

Treatment of Green Belt boundaries of allocations in the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

Note by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

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Introduction

Where green belt release is proposed to meet housing and other development needs, development should be designed to minimise impact on green belt purposes. This can be achieved by incorporating design elements such as substantial tree planting to strengthen the new green belt boundaries to create or enhance physical features which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. This approach accords with point (v) of the Calverton test which takes account of the extent to which harm to the green belt can be reduced.

Current Approach

The Council has put forward a number of proposed modifications relating to allocated sites which indicate the need for tree planting and green buffers to strengthen green belt boundaries. However, it has not always been entirely clear how this is to be achieved. In some cases the Inspector has asked for additional information (for example in relation to HS22 and HS24).

The Council has therefore come to the view that it would be sensible to provide an overarching approach to be taken to this issue, and then to indicate how this would be applied to the local plan allocations.

Proposed Approach

The general approach the Council proposes is based on the following considerations:

- Built development is inappropriate development in the green belt (with a number of exceptions) but open space, tree planting and structural landscaping are not.
- Where a site is to be released from the green belt it is appropriate to maximise the delivery of new homes on that site in order to minimise the need to release green belt elsewhere.
- Many sites to be allocated are part of a larger landholding which would allow boundary strengthening to occur on adjoining land.
- There will be exceptions to this general approach where appropriate.

It is therefore suggested that as a general rule, the tree-planting and other strategic landscaping needed to strengthen the green belt boundary will take place adjoining but outside the development allocation, and within the green belt. In other words, generally the green belt boundary would divide the landscaping from the built development.

There are a number of potential exceptions to this approach;

- Where ownership does not extend over the green belt boundary. In this case the developer will need to incorporate the boundary enhancements within the allocation and outside the green belt. It would usually be possible to overcome this issue if a developer purchases adjoining land within the green belt.
- Where topography would limit the effectiveness of screening outside the site allocation.
- Where the existing boundary would make this inappropriate, for example sites adjoining roads, railways and significant woodlands.

- Where there are noise, ecological or other reasons to incorporate a green buffer zone within the site boundary in any case which can then double as boundary strengthening.

Based on this general set of guidelines, we therefore recommend that the following sites are ones where the green belt planting/strengthening should be mainly adjoining but outside the site boundary and therefore within the green belt.

- SDS1 WGC4/4a Panshanger and Extension
- SDS2 WGC5 Birchall Garden Suburb
- HS2 WGC1 Creswick
- HS11 Hat11 South Way.
- HS15 WGr1 East of London Road
- HS24 BrP7 South of Hawkshead Road
- HS25 LHe1 North of Hawkshead Road
- HS27 Cuf1 Meadway
- HS29 Cuf12 North of Northaw Road East

In the case of the following sites, an alternative approach is required for the reasons set out.

Site	Approach and reasons
SDS5 Hat 1 North West Hatfield	Green buffer along Coopers Green Lane and planting both within and outside the Green Belt on land within the ownership of the promoter.
HS16 OMH8 & HS17 OMH5 Great North Road	No strengthening required, revised boundaries already strong.
HS32 GTLAA04 Four Oaks	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.
HS18 Wel11 The Vineyards	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations and adjoining land is in Local Nature Reserve.
HS19 Wel4 Sandyhurst	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.
HS20 Wel3 School Lane	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.
HS35 GTLAA01 Foxes Lane	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.
SDS7 WeG4b Marshmoor	Landscaping within site, the revised green belt boundary is formed by a major road.
HS21 BrP13 West of Golf Course Road	No landscaping required, the revised green belt boundary is defined by an existing wooded area within the site which is to be retained.
HS22 BrP4 West of Brookmans Park	Landscaping within site, bounded by road to the north and southern landscaping limited by topography.
HS23 BrP14 East of Golf Course Road	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations to the north, wildlife site to the east.
HS28 Cuf6 South of Northaw Road East	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.
HS20 Cuf7 Wells Farm	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.

SDS6 Hat15 Symondshyde	More complex – see separate note.
WeG3a Welham Manor	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.
WeG10 Dixons Hill Road	Landscaping within site, land ownership limitations.
BrP1 Upper Bell Lane Farm	Landscaping within site, revised green belt boundary is formed by a major road.
LHe4/5 Videne and Studlands	Landscaping mainly within site, land ownership limitations.

Note that this list includes allocated sites which the Council is recommending deletion from the plan, in order to give the Inspector the fullest picture. More detail on the green belt treatments for sites is set out in proposed main modifications provided to the Inspector.