Hearing Statement – Issue 4: Green Belt

Bolsover Local Plan

On behalf of Waystone Ltd

December 2018

1. Introduction

1.1. This is a Hearing Statement prepared by Spawforths on behalf of Waystone Ltd in respect of:

- Issue 4: Green Belt

1.2. Waystone has significant land interests in the area and has made representations to earlier stages of the Local Plan process.

1.3. The Inspector’s Issues and Questions are included in bold for ease of reference. The following responses should be read in conjunction with Waystone’s comments upon the Publication version of the Bolsover Local Plan, dated June 2018.

1.4. Waystone has also expressed a desire to attend and participate in Issue 4 of the Examination in Public.
2. **Issue 4 – Green Belt**

**Issue – Is the approach to the Green Belt justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

**Q17) Has the Council’s Local Green Belt Review [EB33 and EB34] been undertaken in a robust manner?**

2.1. Waystone considers that the Green Belt Review (EB34) and Supplementary Assessment (EB33) has been undertaken in a robust manner.

**Q18) How would development of the sites removed from the Green Belt affect Green Belt purposes?**

2.2. The Green Belt in Bolsover District was established in 1955 with the aim of limiting the sprawl from the South Yorkshire conurbation. This Green Belt was incorporated into the Derbyshire Structure Plan in 1990 and has not been reviewed subsequently. The Green Belt in this area has therefore remained largely unchanged since it was first established.

2.3. The Clowne Garden Village proposal is a sustainable mixed-use development, which includes the co-location of employment and housing uses. Development to the north of Clowne is considered, by the Council and Waystone, to represent the most sustainable option for growth. This location is accessible to the motorway, the centre of Clowne and the delivery of transport infrastructure improvements. The proximity of the proposed development site to the M1 Motorway and the employment opportunities at Barlborough Links is also considered to weigh positively in terms of the schemes overall sustainability.

2.4. Releasing a small portion of this strategic site from the Green Belt (circa 15ha) would assist the delivery of a comprehensive link with the existing settlement securing additional cohesion between existing land uses and proposed new development.

2.5. In employment terms, an opportunity to deliver new employment in a location that is attractive and has a proven track record of attracting employment investment/development
(proven by the success of the Waystone scheme at Barlborough Links, which created a broad range of approximately 3,000 jobs across several sectors, Medical, retail, logistics, Tech, training, Service, manufacturing & travel attracting local, regional, National and Inward Investors) has significant benefits. There is a significant and positive economic dynamic to clustering employment and creating a hub for employment growth near to Barlborough Links and the M1 Motorway.

2.6. Furthermore, in relation to Clowne the Local Plan evidence base and settlement hierarchy analysis is clear that the settlement’s current weakness is the lack of business/employment development and growth. The Spatial Strategy is therefore clear that in terms of positive planning Clowne Garden Village would specifically address this weakness by delivering new employment and inward investment. This would enhance the sustainability of the settlement and also make a strong contribution to meeting Local Plan objectives as well as the Framework objectives in terms of economic and social considerations.

2.7. The current Green Belt is related to the north west edge of Clowne and wraps around the northern and eastern edge of Barlborough. The main gap between Clowne and Barlborough is not designated as Green Belt. The elements of the Clowne Garden Village proposal extending into the Green Belt are along the north western edge of the site extending northwards.

2.8. The Clowne Garden Village development assimilates with the settlement edge of Clowne. It therefore would not result in an isolated incursion into the Green Belt. The proposed built form would follow the existing settlement boundary. The proposed scheme on the parcel of land closest to the settlement has a strong relationship with the built-up area and represents a logical rounding-off of the existing settlement edge.

2.9. The Clowne Garden Village proposal would therefore maintain a similar degree of separation between Clowne and Barlborough as the existing situation. The minimum gap between the two settlements remains the same.

2.10. The proposed new Green Belt boundary would utilise the existing mature woodland and tree belts, which will be reinforced by further tree planting. The new and existing woodland area is circa 13ha and will be retained in the Green Belt. The inclusion of landscape planting alongside woodland tree belts and mature woodland would create defensible and permanent boundaries maintaining separation between the two settlements and ensuring a robust
Green Belt function is retained. Therefore, the use of a small area of Green Belt will not compromise its role and purpose.

