

GILLESPIES

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LAND AT CHIDSWELL, DEWSBURY

APPRAISAL OF PROPOSED SOUTHERN ALLOCATION BOUNDARY

FINAL REPORT (Revision 01)

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For:

THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS FOR ENGLAND

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Gillespies LLP (“Gillespies”) have been appointed by The Church Commissioners for England (“The Church Commissioners”) to respond to an objection made by Wakefield Council regarding the proposed southern boundary of the draft allocation of the site (Allocation reference MX1905).
- 1.2 By way of background, Gillespies have been involved in this site since 2013, where we were originally appointed to prepare an Outline Landscape Appraisal to support the identification of land at Chidswell as a strategic location for housing and employment development in the Kirklees Core Strategy Submission Draft Development Plan Document (DPD)¹.
- 1.3 The southern boundary was arrived at during the development of options to give the required housing numbers whilst taking into account the landscape appraisal. Boundaries were chosen by taking existing landscape features into account.
- 1.4 Gillespie’s subsequently prepared a landscape and visual appraisal of the John Thompson and Partners Masterplan, Option 1, dated Dec 2014 (“JTP Masterplan”) in terms of a key purpose of the existing Green Belt, ‘*to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another*’ (NPPF para. 80) in April 2015. This recommended changes to the eastern boundary of the emerging allocation, which was taken into consideration in the revised masterplan which was submitted in January 2016.
- 1.5 The results of this appraisal are based on the findings of desk top research and site based analysis undertaken by Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute of Gillespies in February 2017.

¹ The Core Strategy Submission Draft Development Plan Document which was subsequently withdrawn by Kirklees MDC.

SECTION 2: PLANNING POLICY

Relevant Planning Policy

- 2.1 Green Belt policy is defined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012), the relevant sections of which are set out below:
- 2.2 Paragraph 79 states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 2.3 Paragraph 80 set out that Green Belt serves five purposes, namely:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 2.4 Paragraph 81 states that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.
- 2.5 Paragraph 83 advises that local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.
- 2.6 Paragraph 85 states that when defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:
- ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;

- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;
- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development;
- satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- **define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.**

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED SOUTHERN ALLOCATION BOUNDARY

3.1 Wakefield Council's comments on the proposed southern boundary include: "*The southern boundary shown on the draft policies map coincides with the local authority boundary between Wakefield and Kirklees and would become the new green belt boundary if the site is allocated. Part of this boundary is formed by a small stream. However, a portion of the boundary is formed simply by undefined field boundaries from the point west of where the stream emerges as a spring. The Framework at paragraph 85 is clear that green belt boundaries should be defined 'clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable'.*"

3.2 The key issue regarding the definition of the southern boundary of the proposed allocation site is outlined in point 6 of NPPF paragraph 85 that:

"when defining Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent".

Purpose of the Assessment

3.3 The purpose of this appraisal is to determine if the proposed southern boundary allocation is defensible in Green Belt terms. The key issues to consider to answer this question are to assess its '*permanence*' and its '*physical features that are more readily recognisable in the landscape*'.

Historic Analysis & Boundary Permanence

3.4 Historic maps (from 'oldmapsonline.org') have been analysed to determine the level of permanence of the southern allocation boundary. These historic maps (from 1894 to the present day) are shown in Figure 1: Historic Landscape Change, which is included at the end of this report.

3.5 It can be seen that despite changes in the landscape over time which includes a number of field boundaries, a section of Dogloitch Wood has been lost and a section of a farm track has been lost further north, the southern allocation boundary has been present since at least 1894. This is helped by the fact that it is the route of an established watercourse. It can therefore be considered a permanent feature in the landscape.

3.6 A current day examination of the boundary reveals that over much of its length it is well defined by hedgerows adjacent to a grassy track, by a stream with associated scrub and trees and a thicker belt of woodland to the west.

