

BIRMINGHAM DEVELOPMENT PLAN EXAMINATION 2014

MATTER E: GREEN BELT POLICY & THE LANGLEY SUE

STATEMENT BY SAVILLS ON BEHALF OF THE LANGLEY SUE CONSORTIUM

SEPTEMBER 2014

Question 1. Does policy TP10 set out an appropriate approach to the management of the Green Belt?

1. The Langley SUE Consortium (referred to hereafter as “the Consortium”) supports the removal of the Langley SUE (Area C) from the Green Belt, in accordance with the revised Green Belt boundaries shown on the Policies Map.
2. Whilst the proposed approach to the management of land in the Green Belt in Policy TP10 is considered to be in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Consortium notes that Birmingham City Council (BCC) includes a number of Green Wedges within its Green Belt. The NPPF does not recognise the term ‘Green Wedge’. The Consortium questions whether all of these Green Wedges truly perform a Green Belt function when assessed against the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt set out in NPPF paragraph 80 and therefore whether it is appropriate to include them all in the Green Belt.
3. The Consortium would not consider it appropriate for the ‘substantial green corridor’ to connect the New Hall Valley Country Park to the wider Green Belt, proposed for the Langley SUE in Policy GA5, to be designated as a Green Wedge in the Green Belt, and therefore be subject to Policy TP10, on the basis that it is not considered to meet the five purposes of Green Belt.

Question 2. Do exceptional circumstances exist which justify an alteration to the Green Belt boundary to accommodate 6,000 dwellings?

4. The Council accepts that not all of its objectively assessed housing need can be accommodated in the existing urban area, as informed by the 2013 Birmingham SHLAA, and therefore that it needs to look to Green Belt within its administrative boundary to seek to accommodate more of its need because the only remaining 'non-urban' land within its administrative boundary is in the Green Belt. Therefore, on a housing need basis the Consortium considers that exceptional circumstances exist to justify looking at releasing land from the Green Belt within the Birmingham administrative boundary.
5. The Birmingham Development Plan 2031 Green Belt Assessment (October 2013) responds to the NPPF paragraph 83 requirement for LPAs to review Green Belt boundaries "*having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period*". In Section 5.5 of the Green Belt Assessment (October 2013), Area C, when considered in isolation, scores the highest out of all the Green Belt areas reviewed for residential development, both in terms of accordance with the Green Belt tests for 'sprawl', 'merger' and 'encroachment' (score of 8/9) and in overall terms against all of the assessment criteria (score of 28/33). The release of Area D (Peddimore) for employment development to the east, subject to this site being found 'sound' through the Examination, will further reduce the case for Area C performing a Green Belt function and further reduce the impact of residential development in Area C on the landscape.
6. Area C (The Langley SUE) is well-related to the existing urban area, including existing transport, retail, community, employment and other infrastructure. Green Belt release in this area represents a logical expansion of the urban area, in accordance with the need to promote sustainable patterns of development (NPPF paragraph 84).
7. The Consortium therefore considers that exceptional circumstances do exist for the release of land in Area C (The Langley SUE) for 6,000 dwellings based on the need for housing and the Green Belt evidence base accompanying the Plan.

Question 4.a) Is there adequate justification, including Sustainability Appraisal and assessment of the transport, education, health, drainage, sewerage and other infrastructure implications, for the selection of Green Belt “Area C” to accommodate Langley SUE?

8. The Council’s evidence behind the Plan, as summarised in paragraphs 4.5.2 and 5.5.3 of the Green Belt Assessment (October 2013) identifies that: the site performs a limited Green Belt function; the impact of residential development in Area C on heritage assets can be satisfactorily mitigated by archaeological excavation; the landscape and visual sensitivity ecological value of the majority of Area C is judged to be ‘low’; the transport connectivity of Area C is assessed to score on the higher range of a location that is typically suburban but having good access to facilities via a reasonable choice of transport modes; and Area has transport capacity representative of a typical suburban area. No delivery issues are identified and no principal utilities constraints are identified.
9. In terms of potential constraints to residential development, both in isolation and in the context of other Green Belt parcels assessed for residential development, the Consortium considers that the Council’s evidence base supports the selection of Green Belt Area C to accommodate the Langley SUE as a deliverable sustainable urban extension.
10. The Consortium acknowledges that the SUE would need to accommodate primary and secondary education and healthcare infrastructure, negating the need to rely upon existing medical and education facilities in the areas, as identified within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (October 2013), Site Delivery Plan (October 2013) and in Policy GA5. These infrastructure requirements can be considered as part of the site-wide masterplan and delivered through an appropriate mechanism.
11. Paragraph 5.4.3 of the Submission Plan Sustainability Appraisal (June 2014) identifies some negative effects in allocating the Langley SUE under policy GA5, notably the impact on natural resources and the efficient use of land, but acknowledges that the overall sustainability effects are likely to be positive in the context of creating a mixed use development which responds to the housing needs of the City which cannot be realistically