2.11. The proposed employment area is situated in a well screened and relatively enclosed visual envelope. This part of the Green Belt is already separated from the wider Green Belt by existing woodland and tree belts/hedgerows. The woodland would supply substantive visual containment to the proposed built development as well as providing a natural, permanent and defensible Green Belt boundary. In overall terms, the use of Green Belt land in this location would not have an impact on the wider Green Belt’s role and purpose.

2.12. The proposed employment elements along the western edge of Clowne Garden Village can be designed, controlled and landscaped to minimise any potential effects. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that the Green Belt in this location is not strategically important in seeking to avoid the coalescence of settlements.

2.13. The proposed Clowne Garden Village scheme shows substantial proposed tree planting, woodland creation and landscaping along this edge. The existing mature woodland, Forresters Plantation and the new tree planting will remain in the Green Belt. This planting will supplement existing woodland blocks minimising visual impacts and provide a permanent and defensible Green Belt boundary.

2.14. Furthermore, the Bolsover Partial Green Belt Review: Supplementary Assessment (EB33) demonstrates that the parcels of land considered for removal from the Green Belt were assessed to not contribute to preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another and therefore would not compromise the key local purpose of preventing Barlborough and Clowne from merging. Furthermore, the site would not compromise the wider strategic purposes of the North East Derbyshire Green Belt to assist in the urban regeneration of Sheffield and Rotherham.

2.15. The evidence therefore demonstrates that none of the purposes of the Green Belt are unacceptably compromised by the proposed Clowne Garden Village scheme. Therefore, the proposed revision to the Green Belt is justifiable in order to facilitate the delivery of this strategically important scheme.
Q19) **Have exceptional circumstances been demonstrated to support the removal of sites from the Green Belt?**

2.16. Waystone considers that due to the significant need and demand for housing and aspirations for economic and housing growth there is clearly a requirement for a strategic review of the approach to locations for future growth within the district. In order to plan appropriately for the plan period there is a need to review the Green Belt boundaries.

2.17. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that local authorities should meet their objectively assessed housing needs in full. Furthermore, the Framework’s core planning principles in paragraph 17 states that planning should “proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth”. This is reflected in the Housing White Paper: Fixing our Broken Housing Market (2017) which states that “local planning authorities have a responsibility to do all they can to meet their housing requirements”.

2.18. It is clear from the Local Plan evidence base that there is a need for development at Clowne of the scale and nature proposed at Clowne Garden Village, particularly in terms of employment and regeneration needs.

2.19. The Clowne Garden Village scheme represents sustainable development and would assist in delivering the objectives of the Local Plan strategy. The draft Local Plan and its evidence base recognises that Clowne is one of the most sustainable and viable locations for growth in the district. This is also evidenced by the growth created nearby in Barlborough over the last 20 years and its significant contribution to growth in the Bolsover District. The location of the proposal, therefore, accords with the approach of the spatial strategy. The Clowne Garden Village proposal will make the existing settlement of Clowne more sustainable, particularly in relation to employment land and jobs and the pressing need for a new primary school. This is reflected in the Sustainability Appraisal (SD3).
2.20. There is a need to deliver regeneration to Clowne, including employment provision, infrastructure improvements to the highway network and new education facilities. The Clowne Garden Village allocation allows the Council to plan strategically and positively for infrastructure needs in the area. The delivery of a strategic scheme to the north of Clowne is vital therefore to the overall soundness of the Local Plan and has transformational benefits and is necessary to ensure the sustainable growth and regeneration of Clowne. The Socio-Economic Paper as part of the planning application explains that the development proposes a mix of industrial and commercial development, a local centre and primary school, health and care facilities, retirement development and additional education facilities offsite. The Socio-Economic Paper explains that the expected direct employment creation attributed to the development is circa 2,100 jobs plus a further circa 600 indirect job opportunities in the local area.

2.21. The Socio Economic Paper therefore concludes that the effect of the proposed scheme is therefore of local and regional scale of moderate beneficial significance due to the scale of jobs that will be created and induced, along with the positive economic impacts over the baseline position.

