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For and on behalf of  
**Bovis Homes Ltd and  
New Road Property Developments Ltd.**

**North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination  
MATTER 15 – POLICY CGB5**

Prepared by  
**Neil Osborn BA(Hons) MRTPI  
DLP Planning Ltd  
Bedford**

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Prepared by: .....

**Neil Osborn BA(Hons)**  
**MRTPI**  
Senior Director

Approved by: .....

**Neil Osborn BA(Hons)**  
**MRTPI**  
Senior Director

Date: November 2017

**DLP Planning Ltd**  
4 Abbey Court  
Fraser Road  
Priory Business Park  
Bedford  
MK44 3WH

Tel: 01234 832740  
Fax: 01234 831266

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 These submissions are made on behalf of Bovis Homes Ltd and New Road Property Developments Ltd.
- 1.2 New Road Property Developments Ltd has an option to promote the land comprising site allocation WY1, known as Bungalow Farm. Bovis Homes has a contract with New Road to develop the site subject to a satisfactory planning permission and has acted as the lead interest in the promotion of the site as an allocation in the Submission Draft Local Plan.
- 1.3 In advance of the preparation of a planning application, Bovis Homes has produced a Vision Document, including a draft Concept Masterplan – Appendix 1.
- 1.4 NHDC has invited a formal pre-application discussions having regard to the evolution of the scheme particularly in respect of the relationship between the proposed development area and the land designated on the Proposals Map as Urban Open Land (policy CGB5). At the time of drafting this Statement, this pre-application has not been completed. Any outstanding comments in respect of the matters raised in this Statement can be reported to the Examination.

## MATTER 15 - URBAN OPEN LAND

### **15.7 Policy CGB5 introduces Urban Open Land. This is not a designation recognised in national policy.**

#### **a) What is the justification for this approach?**

- 15.7.1 The stated aims of the policy set out at paragraphs 6.25 and 6.27 do not provide suitable justification to prevent the development of land to be released from the Green Belt. It is illogical to remove land from the Green Belt then sterilise it from development via this policy. It is stated the policy is required because if left as 'undesignated white land' released land could be '*subject to speculative applications which would be detrimental to local character, or would not provide an appropriate transition from the urban to the rural*'. The approach is not justified as the transition between the built form and rural edge can be controlled through the development control process. In the case of site WY1, the whole site is controlled by a single landowner and will be included within a single planning application for comprehensive development, avoiding the need to protect the land from future speculative applications, and ensuring the open space can be secured in perpetuity through the development control process. The policy is therefore not justified and is not necessary.

#### **b) What is the purpose/function of Urban Open Land?**

- 15.7.2 With regard to Site WY1 Little Wymondley, the policy serves no useful purpose or function.

#### **c) What methodology has been used to identify the Urban Open Land shown on the Policies Map?**

- 15.7.3 The impetus for applying Policy CGB5 appears to derive from the maintenance of openness (LP1 paragraph 6.28). In the case of Site WY1, the capacity of the land to accommodate a balance of built and open space uses is to be determined by landscape, heritage and other evidence based assessments prepared in respect of a planning application.
- 15.7.4 More detailed technical and environmental work undertaken to date in the preparation of the attached masterplan, which has been subject to pre-application discussions with the Council, indicates that the boundary drawn between developable land and Policy CGB5 is not the most suitable, defensible or justified. The masterplan demonstrates that the most appropriate boundary between the developable area of the site and the sensitive landscape is further south that set out on proposals map. The proposed boundary for Policy CGB5 is arbitrarily drawn along an existing hedgerow and could prejudice the proper design and layout of the development. It creates an artificial urban edge and constrains the scope for creating a logical, defensible edge to the development site and the ability of the site to deliver much needed homes and infrastructure – thereby compromising the reason for its allocation (LP4 Appendix 13 Reasons for selecting sites).