met in the built-up area and which encourages self-containment and provision of green infrastructure enhancements. The Sustainability Appraisal is therefore considered to justify release of Green Belt land for housing development, in conjunction with the identification within the Green Belt Assessment (October 2013) of the Langleigh SUE (Area C) as the area where residential development is likely to result in the least impact and yield the greatest benefit.

Question 4.b) Is the SUE deliverable within the expected timescale?

12. The Langleigh SUE Consortium comprises Taylor Wimpey, Miller Homes, Nurton Developments, William Davis, The Horsfall Family Trust, Rubery Owen and The Gilmour Family, who control or represent the majority of the SUE and are all working together to actively promote the SUE and ensure that the SUE and infrastructure requirements can be delivered. The Consortium Members include national and regional housebuilders who can progress early delivery on the site on a phased basis, including delivery within the next 5 years. The Consortium is committed to enabling the delivery of the Langleigh SUE within the Plan timescales.
13. In accordance with the assumptions included within the Savills 'Birmingham Strategic Growth Review (March 2014)' report, the Langleigh SUE is considered capable of supporting 8 sales outlets, which at an average delivery rate of 0.75 – 1 sale per week per outlet equates to peak annual production of 320 – 400 homes per annum. The assumptions used within the Savills 'Birmingham Strategic Growth Review (March 2014)' report are defended via a separate representation to this Examination. On this basis, as a guide, 5,000 dwellings could be delivered within a peak delivery period of 12.5 – 15.625 years and 6,000 dwellings could be delivered within a peak delivery period of 15 – 18.75 years. The Consortium therefore considers that the full allocation of 6,000 dwellings could be delivered within the Plan period.
14. Land in the south-eastern corner of the Langleigh SUE is owned by BCC. BCC has already secured Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) funding for a new at-grade A38 roundabout on part of this land, which will provide strategic highway

connectivity to both the Langley SUE and the Peddimore employment allocation on the eastern side of the A38. The early delivery of the roundabout will assist with the early delivery of the Langley SUE.

Question 5. Is there adequate justification for all the requirements of policy GA5, including preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document?

GA5 Requirements

15. Policy GA5 allocates the Langley SUE for 'approximately 6,000' homes. The Consortium acknowledges that Policy GA5 does not therefore limit the capacity of the SUE to delivery of 5,000 dwellings within the Plan period, as suggested by the PBA Housing Delivery on Green Belt Options paper (January 2013), and referred to in paragraph 5.63 of the Plan. The Consortium therefore welcomes the flexibility that this offers for the delivery of in excess of 5,000 dwellings on the SUE, or even circa 6,000 dwellings, in the Plan period in accordance with the full allocation if the market supports this.
16. Policy GA5 should include a reference to development taking place at the Langley SUE 'at an appropriate density'. The Consortium notes that the June 2014 BCC response in relation to Langley SUE density comments refers to the assumptions used in the 2013 SHLAA, which applies the densities proposed in the Plan (policy TP29) to all sites considered in the SHLAA, generally at 40dph outside the City Centre. The Consortium still considers that a requirement to apply an average density of 40dph across the Langley SUE based on Policy TP29 to maximise land use and development potential would not be appropriate and would be contrary to the Policy GA5 focus on the provision of family housing.
17. A delivery requirement based on 40dph on the Langley SUE would also be contrary to paragraph 2.10 of the PBA Housing Delivery on Green Belt Options evidence base document (January 2013), which identifies that 40dph is a maximum density and that most developers are seeking lower densities on greenfield sites, often down to 32dph. This accords with 'exemplar' urban extensions which have been delivered in recent years, such as Newcastle Great Park (35dph), Poundbury (34dph) and Hampton, Peterborough (35dph). The

Consortium also notes that many of the recent detailed planning permissions in Birmingham which have achieved densities of 40dph or higher outside the City Centre have been generally smaller scale and often included flats.

