

Note on the consideration of Green Belt around new Garden Communities by the North Essex Authorities

The NPPF states in paragraph 52 that;

*“The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities. Working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development. In doing so, they should consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining any such new development”.*

Paragraph 82 of the NPPF is clear that the general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established and new Green Belts should only be in the established in exceptional circumstances and provides general guidance on the points which local authorities would need to consider;

*The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions. If proposing a new Green Belt, local planning authorities should:*

- *demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate*
- *set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary*
- *show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development*
- *demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas*
- *show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework*

The North Essex Authorities did not formally consider the use of Green Belt policy to protect land around the proposed garden communities. It was considered and dismissed at officer level. The NEA have now considered these provisions in the NPPF and do not believe that Green Belt is the appropriate approach in North Essex for the reasons set out below.

The starting point is that neither Tendring, Braintree nor Colchester are currently authorities which have any Green Belt within them. A few neighbouring authorities have some aspects of metropolitan green belt within them, including in Uttlesford and Chelmsford. These districts are located further to the south of the North Essex Authorities, closer to London. Accordingly, the establishment of Green Belt around the Garden Communities would not reflect the current approaches taken to the protection of countryside in the NEA or the adjoining areas. If a Green Belt policy

approach was to be taken around the Garden Communities then consideration would have to be given to a similar approach around each of the existing major settlements; not an approach that has been considered necessary to date.

In any event, the Councils consider that normal planning and development management policies can provide the necessary protection of land surrounding the Garden Communities. Braintree District Council proposes 'green buffers'. Tendring District Council propose 'strategic green gaps' in their Submission Local Plan. Similarly, Colchester Borough Council's adopted and emerging Local Plans include provisions to safeguard the countryside and focus new development within settlement boundaries.

Collectively therefore, North Essex already benefits from planning and development management policies which are designed to protect the rural landscape around settlements and to avoid coalescence between settlements. This protection would be applicable to the Garden Communities and the extent of the green buffers will be fixed as part of the masterplan DPD process. In addition it is anticipated that the green buffers around the Garden Communities will form part of the stewardship assets with ownership/legacy mechanisms being developed as part of the DPD process. The combination of planning policies designed to protect land surrounding the new settlements and a stewardship arrangement significantly reduces the risk that speculative planning applications would be submitted on the green buffers around the Garden Communities, strengthening protection from development.

The proposed Garden Communities are major changes in circumstances to the North Essex Authorities. However for the reasons set out above, it is not considered that Green Belt is necessary given that it has not been demonstrated why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate.

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