge of Settlement Analysis (Draft Green Belt Purpose Assessment and Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment Methodologies), October 2015
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	John Kaiser, Executive Member for Planning and Highways
ON	26 th November 2015
TIME	11.00am
WARD	All
DIRECTOR	Environment - Heather Thwaites
VENUE	Room SF1

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To ensure that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead take into consideration the impact of their Edge of Settlement Assessment on Wokingham Borough in terms of cross-boundary movement, infrastructure, jobs and transport.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Highways

- 1) approves the comments outlined in this report; and
- 2) approves that they be submitted as a formal response to the consultation from Windsor and Maidenhead on their duty to co-operate consultation on their Edge of Settlement Analysis (Draft Green Belt Purpose Assessment and Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment Methodologies)

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report details the proposed response of Wokingham Borough Council to the consultation from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead on their duty to co-operate consultation on their Edge of Settlement Analysis (Draft Green Belt Purpose Assessment and Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment Methodologies).

The content of this report includes:

- Considering the impact of the Green Belt and Edge of Settlement Assessment on Wokingham Borough Council
- Requesting further clarification about the definition of land parcels that perform 'less well' against the purposes of the Green Belt and further clarification about how this Review fits in with the wider work being undertaken by the Berkshire authorities on the emerging Draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology.

Background

This consultation document from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) relates to the process to assess the suitability of land on the edge of settlements that are excluded from the Green Belt for the purpose of major residential or commercial development. The assessment will consider how land parcels perform against the purposes of Green Belt as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and it will also identify those parcels that make less of a contribution to Green Belt purposes. The second part of the assessment will be to evaluate the land parcels that contribute least to the Green Belt in terms of opportunities, constraints and future development delivery.

The consultation document sets out the policy context and best practice examples of Green Belt Boundary Reviews undertaken on behalf of several Local Planning Authorities in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

The Green Belt is considered to be a strategic issue that should be considered collaboratively with other local authorities and engagement under the Duty to Cooperate.

The Green Belt assessment will complement a strategic level Green Belt Purpose Analysis undertaken by RBWM in November 2013, which considered all land designated Green Belt within the Borough. Following this analysis, the options of establishing a new settlement and the significant expansion of an existing settlement that would alter the existing settlement hierarchy were both rejected by RBWM through the sustainability appraisal process. However, RBWM consider that land located on the edge of settlements and excluded from the Green Belt is considered to be both reasonable and sustainable in terms of development.

Their Green Belt assessment refers to paragraph 79 of the NPPF, which states that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The NPPF explains that once Green Belt boundaries have been established they should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan.

Analysis of issues

The consultation document sets out the proposed methodology that will be used to assess the suitability of land for development, with stages one to three focusing on the Green Belt Purpose Assessment and stages four and five assessing land parcels against constraints, opportunities and suitability for development.

After seeking clarification from RBWM, it is understood that the land parcels to be assessed are all sited within the Green Belt and adjacent to the edge of settlements that

are excluded from the Green Belt.

Each land parcel within the Green Belt will be assessed against the NPPF criteria using a desk-based review and on-site inspections. They will then be categorised as either making no contribution, limited, moderate, strong or very strong contributions to the Green Belt. The land parcels that are judged to: 'be performing less well against the purposes of Green Belt' (though no definition or explanation of such land parcels has been provided in this consultation document) will then be assessed against a range of constraints including flooding, biodiversity, landscape, heritage, land use compatibility, resources, access and highways infrastructure. The land parcels will also be assessed against development opportunities, such as the potential to expand employment locations, re-use previously developed land, the potential for mixed-use development, the potential to provide or improve community facilities and the potential to support regeneration initiatives at Maidenhead town centre and Ascot High Street. The land parcels will also be assessed against deliverability considerations; specifically whether the site would be 'available' and 'achievable'.

It should be noted that this is a consultation document only and it does not therefore include any assessment or analysis of land parcels, nor does it form any conclusions about potential changes to the Green Belt or settlement boundaries.

Whilst this consultation document does not in itself result in an impact upon Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), the resultant Green Belt and Settlement Boundary Review could have implications for WBC in terms of cross-boundary movement, additional strains on infrastructure, the job market and transportation.

Conclusions

WBC request clarification about the definition of land parcels that perform 'less well' against the purposes of the Green Belt. WBC would also like to understand how this Review fits in with the wider work being undertaken by the Berkshire authorities on the emerging Draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology.

WBC request that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead keep us informed as the Review progresses, and consult us at their next stage of the Local Plan process, in line with the Duty to Cooperate. The Council therefore requests that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead take into consideration the impact of Green Belt and Settlement Boundary Review on Wokingham Borough Council in terms of cross-boundary movement, infrastructure, jobs and transportation as their Local Plan is progressed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including property and priorities?)

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Director - Resources	Graham Ebers – No comment
Monitoring Officer	Andrew Moulton – No comment
Leader of the Council	Keith Baker – Supports all the recommendations

List of Background Papers

RBWM Edge of Settlement Analysis, Part 1: Green Belt Purpose Assessment, draft methodology (October 2015)

RBWM Edge of Settlement Analysis, Part2: Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment, draft methodology (October 2015)

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