18. BCC has not responded to the Consortium's previous concerns relating to the requirement for the "*highest standards of sustainability*" and *design* in its July 2014 response to comments on Policy GA5. The Consortium still considers that this should be amended to read "*high standards*" to balance BCC's aspirations with development viability.
19. With respect to Proposed Main Modification MM29, the Consortium questions the justification for, and deliverability of, the proposed amendment to require the SUE to connect into the 'Sprint' bus network. The Birmingham Mobility Action Plan (2013) (page 43) shows a proposal for Walmley to be connected by 'Citylink' bus services rather than 'Sprint' bus. 'Citylink' is identified within the Birmingham Mobility Action Plan as a secondary series of bus priority corridors with a low-level of on-road priority.
20. BCC has also not responded to the Consortium's previous concerns relating to the requirement for a 40ha "substantial green corridor" in its July 2014 response to comments on Policy GA5. The Consortium recognises the importance of green infrastructure within the SUE, but still considers that the Plan requirement for "*a substantial green corridor of at least 40ha connecting New Hall Valley Country Park to the wider Green Belt beyond the A38*" in Policy GA5 has not been justified. The Consortium is still keen to liaise with BCC prior to Examination to seek to understand the justification for the corridor, proposals for spatial delivery and overlap with general public open space requirements.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

21. BCC produced a brief, with input from the Consortium, for the appointment of a masterplanner, to produce a 'viable masterplan, development delivery plan and supporting documents'. The outputs of this process are to include: illustrative 3D spatial masterplan, mix and quantum of land uses and indicative schedule of housing types / tenures, transport plan and parking strategy, design code, sustainability plan, delivery and phasing plan, future management plan and viability assessment.

22. The Consortium has agreed to work collaboratively with BCC on the production of the masterplanning documents to enable the delivery of a comprehensive and sustainable urban extension. The Consortium welcomes the response it received from BCC confirming that engagement with landowners and developers is a key component of the masterplanning. However, the Consortium stresses the importance of the need for ongoing and meaningful input from the Consortium to ensure that the masterplan is deliverable.
23. The Consortium is concerned about the timescales and justification for an SPD. The Consortium understood that the masterplan would replace the need for an SPD, to avoid requirements being overly prescriptive, whilst still meeting the requirements of the Plan and allowing early commencement of development. However the Consortium now notes that BCC is not intending to remove the requirement for an SPD and that BCC now intends to use the masterplanning work to inform the basis of the SPD, which will ultimately provide detailed guidance on the development.
24. The original timescales in the draft brief identified the appointment of the masterplanning consultant in May 2014 and finalising of the masterplan in March 2015, to allow submission of outline planning applications in Mid 2015. On the basis that the masterplanner has not yet been appointed and that the outputs from the process will then still need to be turned into an SPD, through the necessary consultation mechanism, the Consortium still considers that the production of an SPD will be overly prescriptive and will cause unnecessary delay to the delivery of development. Early delivery on the SUE could enable a proportion of development on the SUE to be counted within BCC's housing supply for the next 5 years.

Question 8. Do exceptional circumstances exist which justify further alterations to the Green Belt boundary to release additional land for housing and / or employment development, either within the Plan period or as safeguarded land for development beyond the Plan period?

25. Whilst the full objectively-assessed housing need for Birmingham is not yet known, the evidence that has been produced to date suggests that the need will be in excess of the

51,100 homes being proposed within the Plan (including the 6,000 homes in the Langley SUE) and therefore there is still a housing need case for considering further residential development in the Green Belt within the Birmingham administrative boundary.

26. The Consortium stresses that, on the grounds that the Langley SUE would deliver a sustainable form of development as a logical urban extension to Birmingham, in the area of Green Belt achieving the most favourable score in the Green Belt Assessment (October 2013), that any further Green Belt release to meet the housing needs of Birmingham is in addition to, rather than instead of, the Langley SUE.

Question 9.a) If additional housing or employment land is required, or the selection of the Langley SUE / Peddimore site(s) is found not to be justified, is there justification, including SA, to release other specific area(s) of Green Belt for development?

27. The Consortium is not aware of any constraints that would prevent the selection of the Langley SUE from being found to be unjustified.