

Matter 6  
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**Wycombe District Local Plan  
Matter 6 – Green Belt**

**By Strutt & Parker  
On behalf of IM Land  
Land at Berwick Road, Marlow**

## Introduction

1. This hearing statement has been prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of IM Land, who have residential development interests in two sites on the edge of Marlow: Land at Seymour Court Road and Land at Berwick Road. This statement relates to Land at Berwick Road.
2. The site was promoted to the Council in response to consultation on the draft Local Plan, and is capable of accommodating 30-40 dwellings on part of the site in a sustainable location on the edge of the built up area of Marlow.
3. This statement responds to the Inspector's Matter 6: Green Belt, due to be discussed at the hearing sessions on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

### **1. Are the Green Belt Assessments (GB1 and GB2) soundly based, justified and consistent with national policy?**

1. IM Land made a comprehensive submission to the draft Local Plan objecting to the both the approach taken to the site assessment process and the lack of consistency and rigor with which it was carried out. This included objections to the Green Belt Part 2 Assessment (GB1), Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Site Assessment Report (AONB1) and the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HEL51).
2. Subsequent to the Regulation 19 consultation the Council has published additional evidence in support of its site selection process in Appendix 21 of the Statement of Consultation titled Site Assessment work arising from Regulation 19 Representations (WDL10.21). IM Land does not consider that this additional evidence addresses its concerns and has raised an objection to this late evidence, which has not been consulted on, in its hearing statement on Matter 2.
3. In summary, IM Land consider that by excluding 'General Areas,' identified in the Green Belt Study Part 1, that were not 'weak' or 'relatively weak' in terms of the Green Belt purposes from the Part 2 study the Council has mistakenly prevented itself from considering 'exceptional circumstances' in relation to a large number of potential sites in sustainable locations.
4. Furthermore, the Council has misinterpreted the requirements of paragraph 83 of the NPPF. The Council has created very specific criteria against which it assess the exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release, which unjustifiably constrain the sites considered suitable by the Council for Green Belt release.

#### **1.c How were the removal sites identified and assessed?**

1. It is IM Land's understanding that the Council went through the following process to identify sites to remove sites from the Green Belt.

2. The Green Belt Study Part 2 was the mechanism for identifying potential sites for release.
3. According to paragraph 2.5 of that study the inputs to this process were:
  - a. Those areas identified in the Part One Assessment as performing 'weakly/relatively weakly' against Green Belt purposes
  - b. Sites actively promoted by landowners or developers
  - c. Other wider sense check sites identified by Council officers
4. In other words the Council has not undertaken a comprehensive exercise to review the potential for Green Belt release in sustainable locations, but has merely reviewed weakly performing areas and sites promoted to them.
5. The Council assessed these sites against a set of criteria, with the Council considering that exceptional circumstances will not exist unless all four of the criteria were met. The criteria were:
  - i. The location is capable of contributing to sustainable development
  - ii. The site is capable of removal from the Green Belt (acceptable having regard to the purposes of the Green Belt, the general extent of the Green Belt and the requirement for permanent and robust boundaries
  - iii. The site is a deliverable or developable housing site
  - iv. The OAN is not being met from other sources of supply and the scale of unmet need balanced against the contribution the site makes to the quality and function of the Green Belt weighs in favour of release.
6. It should be noted that the deliverability and developability criteria differ from that used in the AONB Assessment and the HELAA. For AONB sites it included consideration of whether the development would be considered major development in the AONB.
7. If the site was considered capable of removal from the Green Belt and otherwise developable it was then assessed in the HELAA. In other words the Council has not allowed itself to assess the relative merits of sites and their ability to contribute to the spatial strategy against the full suite of constraints in its HELAA.