2.22. The overarching benefits of the scheme are therefore:

- Providing a wide choice of housing.
- Providing short and long term employment opportunities.
- Extensive local and area wide infrastructure, including a new western gateway, local road and junction improvements.
- Delivering a new primary school.
- Creating additional capacity within the secondary school.
- Facilitate a local centre with community facilities.
- Create formal and informal green spaces and habitat creation.
- Deliver neighbourhoods that are safe and accessible.
- Increase the GVA and provide a sustainable economic base for existing and new facilities.

2.23. In light of the above, Waystone consider that the strategic need for employment, housing and regeneration justifies the allocation of a sustainable mixed-use scheme to the north of Clowne. Therefore, this requires the removal and development of a small area of land in the Green Belt.
2.24. The Local Plan evidence base identifies a need for regeneration at Clowne, particularly in addressing employment deficiencies and delivering infrastructure improvements. Clowne Garden Village is therefore a unique opportunity to deliver sustainable economic growth, which is deliverable and accessible and attractive to developers/investors. The northern end of Clowne is particularly accessible to the motorway network alongside good connectivity potential to the centre of Clowne, which all point towards a focus of growth to the north.

2.25. The Council’s Sustainability Appraisal (October 2016) assesses Clowne Garden Village (Site SS5) demonstrates the site’s likely benefits, including:

- Circa 20ha of employment land will attract inward investment, stimulate additional jobs growth and could also support proposals supported by the Sheffield City Region Strategic Economic Plan, the M1 Strategic Growth Corridor and the D2N2 LEP Strategic Economic Plan (2014). Significant positive effects have been identified in respect of economic development;
- The provision of a new primary school within the site and greenspaces means the proposal should have a significant positive effect on education, regeneration, and health and wellbeing.

2.26. Furthermore, as part of the preparation of the Local Plan and the planning application for the site the scheme was assessed against the five tests set out in the Calverton Parish Council vs Greater Nottingham Councils [2015] EWHC 10784 case. This sets out a number of matters that should be identified and dealt with in order to ascertain whether ‘exceptional circumstances’ exist to justify rolling back the Green Belt.

2.27. The Council’s Green Belt Position Paper (PP4) and the planning application Committee Report (appended to the Statement of Common Ground) set out the analysis and conclusions of the assessment and demonstrate the exceptional circumstances.

2.28. It is these conclusions and the combined circumstances of a highly sustainable location for growth alongside delivering the Local Plan Objectives of addressing Clowne’s employment, housing and infrastructure needs. Therefore, Waystone support the conclusions of a small area of Green Belt release in this location.
Q20) Should the Local Plan reaffirm the commitment to the maintenance of the role of the Green Belt in both Policies SS9 and SS10?

2.29. Waystone has no specific comment in relation to this issue.

Q21) Would the changes proposed to the Green Belt lead to Clowne and Barlborough coalescing?

2.30. Waystone do not consider that the proposed changes to the Green Belt would lead to the coalescence of Clowne and Barlborough.

2.31. The Green Belt Review and evidence base demonstrate that a strategic gap will be maintained between the two settlements and that the proposed Green Belt release to the north of Clowne will not encroach into that gap.

2.32. As stated in response to Q18 the current Green Belt is related to the north west edge of Clowne and wraps around the northern and eastern edge of Barlborough. The main gap between Clowne and Barlborough is not designated as Green Belt. The elements of the Clowne Garden Village proposal extending into the Green Belt are along the north western edge of the site extending northwards.

2.33. The Clowne Garden Village development assimilates with the settlement edge of Clowne. It therefore would not result in an isolated incursion into the Green Belt. The proposed built form would follow the existing settlement boundary. The proposed scheme on the parcel of land closest to the settlement has a strong relationship with the built-up area and represents a logical rounding-off of the existing settlement edge.

2.34. The Clowne Garden Village proposal would therefore maintain a similar degree of separation between Clowne and Barlborough as the existing situation. The minimum gap between the two settlements remains the same. Therefore, there is no coalescence of settlements.
Q22) Is Policy SS10 consistent with national policy? In particular, should Policy SS10 refer to the ‘purposes’ rather than ‘purpose’ of the Green Belt?

2.35. Waystone has no specific comment in relation to this issue.