



Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies – Issues and Options

Representations on behalf of Mr Dunthorne

INTRODUCTION

These representations, made by Fisher German on behalf of Mr Dunthorne, relate to land to the south of Plumtree Road, Cotgrave. They incorporate comments on both the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies and also the Green Belt Review Part 2(b).

Rushcliffe Borough Council has very challenging housing targets to deliver and, in accordance with the NPPF, the Local Plan Part 2 must ensure that it is capable of delivering the housing needs identified in the Core Strategy. However, local planning policy as a whole must reflect the most recent evidence base, and ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land, ensuring competition and choice in the market for land.

The Spatial Strategy set in Policy 3 of the Core Strategy seeks to focus development around the main built up area of Nottingham, and in key settlements identified for growth at Bingham, Cotgrave, East Leake, Keyworth, Radcliffe on Trent and Ruddington. These areas are targeted to deliver a minimum of 13,150 new homes over the period 2011 to 2028, with the majority of growth targeted at the sustainable urban extensions to the south of Clifton, at Melton Road, Edwalton and land east of Gamston/north of Tollerton. The proposed growth at Cotgrave is limited to the former Colliery site to the north east of the village.

The three strategic sites alone need to deliver around 7,650 homes in the next 12 years, and concern is raised over their ability to deliver housing at the rates needed to meet the Core Strategy's trajectory.

This is highlighted by the recent appeal decision for land at Abbey Lane, Aslockton (reference APP/P3040/A/14/2227522), which was issued on 15 December 2015; only one year after the Core Strategy was adopted. Firstly, notwithstanding the position taken by the Local Plan Inspector in agreeing the 'Liverpool' method for addressing past shortfalls in delivery, the appeal Inspector confirmed, in accordance with national guidance, that the 'Sedgefield' method is the one which should be adopted. This requires any shortfall in housing delivery to be made up in the next 5 years, rather than spread across the remaining plan period. This has the effect of increasing the immediate requirement for housing, and is the approach which must be taken to any future shortfalls in delivery which are identified against the trajectory proposed in the Core Strategy.

Secondly, in respect of the supply of housing, the Council's own evidence demonstrated that the strategic sites allocated in the Core Strategy were anticipated to deliver fewer homes in the next 5 years than had initially been predicted, with the extent of slippage considered to be significant. Having reviewed in detail all sources of supply, the Inspector concluded that a 5 year supply did not exist, and furthermore that the Council's view on the delivery of the 3 strategic sites was likely to be over-optimistic.

Having regard to the above conclusions in respect of the approach set out in the Core Strategy, it is clear that Rushcliffe Borough Council now needs to take a robust approach to ensuring that a flexible and deliverable supply of housing can be brought forward. The release of 3 strategic urban extensions, whilst commendable in the long term, is evidently insufficient to meet housing needs, and further sources of supply must be identified.

In particular, regard should be given to the very recent judgment in the Court of Appeal regarding policies for the supply of housing (*Richborough Estates v Cheshire East* [2016] EWCA Civ 168, dated 17 March 2016), which states in paragraph 33 that:

“Our interpretation of the policy does not confine the concept of “policies for the supply of housing” merely to policies in the development plan that provide positively for the delivery of new housing in terms of numbers and distribution or the allocation of sites. It recognizes that the concept extends to plan policies whose effect is to influence the supply of housing land by restricting the locations where new housing may be developed – including, for example, policies for the Green Belt, policies for the general protection of the countryside, policies for conserving the landscape of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks, policies for the conservation of wildlife or cultural heritage, and various policies whose purpose is to protect the local environment in one way or another by preventing or limiting development. It reflects the reality that policies may serve to form the supply of housing land either by creating it or by constraining it – that policies of both kinds make the supply what it is.”

This confirms that Green Belt policy is a policy for the supply of housing, and that it must be considered out of date where there is no 5 year supply.

That being the case, it is imperative that Rushcliffe Borough takes a robust approach to allocating sufficient sites to maintain a 5 year supply, in order to maintain a proactive approach to directing development, including protection of the Green Belt. Given the constraints currently imposed on the Borough, we strongly support the review of the Green Belt being undertaken, which is the only way in which development needs can be met whilst ensuring that enduring, defensible boundaries can be created and maintained.

