

## GREENBELT INFORMATION

To add to the recent exchanges about the proposed review of greenbelt boundaries by Wirral Council, I would like to inform people of changes to the procedure for greenbelt boundary review contained within the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF2), published **24 July 2018**. This should be helpful if you are involved in a campaign to protect greenbelt land in your locality.

**NPPF2 paragraph 136** (formerly paragraph 83) states: "**Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans**". This new requirement for exceptional circumstances to be "**fully evidenced and justified**" reaffirms the Government's support for the preservation of the greenbelt.

**NPPF2 paragraph 137** establishes new tests: "Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority [this might be the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority or it could be Wirral alone] should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies [by a Planning Inspector during the Local Plan inquiry], which will take into account the preceding paragraph, and whether the strategy:

- a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- b) optimises the density of development in line with the policies of chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
- c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground."

So, to protect the greenbelt, it may be necessary to increase development density in existing urban areas (building further upwards, basically). More residential development is needed in Birkenhead and Wallasey, where most of the redundant brownfield land is located. There needs to be a wholesale review of the siting of employment and light industrial land to maximise the opportunities for residential development in areas adjacent to the docks. In fact, the current draft Local Plan has policies for exactly this - calling them 'satellite communities' that would be encouraged to grow up around the Wirral Waters site.

According to the initial application of the Government's new housing supply/demand methodology, Liverpool City Council and Knowsley Borough Council needed to identify more housing land, whereas Wirral and Sefton needed to identify less. This may well have changed now that Peel Ports has stated that it will only be building a fraction of the dwellings it has received planning permission for. Nevertheless, there is still a significant opportunity for the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to assess how constituent authorities that need to identify more land could assist those with an overprovision or relevant restrictions (e.g. greenbelt preservation) by assimilating some of this demand into their own supply figures.

In addition to fighting individual proposals, civil society groups should be preparing their evidence for the Local Plan inquiry and would be well-advised to prepare their evidence with NPPF2 paragraphs 136-138 in mind.

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