

KIRKLEES LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
STAGE 1 – MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS:
MATTER 8

SITE ID: H1796

REPRESENTING: Priory Asset Management LLP

SITE: Land north and east of Laverhills and Quaker Lane, Hightown

MATTER 8: APPROACH TO SITE ALLOCATIONS AND GREEN BELT RELEASE

Issue – Is the Plan’s approach to identifying site allocations (housing, employment and mixed use), safeguarded land and Green Belt releases soundly based and in line with national policy?

- 1.1 **Issue 8a** asks if the Council has undertaken a robust and comprehensive assessment of development capacity within existing urban areas and other areas outside the current Green Belt? To this we respond that the council have not undertaken a robust assessment of the urban capacity of settlements. Cheshire East Council undertook a specific Urban Capacity Study to assess the amount of available brownfield and greenfield land within each settlement. This study also considered historic delivery rates, extant planning permissions and the sustainability of each settlement. Kirklees should seek to carry out a similar exercise to examine the existing capacity of each settlement, prior to determining the level of Green Belt release that is required in each area. A more detailed settlement hierarchy alongside a system of spatial distribution would also form a key part of the site selection methodology and the identification of Green Belt sites.
- 1.2 The proposed assessment should be realistic about the deliverability prospects of the identified sites. An over-reliance on brownfield land can result in under-delivery and stalled sites due to viability and technical constraints. Heavy reliance on brownfield land can also lead to a reduction in the amount of affordable and elderly housing delivered within the District due to viability arguments. As discussed within our other matter statements, there is a high level of need within Kirklees for both affordable housing and housing for older persons, and failing to identify sites which can assist the Council in meeting these needs, would render the plan unsound.
- 1.3 **Issue 8b** queries whether the exceptional circumstances exist in order to justify Green Belt release. NPPF paragraph 83 states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. Inspection of the existing supply of both housing and employment land within the urban area of Kirklees has found that Green Belt land must be considered if housing and employment needs are to be met.

- 1.4 Priory Asset Management fully support the Council's review of the Green Belt to identify areas to be released for development, although it is considered that the Council should be more ambitious in delivering growth and meeting the objectively assessed needs of the District. In order to rectify the Council's over-reliance of windfall development, and apply the required 20% lapse rate, as suggested within our Matter 4 statement, further Green Belt should be released if the Council's identified OAN is to be met.
- 1.5 **Issue 8d** considers whether the Council's approach to assessing potential development sites in the Green Belt is soundly based and in line with national guidance. To this we respond that we have reviewed the Green Belt Review in relation to our clients site. The Kirklees Green Belt Review and Outcomes Report 2015 recommended a very small change to the Green Belt boundary to the north-east of the site: 0.0431 ha is removed and 0.069 ha added to the south-east along Halifax Rd (Ref 1923_04 Grid Ref SE197237) described as 'Boundary amended to follow physical features'.
- 1.6 The study has also undertaken a review of the Green Belt edge so to assess the degree to which the land performs a Green Belt function. The subject site comprises CK1 and HT1 and the 'edges are tested for constraints and against Green Belt Purposes.
- 1.7 Both sites clearly pass the constraints test and score 3 for the Green Belt Purposes, which is half way between 'less important' and 'more important' and does not restrict development. Therefore, the subject site clearly does not perform a major Green Belt function. In relation to Test 2b (checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas), the text refers to the boundaries providing containment and not contributing to the merging of settlements. However, HT1 scores highly against Test 2c (safeguarding the countryside from Encroachment) and refers to a strong urban edge. The methodology for the Green Belt Review provides very limited information on how the sites are scored with no obvious framework to guide the reader as to how conclusions were reached. This is one example that demonstrates that the methodology for the Green Belt Assessment is overly simplistic.
- 1.8 The Rejected Site Options document states the following in relation to H564:

"The site is located in a restricted area of green belt that prevents the merger of major settlements. However the existing settlement pattern and land use features mean that this site, although large, could be released without compromising the strategic role of the green belt. It is well contained and largely bounded by existing settlement. The northern boundary is an open watercourse which would be a reasonable new green belt boundary and to the east Quaker Lane presents a strong boundary that would prevent sprawl. This site appears as countryside but its relationship to the wider countryside is limited by the degree of containment."

- 1.9 In light of the exceptional circumstances to realign Green Belt having been justified, the land at H564 and H1796 are sustainable options to meet the need for market, affordable and elderly housing. Despite scoring well, the site has not been allocated for development.
- 1.10 In preparing the Publication Version of the Local Plan, Kirklees Council should have assessed the rejected sites in light of new information to ensure that those sites which offered the most sustainable and deliverable development options were allocated. Site H564 has few constraints to development, makes a limited contribution to the Green Belt, and would assist the Council in meeting their identified elderly housing need.

Hourigan Connolly
31 August 2017