



## **NORTH HERTS LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION MATTER 11 – OFFLEY**

### **STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF JARVIS HOMES**

Land at the Rookery, Harris Lane, Great Offley

DLA Ref: 14/200C  
January 2018

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

- 1.1 This statement relates to a site known as the Rookery, Harris Lane, Great Offley. The statement is made on behalf of Jarvis Homes Ltd, who are working with the landowner to promote the site. While Jarvis Homes are proposing residential development on the site to which this statement relates, this proposal is not being pursued through the Local Plan due to its limited size.
- 1.2 Jarvis Homes objects to the location of the proposed Green Belt boundary in respect of the Rookery site. The boundary is neither justified nor consistent with national policy and needs to be changed in order for the Local Plan to be found sound.
- 1.3 The strategic issues relating to Green Belt – both proposed additions and deletions – were considered under matter 7 and related matters. However, no site-specific issues were considered at that time but were rather reserved for the site-specific hearing sessions relating to each settlement. This statement sets out site-specific Green Belt concerns in respect Offley.

## 2.0 INSPECTOR'S MATTERS AND ISSUES

*Matter 11.53 – Is the proposed settlement boundary:*

- a) consistent with the methodology for identifying the settlement boundaries?*
- b) appropriate and justified?*

2.1 It would appear that the “methodology” for identifying settlement boundaries does not relate to the specific scenario around Great Offley. The following work has taken place:

- The Local Plan proposes a new area of Green Belt that encompasses land around Great Offley and there is a trail of evidence justifying this addition (CG1);
- A review has occurred as to whether to inset villages like Great Offley from the newly created Green Belt (CG1). The conclusion of this work was that Great Offley should be inset from the Green Belt;
- A review of Green Belt/settlement boundaries around proposed housing allocations has taken place;

2.2 However, having concluded that Great Offley should be inset, there does not appear to have been any detailed consideration of where the proposed Green Belt boundary should go and how this relates to the current settlement boundary. It appears the current village boundary has simply been transposed across as a new Green Belt boundary.

2.3 The creation of new Green Belt boundaries needs to follow Government planning policy in paragraph 85 of the NPPF. The creation of a settlement boundary does not. The guidance in paragraph 85 is important because of the intended permanence of the Green Belt and the requirement for exceptional circumstances to be demonstrated for any changes. Of particular relevance here is the requirement to:

- *not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open; and*
- *define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.*

2.4 The site-specific details around this site were clearly set out in the Regulation 19 representations made in November 2016, in both written and graphical form.

2.5 To summarise the position in respect of the proposed boundary, it is proposed to be located between the Rookery and the land to the rear. However, there is no readily recognisable physical feature along which to align a Green Belt boundary as proposed. While the current settlement boundary runs along this line, it was defined some years ago and circumstances have now moved on. In any event, as set out above, there is no government-specified test for defining settlement boundaries, unlike Green Belt boundaries.

- 2.6 In terms of the need to keep the land permanently open, part of the land which is proposed as Green Belt already has planning permission for three dwellings. This permission was granted between the Preferred Options and Pre-Submission stages of Local Plan consultation. Unfortunately, the location of the proposed Green Belt boundary was not reviewed between these consultations.
- 2.7 It is therefore entirely unnecessary to keep this land permanently open, indeed it cannot be kept open since it has planning permission to be built on. Retaining the Green Belt boundary risks undermining the value of the designation.
- 2.8 A revised Green Belt boundary was proposed in the Regulation 19 representations. This boundary follows readily recognisable features, namely a public footpath, a mature hedgerow and a road. The Green Belt boundary proposed in the Local Plan is not sound and should be replaced by the one suggested in our Regulation 19 representations.

### 3.0 **FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The following documents were submitted with the Regulation 19 representations and should be referred back to alongside this statement:
- Appendix A – Aerial photographs and illustrations
  - Appendix B – decision notice and approved plans for development ref 15/02656/1
  - Appendix C – decision notice and approved plans for development ref 16/01409/1