
Matter 5 Hearing Statement

Wyre Forest District Local Plan Examination
Response on Behalf of Gaynor Gillespie and W4
Estates Limited

Representor ID: 859769
Questions: 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4



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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. Savills has been instructed by Gaynor Gillespie and W4 Estates Limited to submit a Hearing Statement in response to Matter 5 (Questions 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4) of the Wyre Forest District Local Plan Examination.
- 1.1.2. Gaynor Gillespie and W4 Estates Limited are promoting land (ref WFR/ST/1) that was shown by Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) to be included within the proposed Core Housing Site to the east of Kidderminster within the Preferred Options consultation document, but was removed by WFDC from subsequent consultation stages of the emerging Local Plan.

2. Matter 5: Kidderminster Eastern Extension

2.1. Question 5.1

“ (i) Are the proposed allocations for the 4 sites that comprise the Eastern Extension, including the indicative quantity and mix of development, justified by the evidence? (ii) Is there a clear rationale for their allocation as a whole and is it appropriate, compared with the reasonable alternatives?”

- 2.1.1. Our client supports the approach taken through the Local Plan for removing land from the Green Belt on the eastern edge of Kidderminster and allocating it for residential development. It is also recognised that the sites identified for allocation under Policy 32 of the Submission version of the Local Plan (OC/5, OC/6, OC/12 and OC13/N) would achieve a substantial mass of development in this sustainable location alongside the delivery of new supporting (e.g. highway) infrastructure.
- 2.1.2. Our client proposes that the extent of allocations to the east of Kidderminster should go beyond the four sites identified within proposed Policy 32 and also include land at Captains (ref WFR/ST/1). This site did form part of the WFDC proposed larger (1,735 dwellings) strategic allocation area to the east of Kidderminster in the Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document, as an Option B site, considered capable of being brought forward for housing development without significant investment in infrastructure.
- 2.1.3. Land at Captains in site ref WFR/ST/1 comprises a partially previously developed site in the Green Belt, of which 2.6ha is already included in the WFDC Brownfield Land Register. As identified within the responses

to Matters 1 and 3¹, the assessment to given to this site in the most recent 2019 Sustainability Appraisal and ultimate rejection of the site based on “*ecological constraints – adverse impact on ancient woodland*”², is not considered to accurately reflect the findings of the more up to date and detailed location-specific information submitted previously by our client.

- 2.1.4. The proposed updated sustainability appraisal analysis for WFR/ST/1³ identifies that there are considered to be deficiencies in the way that WFDC has assessed this site, notably through not taking account of the ability to mitigate potential ecological impacts, and demonstrates that there is not considered to be justification (including in relation to impact on the Green Belt as highlighted in response to Question 5.2) for excluding this site from the wider Kidderminster Eastern Extension area.
- 2.1.5. The supporting text⁴ to the policy already acknowledges that two of the four sites that make up the proposed strategic allocation to the east of Kidderminster (at the northern and southern ends) will be brought forward separately. Our client wishes to highlight that WFR/ST/1 is also available now and provides an opportunity for early development to take place on a self-contained partially previously developed site in a sustainable location as part of a wider growth area, delivering housing to assist WFDC with achieving and maintaining a five year supply of deliverable housing land in the short term, in advance of the significant contribution to housing land supply that will be made by the larger strategic sites.
- 2.1.6. WFDC’s rejection of the reasonable alternative of allocating a larger area for the Kidderminster Eastern Extension, to also include WFR/ST/1, to contribute to meeting the significant local housing need for the District, is therefore not considered to have been properly justified. This is especially pertinent given that WFDC is proposing to allocate land elsewhere in the District, outside of the Kidderminster Eastern Extension, on greenfield sites in the Green Belt (e.g. adjacent to the previously developed area of Lea Castle Hospital and on site WA/KF/3). Further comments are provided in relation to site WA/KF/3 in the response to Matter 6(i)⁵.

¹ Gaynor Gillespie and W4 Estates Limited responses to Matters 1 and 3.

² Examination Document SSP01 WFDC Sites Selection Paper (August 2019). Appendix 2.

³ Gaynor Gillespie and W4 Estates Limited response to Matters 1 Appendix 2.

⁴ Examination Document SD01 Local Plan (2016-2036) Submission Document (January 2020). Paragraph 32.1.

⁵ Gaynor Gillespie and W4 Estates Limited response to Matter 6(i).

2.2. Question 5.2

“Are there exceptional circumstances that justify the proposed changes to the Green Belt in this location”.

- 2.2.1. As identified in our client’s response to Matter 3⁶ it is considered that exceptional circumstances do exist for making changes to the Green Belt boundary on the edge of Kidderminster. This is based on: insufficient previously developed sites being available within the urban areas of the District to address the identified housing need; the need for more housing, particularly affordable housing; the lack of willingness from neighbouring local authorities to take any of the District’s housing requirement; Kidderminster being the largest and most sustainable settlement in the District and therefore the primary focus for growth in the District; and the fact that Kidderminster is surrounded by Green Belt.
- 2.2.2. At a strategic scale the Green Belt Review⁷ identifies that the land on the eastern, south eastern and north eastern edge of Kidderminster makes a ‘contribution’ to NPPF overall Green Belt purposes in contrast to the ‘significant contribution’ made by the land on the north western and western edges. Therefore a focus on removing land from the Green Belt adjoining the eastern edge of Kidderminster for development during the next Local Plan period is considered to be an appropriate approach.
- 2.2.3. It is noted that the land parcels which make up the proposed strategic allocation to the east of Kidderminster within the Submission version of the Local Plan are all shown to be located within Green Belt parcel E1. The Green Belt Review⁸ identifies that parcel E1 *“forms a substantial part of the Green Belt to the east of Kidderminster, containing the urban edge and preventing sprawl into open countryside. The absence of significant internal boundaries, comprising field boundaries and hedgerows of varying strength means that the parcel is potentially vulnerable to the containment of development pressures”*. Overall parcel E1 is categorised as making a ‘contribution’ to NPPF overall Green Belt purposes, and only making a ‘significant contribution’ to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt on one of the criteria (sprawl).