3.7 A short section, to the west of the stream, which Wakefield Council's objection specifically mentions as an "undefined field boundary", is in fact marked by a grassy track with raised grass verges. This is a subtle but distinct feature that is particularly striking when the surrounding fields

have been ploughed. It does not appear to have been ploughed over or cultivated in anyway and what is significant is that it follows the boundary shown on the historic maps.

- 3.8 The current illustrative JTP masterplan shows the retention of existing boundary vegetation and the stream alignment but also new open space and houses fronting the boundary to provide a positive edge (in contrast to houses backing onto open countryside which can expose ugly back garden fences). However, it would be equally possible to plant a dense woodland screen along the boundary. Both solutions would reinforce the boundary.

Legibility of Boundary Features in the Landscape

- 3.9 In order to assess legibility, a visual assessment of the proposed southern allocation boundary within the landscape has been undertaken via site investigation, backed up by analysis of aerial photographs.

Visual Appraisal of Boundary

- 3.10 A site visit was made on the 11th February 2017. Photographs from 3 locations within the landscape have been used to illustrate the assessment² and the locations of these are shown on the location plans on the viewpoint sheets at Figure 2 to the rear of this report.

Viewpoint 1

- 3.11 This viewpoint looks west and is located on the PRow to the south of the stream which forms the proposed southern allocation boundary. The boundary runs west to east across the view and can be seen as a recognisable boundary in the foreground, defined by streamside vegetation and trees.

Viewpoint 2

- 3.12 The centre of this viewpoint looks west and is located on the PRow between the stream which forms the proposed southern allocation boundary and a farm track located to the north. The southern allocation boundary runs to the left (south) of the view and can be seen as a strong boundary, reinforced by a clear line of streamside vegetation running up to the horizon) and stands out amongst other boundaries identifiable in this view.

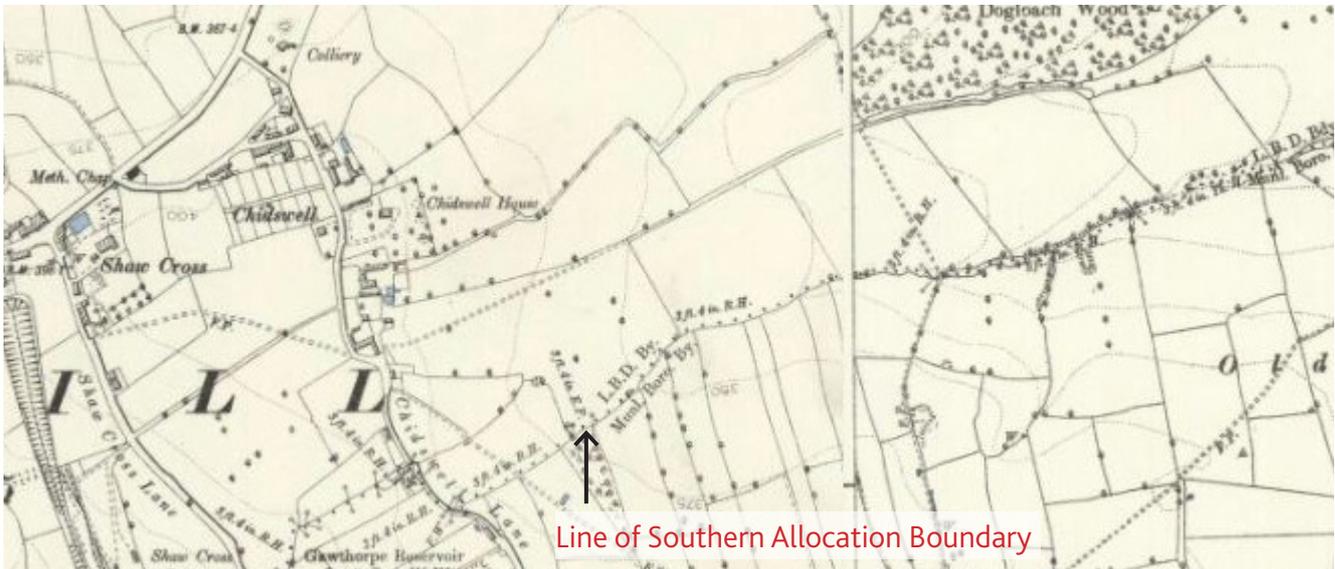
² Due to adverse weather conditions, the distant view represented by VP 3 lacked clarity, so an image from Google Streetview has been used in its place.

