

Matter 6

**Gedling Borough Council
Local Plan Examination**

Statement on Behalf of

**Mr Steve Walker
Ref: 14343137**

(Monday 27th February 2017 – 10 a.m.)

**Matter 6
Housing Allocations**



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Matter 6: Housing Allocations

Issue 6a: General Questions

Q6. For those sites that have been removed from the Green Belt, have exceptional circumstances been demonstrated to enable the alteration of existing Green Belt boundaries? Have all potential sites in the Green Belt been considered for inclusion based on clear criteria?

In dealing with the Green Belt; policy 3 of the Core Strategy explicitly states that Part 2 Local Plans will review the Green Belt boundaries to meet development needs. To that extent, the strategic growth needs of the Borough form the basis for the exceptional circumstances necessitating Green Belt release.

It is logical that Green Belt boundaries are reviewed to enable sustainable development in line with the spatial strategy and other sustainable aspirations. As such, we support the principle of a Green Belt review.

However, the Council in their Local Planning Document has focussed only on amending the boundaries relating to larger, strategic sites and safeguarded land. The opportunity to carry out a comprehensive and robust review of all villages, tidying up any anomalies as exceptional circumstances, has been missed.

With reference to our client's site the Local Plan Document LPD/REG/04 states: *'Regarding 75 Lambley Lane in Burton Joyce, there has been ongoing correspondence between the landowner and planning officers. It is not proposed to change the Green Belt boundary in this location on the grounds that to take the site out of the Green Belt a significantly larger area of land would also need to be released in order to follow defensible boundaries.'*

This does not amount to a critical assessment of the Green Belt functions of the site, to identify if exceptional circumstances exist. Rather, it betrays the fact that the Green Belt review has simply been about accommodating potential strategic housing sites rather than a comprehensive review of settlement boundaries. This failure to formally review the Green Belt, particularly around Burton Joyce, emphasises the fact that the Plan has not been positively prepared, in accordance with the local and national policy requirements.

It is relevant, by way of a clear example, to consider our client's land to the rear of 75 Lambley Lane, in the context of the Green Belt.

The purposes of including land within the Green Belt is defined in the NPPF, which states, at paragraph 85, that Green Belts should not include land that is not necessary to keep permanently open; be satisfied that boundaries will not need to be altered; and define boundaries clearly.

The inclusion of the land to the rear of 75 Lambley Lane, when the Green Belt boundary was established, was simply erroneous. The land is not and never has been

in agricultural use since the 1960's. The land forms part of the single curtilage of 75 Lambley Lane, it is well screened, has no special merit and it is of low grade. Its character is one that is common of garden land therefore, it is significantly different to that of the wider countryside and the adjacent Green Belt designation. Not only that, but the adjoining belts of woodland offer a significant and robust, defensible boundary, based on clearly recognisable, physical features, rather than cutting through our client's garden demise, as it does currently.

The rationale for the retention of this site as Green Belt is unclear. It follows that we believe that the release of land here would be in line with the exceptional circumstance tests set out at paragraph 85 of the NPPF, in so far as:

- The Green Belt boundary was drawn without using skill and local knowledge, or using defined boundaries – clearly using physical features that are readily recognisable;
- The site to the rear of 75 Lambley Lane forms, and always has formed, part of the overall garden and demise (domestic curtilage), as such, the ownership boundary offers a more logical and robust Green Belt boundary;
- The site is not wooded, unlike much of the adjoining land. A copse screens the site from view and provides a recognisable physical boundary;
- The site exhibits a very different character to the surrounding undeveloped land which forms part of the designated Mature Landscape Area and Site of Interest for Nature Conservation – The site, exceptionally in this location, falls within neither of these designations and is expressly recognised as 'distinct';
- The appropriateness of 'tidying up' Green Belt boundary anomalies, where possible, has been recognised by Planning Inspectors in regards to sites elsewhere.

In light of obvious non-conformity with the adopted Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework, the soundness of the Plan is jeopardised.

Local Planning Document Policy LPD63 sets out the minimum housing target during the Plan period, 55 homes are to be distributed in Burton Joyce, thus establishing the principle of residential development in this locality albeit to meet a local need only.

It is accepted that Burton Joyce is not identified as a location for significant housing growth. It is however, recognised as a sustainable location moreover, as set out above, National Planning Practice Guidance advises that: "all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas - and so blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence."

Policy LPD68 allocates two sites for residential development in Burton Joyce and at supporting paragraph 7.3 states that 'in some cases, it has been considered that there were the exceptional circumstances required to amend the boundary of the Green Belt allowing residential development'.

The demonstration of exceptional circumstances is no more obvious than in the case of the land to the rear of 75 Lambley Lane.

In light of obvious non-conformity with the adopted Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework and the failure of the Council to conduct a thorough Green Belt review, the soundness of the Plan is questioned.