**d) Have all parcels of land considered for this designation been subject to sustainability appraisal?**

- 15.7.5 Site WY1 (referenced as site 122 and 232) has been subject to SA (LP4 Appendix 6 s2.22) in its entirety; it found both the parts identified on the Proposals Map to be developable. The application of CGB5 to a part of the site does not appear to have been assessed separately, nor was it a part of any previous SA at Reg18 stage.

**e) Have these areas been considered for development? Is this reflected in the sustainability appraisal?**

- 15.7.6 Site 122 was originally canvassed as having an area of 26.0ha and a capacity for 781 dwellings in the Council's Housing Options Paper February 2013. As such it also included the existing village playing field, pavilion and tennis courts accessed via Tower Close.
- 15.7.7 DLP on behalf of New Road Property Developments and Bovis Homes suggested that the capacity for the site be reduced – Reg 19 submission para 2.2
- 15.7.8 Accordingly, the site was recanvassed in the Additional Locations Options July 2013 as Amended Site 122 (reference 232) with a capacity of 11.2 ha and 300 dwellings. This was carried forward to the Reg 18 Consultation where no Urban Open Land policy was proposed.
- 15.7.9 As part of, and subsequent to, the pre-application process, which New Road and Bovis Homes were invited to undertake, it was established that the capacity of the site would be in the order of 350 dwellings and that the boundary between that part of the site suitable for residential development and the residual area to be used for recreation and open space was best determined by a rigorous assessment of the landscape characteristics of the site as well as the considerations noted above.
- 15.7.10 Accordingly, the Policy has been assessed in the SA but this does not reflect the history of Site 232/122 at Little Wymondley.

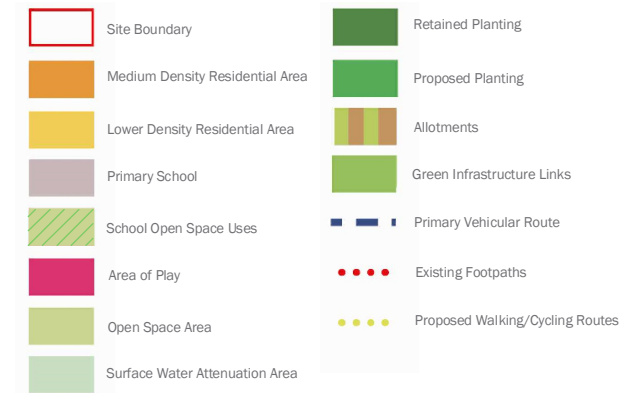
**f) For each parcel of Urban Open Land, what is the justification for its designation?**

- 15.7.11 As stated above, there is no justification for the designation of any part of Site 232/122 as Urban Open Land.
- 15.7.12 The definition of the boundary between developable land to be removed from the Green Belt and the remaining land enclosed by the Wymondley Bypass was, for the purposes of the Reg 18 Consultation and Reg 19 Submission Plans, drawn to coincide with a hedge feature running east-west across the site – this providing the definition of the land immediately surrounding Bungalow Farm and distinguishing land used for grazing from that under arable cultivation.