⁶ Gaynor Gillespie and W4 Estates Limited response to Matter 3 Question 3.2.

⁷ Examination Document GB01. Amec Foster Wheeler: WFDC Green Belt Review – Part 1: Strategic Analysis (September 2016). Figure 3.1.

⁸ Examination Document GB01. Amec Foster Wheeler: WFDC Green Belt Review – Part 1: Strategic Analysis (September 2016). Table 3.1.



- 2.2.4. The WFDC Green Belt Topic Paper⁹ identifies that WFDC considers that the sites which make up the proposed allocation to the east of Kidderminster in the Submission version of the Local Plan (OC/5, OC/6, OC/12 and OC13/N) are in a sustainable location and can accommodate a significant quantum (critical mass) of development in areas assessed as making a moderate / significant contribution to Green Belt purposes with the incorporation of mitigation.
- 2.2.5. Our client considers that the exceptional circumstances that exist for justifying development in the Green Belt in relation to the sites which make up the proposed allocation to the east of Kidderminster in the Submission version of the Local Plan (OC/5, OC/6, OC/12 and OC13/N) should also apply to our client's site at Captains (ref WFR/ST/1). This site is shown in the Green Belt Review to be located within Green Belt parcel SE1¹⁰. Parcel SE1 achieves a similar overall assessment score to parcel E1, and only makes a 'contribution' to the first purpose for including land within the Green Belt (sprawl).
- 2.2.6. Furthermore WFR/ST/1 is identified¹¹ as making *"only a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes, being well bounded with limited visual connection...Development would extend the current built edge of Kidderminster along the A448 but this would not be substantial and would [be] visually contained by substantial boundary vegetation"*. The substantial boundary vegetation reduces openness both physically and visually. This is also reflected in the 'green' scoring that this partly previously developed site was given within the 2019 Sites Selection Paper¹² in relation to Green Belt constraints.
- 2.2.7. Land at Captains in WFR/ST/1 is currently in lawful use for the storage of caravans and an increase in the storage of caravans at the site from 15 to a maximum of 39 caravans has recently been deemed to be lawful¹³. Within this decision¹⁴ the Inspector acknowledged that *"views to the site from public viewpoints, including footpaths to the north and west, are limited"*. It should also be noted that the inclusion of land within WFR/ST/1 on the WFDC Brownfield Land Register already provides acknowledgement of its

⁹ Examination Document 20. WFDC: Wyre Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036 Green Belt Topic Paper (October 2020) (Table at pages 30-35 and Appendix 1).

¹⁰ Examination Document GB01. Amec Foster Wheeler: WFDC Green Belt Review – Part 1: Strategic Analysis (September 2016). Figure 3.1.

¹¹ Examination Document GB02. Amec Foster Wheeler. Green Belt Review Part II – Site Analysis (May 2018). Page 23.

¹² Examination Document SSP01. WFDC Sites Selection Paper (August 2019). Appendix 1.

¹³ Appeal Ref: APP/R1845/X/19/3230753. Land at Captains, Stone Hill, Stone, Kidderminster, DY10 4AJ. Certificate of lawful use or development. Appeal allowed 22 February 2020.

¹⁴ Appeal Ref: APP/R1845/X/19/3230753. Land at Captains, Stone Hill, Stone, Kidderminster, DY10 4AJ. Certificate of lawful use or development. Appeal allowed 22 February 2020. Paragraph 6.

availability, suitability and achievability for residential development and therefore the principle of accommodating development on this site has already been established.

2.2.8. There is therefore not considered to be justification in relation to consideration of the impact on the Green Belt for not including land at Captains in site WFR/ ST/1 within the proposed strategic allocation area to the east of Kidderminster.

2.3. Question 5.4

“(i) What is the basis for expecting that around 1,440 dwellings will be delivered in the Eastern Extension by 2036? (ii) Are there infrastructure requirements, funding arrangements, phasing or other factors that may affect the timescale for the development and that should be addressed in the Plan?”

2.3.1. The supporting text to proposed Policy 32¹⁵ states that the proposed Kidderminster Eastern Extension is made up of four sites, two of which are under the control of a single national housebuilder and two (at the northern and southern ends) will be brought forward independently. As acknowledged within the Preferred Options consultation document, the allocation of a further self-contained site to the south of the A448, at Captains (WFR/ST/1), would still assist with the delivery of additional housing development from this sustainable location from early in the Local Plan period, to complement the delivery of the significant contribution to housing land supply and associated infrastructure which will be made from the remainder of the Kidderminster Eastern Extension allocation to the north.

¹⁵ Examination Document SD01 Local Plan (2016-2036) Submission Document (January 2020). Paragraph 32.1.