RUSHCLIFFE LOCAL PLAN PART 2: LAND AND PLANNING POLICIES – ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Comments have not been made to all questions posed in the Issues and Options paper, with the representations below focusing on those questions of most relevance to the land south of Plumtree Road.

We note that Cotgrave is identified in the Core Strategy as one of the Borough's medium-sized villages which contain a number of local services and facilities to serve their population, and are currently inset from the Green Belt. However, beyond the redevelopment of the former colliery Policy 3 of the Core Strategy restricts development in this location to being "for local needs only".

In light of the above discussion regarding the level of housing supply in Rushcliffe Borough, and the potential implications for the protection of Green Belt where such a supply cannot be demonstrated, it is clear that a broader approach must be adopted to delivering housing in sustainable settlements. Cotgrave has been confirmed as a sustainable settlement, and consideration must therefore be given to allocating further sites for housing.

Question 12 – Development in "other villages"

Notwithstanding that the Core Strategy does not set a target for housing in "other villages", it is clear from the above that additional housing in these locations must be considered.

In terms of identifying suitable sites, we believe that the land south of Plumtree Road represents a deliverable option for housing at Cotgrave. Whilst the land subject to these representations has not been considered in the SHLAA, there is land immediately adjacent to the east which has been assessed (site ref 683), and it is considered that similar conclusions would be relevant for this site. Detailed justification for the land south of Plumtree Road is set out below, where we have assessed the site against the requirements of the draft Sustainability Appraisal scoring which forms part of the current consultation.

| SA Objectives | Response | Scoring |
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| <p>1. Housing</p> <p>To ensure that the housing stock meets the housing needs of Rushcliffe</p> | <p>The site is not currently allocated for development, but is a site which could be brought forward as a residential development through the Local Plan Part 2.</p> <p>The site is bounded by existing residential development to the east of the site. Plumtree Road forms the northern boundary of the site. The western boundary of the site is formed by a substantial hedge which continues the length of the site and restricts views into the site. The far south of the site is bounded by woodland. The site is split in part by a hedgerow in the northern third of the site. It is considered that it may be appropriate to deliver this part of the site first, with the remaining land safeguarded for future development in the longer term.</p> <p>Housing provision within the site would be delivered in accordance with the most up to date objectively assessed needs set out in the SHMA. The site will therefore increase the range and affordability of housing for all social groups.</p> | |
| <p>2. Health</p> <p>To improve health and reduce health inequalities</p> | <p>The site is approximately a 10 to 15 minute walk to Cotgrave Leisure Centre and other sports facilities in that locality, including those associated with the Cotgrave Club. The development of the site could facilitate additional onsite open space provision in the form of children's play and/or off site contributions to existing facilities.</p> <p>The development of the site would not result in the loss of existing recreational open space.</p> | |
| <p>3. Heritage</p> <p>To provide better opportunities for people to value and enjoy Rushcliffe's heritage</p> | <p>The development of the site will not result in the loss of a historic site. The site does not impact a Conservation Area, Scheduled Ancient Monument or Historic Park and Gardens, and the nearest listed buildings are located within the village centre.</p> | |

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| <p>4. Crime</p> <p>To improve community safety, reduce crime and the fear of crime in Rushcliffe</p> | <p>The internal layout of the site would be designed to design out crime with natural surveillance provided over public spaces within the development.</p> <p>Natural surveillance is also currently provided by the existing dwellings on the site's boundary.</p> | |
| <p>5. Social</p> <p>To promote and support the development and growth of social capital across Rushcliffe</p> | <p>The development of the site will not result in the loss of a community facility.</p> <p>The site is within walking distance of existing community facilities which will assist in the creation of a cohesive and integrated community.</p> | |
| <p>6. Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure</p> <p>To increase biodiversity levels and protect and enhance Green Infrastructure across Rushcliffe</p> | <p>The development of the site will not result in the loss of all or part of a designated site of nature conservation interest.</p> <p>The proposed development would not involve the loss of existing habitat or trees or hedgerow. Trees and Hedgerow surrounding the site will be enhanced and strengthened as part of the development proposals.</p> <p>The development of the site provides the opportunity to deliver biodiversity enhancements through the provision of SUDs and onsite open space.</p> <p>Open space provision can be provided on site with the potential to deliver green infrastructure within the site to build on the woodland planting to the south.</p> | |
| <p>7. Landscape</p> <p>To protect and enhance the rich diversity of the natural, cultural and built environmental and archaeological/geological assets, and landscape character of Rushcliffe, including Rushcliffe's heritage and its setting</p> | <p>The overall landscape strategy is "Enhance and Restore". <i>The area has a relatively uniform character of arable fields with prominent village fringes. Urban elements are frequent and exert a strong influence. Man-made elements and landform have a localised influence on character.</i> It is considered that the development of the site offers an opportunity to enhance the landscape and the setting of the settlement through the provision of green infrastructure and associated planting, reflecting the woodland planting to the south of the site. In particular, the existing residential development to the east presents a very harsh edge to the settlement, and development of the site would provide the opportunity for a strong, defensible and enduring boundary to be created through appropriate use of landscaping.</p> | |