Viewpoint 3

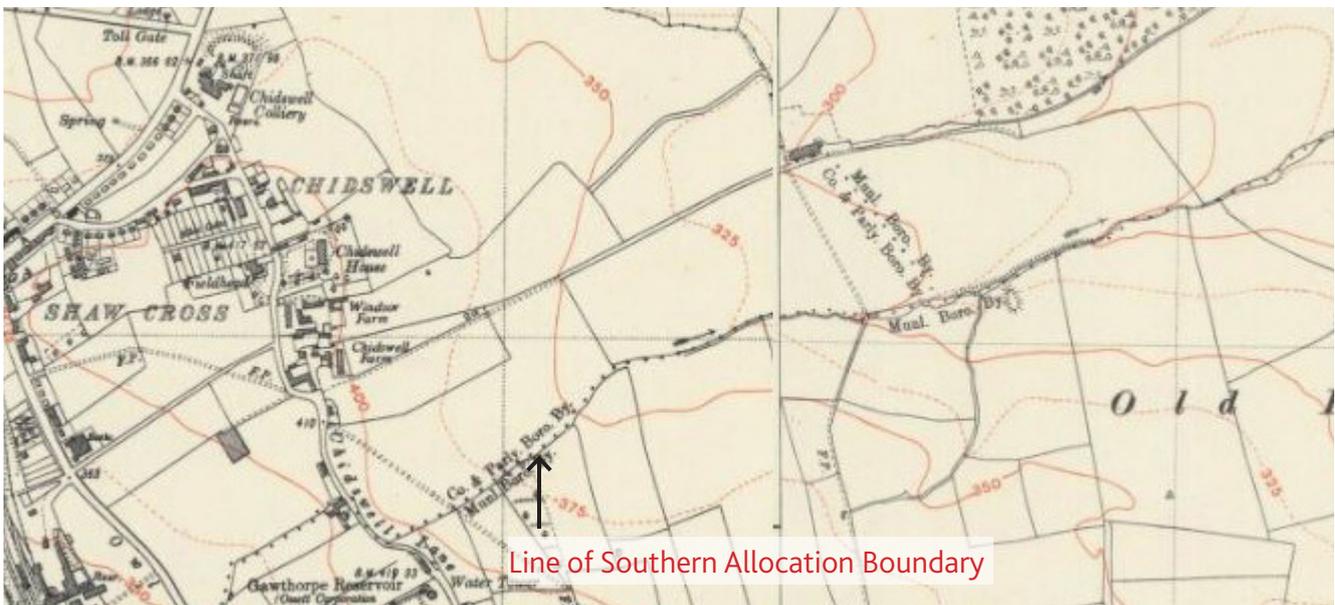
- 3.13 This viewpoint is located on the Batley Road to the north east of the site. Due to distance (2.3km from this viewpoint location to the water tower on the horizon), the boundary forms a relatively minor element within the overall view. However, the southern boundary allocation is still distinguishable, formed by a visually significant line of vegetation and mature trees.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