- 15.7.13 This hedgerow is not continuous. It is not robust or durable, and is drawn arbitrarily to relate to an estimated site capacity rather than a proper assessment of sensitive areas worthy of protection.
- 15.7.14 The Bypass and Blakemore End Road offer robust and durable boundaries for the Green Belt. They are clearly recognisable and permanent. We agree with and fully support the Council's proposal that the whole of Site 232 be taken out of the Green Belt and we agree that not all of the land is suitable for or should be developed for housing.
- 15.7.15 The Masterplan (Appendix 1), which is presently the subject of discussion with the Council, considers an appropriate boundary between development and the landscape beyond, based on a thorough assessment of infrastructure capacity, landscape appraisal and evaluation of the potential impacts on historic assets.
- 15.7.16 A full suite of ecological surveys have also been completed for the site. There are no in-principle ecology or heritage constraints to development of the site, and the proposed access strategy is suitable to serve up to 350 dwellings. The most sensitive area of the site in landscape terms is limited to the far south of the site, therefore the masterplan proposes only 'green' uses and open space in that part of the sites. Built development, including the residential development and the school building is limited to the least sensitive part of the site.
- 15.7.17 Following discussions with HCC as Education Authority it is understood that a 2FE school campus is required. This could be accommodated in the developable area of the site but would conflict with the Urban Open Space as presently depicted on the Proposal Map without removal of the Policy.
- 15.7.18 Previously DLP's Reg 19 objection requested amendment to CGB5, however, with regard to the prospective agreement of the Masterplan arising from the current pre-application – which DLP will seek to secure through a Statement of Common Ground in advance of the examination of Matter 15 – we now consider that the application of Policy CGB5 to any part of the land at Little Wymondley serves no planning purpose either to regulate the proper development of the land in accordance with Policy WY1 or to control the use of land in the future.
- 15.7.19 The boundary between the developed part of the site and open space and recreational uses is properly defined by evidence based documents prepared to support a planning application and regulated thereafter by conditions on planning approval and/or a s106 Obligation.

**APPENDIX 1 - Site WY1 Draft concept masterplan**





1. Primary vehicular access from Stevenage Road.
2. Emergency and pedestrian/cycle access from Blakemore End Road.
3. Pedestrian/cycle access connecting into village centre.
4. Retention of existing vegetation (wherever possible) to create a sense of place and link open space areas with opportunity for area of play.
5. Addition of tree planting to screen development from incidental views from the south.
6. Potential location of a new 2FE primary school with integrated community facility.
- 6a. Location of school play space and sports pitch.
7. Surface water swales to be located within areas of open spaces, integrated with biodiversity enhancements (subject to inputs from Drainage Engineer).
8. Opportunity for allotments.
9. Housing to be at a lower density and sensitively designed to create an informal edge to development with opportunities for open space areas to extend north and fragmenting built form.
10. Proposed locations of surface water attenuation areas, in accordance with the drainage strategy.
11. Informal views towards north and north-east.
12. Retained existing orchard on site.
13. Indicative development built form extent.

client  
**Bovis Homes Ltd**

project title  
**Land south of Little Wymondley**

drawing title  
**Initial Concept Masterplan**

date 01 NOVEMBER 2017 drawn by RB  
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info@edp-uk.co.uk www.edp-uk.co.uk  
Cirencester 01285 740427 Cardiff 02921 671900 Shrewsbury 01939 211190

**BEDFORD**

4 Abbey Court  
Fraser Road  
Priory Business Park  
Bedford  
MK44 3WH

Tel: 01234 832 740  
Fax: 01234 831 266  
bedford@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**BRISTOL**

Broad Quay House (5th floor)  
Prince Street  
Bristol  
BS1 4DJ

Tel: 0117 905 8850  
bristol@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**CARDIFF**

Sophia House  
28 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff  
CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2064 6810  
cardiff@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**LEEDS**

Princes Exchange  
Princes Square  
Leeds  
LS1 4HY

Tel: 0113 280 5808  
leeds@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**LONDON**

The Green House  
41-42 Clerkenwell Green  
London  
EC1R 0DU

Tel: 020 3761 5390  
london@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**MILTON KEYNES**

Midsummer Court  
314 Midsummer Boulevard  
Milton Keynes  
MK9 2UB

Tel: 01908 440 015  
Fax: 01908 357 750  
miltonkeynes@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**NOTTINGHAM**

1 East Circus Street  
Nottingham  
NG1 5AF

Tel: 01158 966 620  
nottingham@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**RUGBY**

18 Regent Place  
Rugby  
Warwickshire  
CV21 2PN

Tel: 01788 562 233  
rugby.enquiries@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**SHEFFIELD / SPRU**

Ground Floor  
V1 Velocity Village  
Tenter Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4BY

Tel: 0114 228 9190  
Fax: 0114 272 1947  
sheffield@dlpconsultants.co.uk