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| <p>8. Natural resources and flooding</p> <p>To prudently manage the natural resources of the area including water, air quality, soils and minerals whilst also minimising the risk of flooding</p> | <p>The site will not cause any harm to the water environment or to any AQMA. The site is not at risk of Flooding as defined by the Environment Agency's online maps.</p> <p>The site is currently used for agricultural purposes.</p> | |
| <p>9. Waste</p> <p>To minimise waste and increase the re-use and recycling of waste materials</p> | <p>Recycling and Waste collection will be provided in accordance with the County's requirements.</p> <p>A Construction Management Plan would be submitted on discharge of the planning permission conditions detailing a waste management plan for the construction period.</p> | |
| <p>10. Energy</p> <p>To minimise waste and increase the re-use and do develop the area's renewable energy resource, reducing dependency on non-renewable sources</p> | <p>The proposed development will deliver energy technology as required by building regulations at the time of the determination of the planning application.</p> <p>The Construction Management plan will detail how sustainable construction techniques and reuse of materials will be undertaken.</p> | |
| <p>11. Transport</p> <p>To make efficient use of the existing transport infrastructure, help reduce the need to travel by car, improve accessibility to jobs and services for all and to ensure that all journeys are undertaken by the most sustainable mode available</p> | <p>The site is less than a 10 minute walk to the bus stops on Main Road and the Owthorpe Road providing regular services. Future residents of the site will therefore have an opportunity to use existing transport infrastructure and reduce journeys undertaken by the car.</p> <p>Services and facilities including shops, takeaways and a medical centre are all located within a 10 minute walk of the site, centred around the Local Retail Centre in the middle of Cotgrave. The leisure centre and Cotgrave Club are a 10 to 15 minute walk from the site.</p> | |
| <p>12. Employment</p> <p>To create high quality employment opportunities</p> | <p>The site would generate additional job creation through the construction phase.</p> <p>The development of the site will not result in the loss of existing employment land.</p> | |

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| <p>13. Innovation</p> <p>To develop a strong culture of enterprise and innovation</p> | <p>The development of a range of types and tenures of dwellings, in a settlement where there is strong demand for housing, will assist in encouraging people working in high knowledge sectors to come and work within the Plan Area, from outside the Plan Area, whilst seeking to retain those that already do so.</p> |  |
| <p>14. Economic structure</p> <p>To provide the physical conditions for a modern economic structure including infrastructure to support the use of new technologies</p> | <p>The site will deliver the infrastructure required to support the development. Contributions, through a S106 agreement, will be made to education, health and other areas as sought by the Local Planning Authority.</p> |  |

Question 13 – Affordable Housing Allocations

Sites for purely affordable housing should only be allocated where there is clear evidence that they will be delivered for that purpose. In the absence of any such evidence, sites should be allocated for market housing, with affordable to be delivered as a proportion of the site in accordance with normal policy. Any sites for purely affordable housing could continue to be delivered under an exceptions policy, which should also permit such sites in the Green Belt.

Question 18 – Green Belt Boundaries

We support the principle of altering Green Belt boundaries to reflect existing and committed development, following logical boundaries, but emphasise the need for additional allocations to be made across the full range of sustainable settlements, including Cotgrave.

Question 20 – Safeguarded Land

Given the challenging circumstances faced by Rushcliffe Borough, as set out in detail above, it is vital that further land is released from the Green Belt to be identified as safeguarded land for longer-term development needs. The uncertainties already identified in meeting the current plan period’s housing target means that such sites may become necessary for development in the plan period’s later years, and will certainly be required in future plan periods. The NPPF is clear that Green Belt reviews should ensure that boundaries can endure beyond the plan period, so the identification of safeguarded land must also be considered at this stage.

The review of the Green Belt must look to release those sites which are considered most suitable, having regard both to the 5 purposes of the Green Belt, and also to the suitability of each site for residential development. This should be determined having regard to the established principles of sustainable development established in national policy. Once sufficient sites have been identified to meet anticipated needs in the current plan period, taking a realistic approach to the likely level of delivery from the strategic sites in particular,

further land should also be identified for safeguarding. The identification of such sites must take the same approach as for housing allocations in the current plan period.

GREEN BELT REVIEW PART 2 (B)

As set out above, we support the need for a review of Green Belt boundaries, and emphasise that this must be in relation to all sustainable settlements across the Borough. Answers are provided below to the consultation's questions which are relevant for Cotgrave.

Question 3: Minor Amendments to Existing Boundaries - Methodology

The suggested inset boundaries are drawn tightly around the settlements and will, inevitably, require a review of the Green Belt boundaries at some point, either before or at the end of the plan period. The Council has an ambitious housing requirement to deliver over the plan period, relying on the delivery of three large urban extensions. Should the Council fail to deliver the number of homes needed during the plan period, additional land will be required to facilitate the housing delivery.

Sustainable settlements, including those which are inset from the Green Belt, can support the delivery of this growth during the plan period, and are likely to be required during the next plan period to support future growth.

In order to ensure that the Council does not have to alter the Green Belt boundaries again at the end of the plan period, and to provide sufficient flexibility to deliver the housing requirements of this plan period, it is considered that additional land at Cotgrave should be identified for inclusion within the inset boundaries as well as further safeguarded land to be identified for development in the longer term when required. The methodology should be explicit in seeking to achieve these long term objectives.

Question 4: Minor Amendments to Existing Boundaries

We have no comments on the proposed minor amendments for Cotgrave's existing boundary, but would reiterate the above point that the boundary review must be undertaken to allow for potential development needs in the current and future plan periods.

Question 5: Key Settlement Review

The Assessment Criteria and the Assessment Matrix Scoring system is broadly supported, and should be applied to all settlements which are to be inset from the Green Belt.

Question 6: Key Settlement Review

To assist the Council in their consideration of sites, an assessment has been undertaken of the land south of Plumtree Road, Cotgrave, against the Assessment Matrix Scoring system. This is set out below, and demonstrates that the site is suitable for release from the Green Belt.

| Green Belt Purpose | Score | Justification |
|--|--------------|--|
| To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas | 3 | The site has residential development adjacent to the eastern boundaries and is adjacent to Plumtree Road to the north. It is flat in nature and has clear field boundaries which are reinforced by existing hedgerow. The development of the site presents the opportunity to create a strong, defensible and enduring boundary to the Green Belt. |
| To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another | 1 | The site is located to the west of Cotgrave. There are no other settlements to the west which could be considered at risk of merging with Cotgrave, either practically or perceptually. |
| To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment | 3 | The site has a clear and strong relationship with the existing edge of the settlement, which is prominent in the wider countryside and presents a harsh edge to the village. |
| To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns | 1 | The site does not contain or fall within the setting of any heritage assets. |
| To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land | 3 | There are no specific urban regeneration projects within East Bridgford. |
| Total Score | 11 | Low to Medium Green Belt Value |

CONCLUSION

It is requested that the comments detailed above are taken into consideration in progressing the Green Belt Review and Local Plan Part 2. The land south of Plumtree Road, Cotgrave clearly represents an obvious and enclosed location for a development in a sustainable location, whereby future residents can support the vitality and viability of the existing services the settlement offers.

Having regard to the Council's housing land supply position and ensuring the Council is able to accommodate future development needs, additional land, such as land south of Plumtree Road, needs to be released from the Green Belt.