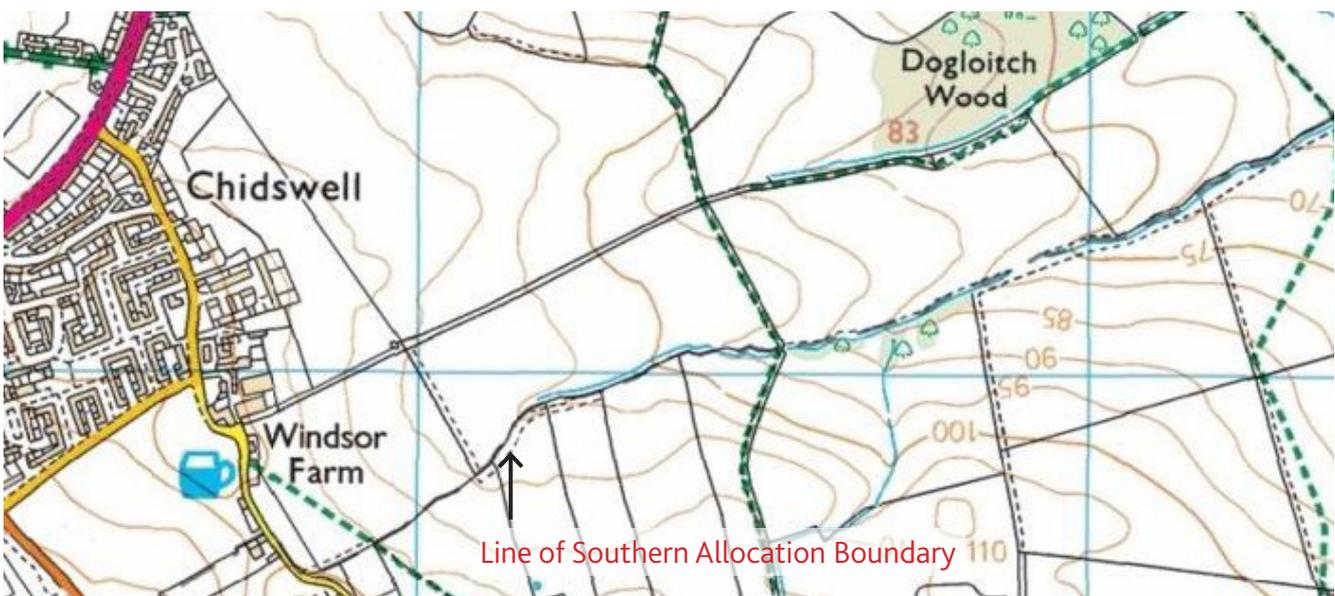
- 4.1 The historic analysis illustrates that the southern allocation boundary has a level of permanence, having been present since at least 1894 and, as an established water course, is likely to have been in existence for some time before this and is unlikely to be altered in the foreseeable future.
- 4.2 A site appraisal of the boundary has been undertaken, and the result of this is that the stream and associated vegetation is considered to be a strong visual boundary within the local landscape and is readily recognisable. In the wider landscape the surrounding boundaries are, on the whole, comprised of weaker field boundaries, undefined by hedgerows and trees, reinforcing the importance of the southern allocation boundary.
- 4.3 Having regard to the historical assessment, and the visual appraisal of the proposed southern allocation boundary, it is considered that this is a long established permanent and easily identifiable boundary, and one that can be easily reinforced through design of the edge of the new housing and new planting.
- 4.4 This appraisal therefore concludes that the proposed southern allocation boundary forms a defensible boundary as defined by paragraph 85, bullet point 6 of the NPPF and is therefore appropriate for designation as the new Green Belt boundary through the emerging Kirklees Local Plan.



OS Map: 1894



OS Map: 1948



OS Map: Current

Figure 1: Historic Landscape Change

FIGURE 2: VIEWPOINT 02

VIEW LOOKING WEST FROM THE PROW NORTH OF THE SOUTHERN ALLOCATION BOUNDARY



Southern Allocation Boundary



FIGURE 2: VIEWPOINT 03

VIEW (FROM GOOGLE STREETVIEW)LOOKING WEST FROM THE BATLEY ROAD TO THE NORTH OF JAW HILL

