

BARKWAY PARISH COUNCIL

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT PLAN HEARING STATEMENT

MIQ: Matter 23 - the Green Belt Review and site selection process Q 23.1 b)

Is the approach taken reasonable, adequately robust and consistent with national policy?

Barkway Parish Council (BPC) takes the view that the answer to the Inspector's question 23.1 b) is no.

In the NHDC response to the Inspector's letter of 9 July 2019 – Paper B (Green Belt) North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) made the following statement:

“The Council has not taken a mechanistic or rigidly sequential approach (see HOU1, p.29, paragraph 5.33). For example, not all sites in the rural area beyond the Green Belt have been utilised in preference to the allocation of Green Belt sites. This is because some of these sites were judged as less sustainable locations for development and / or would result, in the Council's view, in disproportionate levels of housing in a single village. This can be clearly seen from the commentary of Appendix 2 of HOU1. Similarly, Green Belt sites have not been allocated working upwards from those of least harms through moderate to significant.”

BPC agrees with the approach set out in this statement, but does not agree that NHDC's application of these principles have been soundly applied in relation to Barkway.

Statements will be made to these hearings detailing the unsoundness of the inclusion of Barkway as a village for growth and the unsoundness of the inclusion of the extension of BK3 and so we will not repeat the details of those arguments here. In summary, in the context of NHDC's methodology to select Green Belt sites, some such site **should** be preferred over a village such as Barkway that is rural but not Green Belt, because the development of Barkway is unsound for the following reasons:

- Unlike some proposed Green Belt sites, Barkway is not adjacent to established conurbations;
- In other parts of Hertfordshire the unsustainability and undesirability of developing rural villages beyond the Green Belt has been recognised through a strategy of creating new towns, or focusing development on the boundaries of existing towns – BPC agrees with that strategy;
- Barkway has been wrongly categorised as a Category A village when it more closely shares the characteristics of a Category B village and should not, therefore, have been eligible for designation as a Village for Growth.

- There would be an unacceptably adverse economic impact on the internationally important, multi-million pound, bloodstock business at Newsells Park whose closure would remove the village's principal employer and adversely impact a significant supply chain of local businesses;
- Barkway has very poor public transport and would inevitably lead any new households relying on private cars to access fundamental services including general stores, health services, Job Centres and (apart from Reception and Year 1) education.

Achieving Soundness

Barkway Parish Council submits, therefore, that NHDC's methodology as set out in its response to the Inspector's letter of 9 July for selecting Green Belt sites has been misapplied in relation to Barkway and is therefore unsound.

This can be rectified making the plan sound in this respect by re-designating Barkway as a village where growth would be unsustainable, potentially justifying the inclusion of some Green Belt sites as a better option.