

NORTH SOMERSET CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION OF REMITTED POLICIES

HEARING STATEMENT:

MATTER 3 (Question 5) Policy CS6: Green Belt

PERSIMMON HOMES SEVERN VALLEY

MAY 2016

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In response to the consultation on the remitted policies we previously accepted that from a strategy point of view it was not appropriate to amend the strategy and the wording of the policy on Green Belt because the Council had identified sufficient capacity to accommodate housing on non Green Belt land. However, as the issue has been identified for examination we have the following additional comments:

1. Had the timescale for dealing with the remitted policies been clear from the outset a New Objective Assessment of Need (OAN) should have been carried out.
2. If the need for a 50% increase in the housing numbers had been identified at the start of the process to consider the remitted policies, a new Sustainability Assessment should have been prepared and we consider would have produced a strong case for a Green Belt review.
3. In addition, in the light of a 50% increase in the housing numbers, we consider the Council should have, at the very least, updated Green Belt evidence and/or reviewed the Green Belt rather than simply relying on the 2006 Colin Buchanan Review (previously document ED/21). The Council's Green Belt Position Statement at the original examination (Document HD/11) clearly stated that exceptional circumstances did not exist in order to meet the then target of 14,000 dwellings:

'The local-derived housing target of 14,000 dwellings and opportunities for the delivery of development consistent with the Core Strategy Spatial Strategy justify the Council's position that the scale of demand for housing no longer provides the exceptional circumstance required to alter the Green Belt.'

4. In addressing potential locations HD/11 rejected South West Bristol and also considered and rejected Nailsea and briefly Ham Green, Pill and Portbury. However the position now is additional potential sustainable locations, could have been assessed, for example at Portishead.
5. The increase in numbers in Weston-super-Mare was not tested against the potential market capacity of the town. Evidence shows 3,130 in completions at an average of 348 dwellings per annum (Site Allocations Plan Table 1 CC/10) and 396 in 2015 (AMR, 2015) against a requirement from 2016 to 2026 of 808 dwellings per annum.
6. Normally we would accept that a review of the Green Belt should be carried out through the Joint Spatial Plan under preparation, but the circumstances in North Somerset concerning the need to reconsider previously adopted policies and the time it has taken to do that could be justified as an exceptional circumstance for carrying out a Green Belt Review as part of this process. Whilst we accept that has not happened and in all likelihood will not happen until the Core Strategy is reviewed, it is of considerable concern that once again we are being forced to rely on promises of a review to achieve the proper planning of the area. Our concern is increased by the fact that North Somerset Council have not established a clear timetable for the review of that plan in parallel with the JSP in a revised development management scheme unlike their neighbours at South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset.