

Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy Examination: October 2012

Statement from CPRE Hertfordshire (Representor Id: 498429)

Issue 8: Meeting Community Needs, question 8.2

1. I Jacqueline Veater, BA, BTP, MRTPI, represent CPRE Hertfordshire
2. This statement complements our original representations on the Core Strategy Pre-submission, which are still relevant except where updated by this statement and seeks to address the Inspectors relevant questions as set out in his guidance note.

Question 8.2: Is the Council's approach to the provision of community facilities satisfactory? Will community needs be met? Policy CS23 refers to Education Zones being defined in the Green Belt for new school facilities. How will this be achieved? School facilities will also be supported on Open Land, which is defined as areas of open space over 1 ha, protected from development. Is this approach justified?

3. The Council's approach to the provision of new community facilities as dual use facilities with new schools through the allocation of sites within the Green Belt is not satisfactory. Schools and indoor recreational facilities constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt Exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated for any inappropriate development in the Green Belt and this has not been done.
4. Given the volatility of population change in Hertfordshire it is impossible to plan for new school places 20 years ahead. If in the future it should prove necessary to provide schools outside the urban area then very special circumstances would need to be demonstrated to support a change in the Green Belt boundary and all options would have to be examined at that time.
5. A recent appeal decision in East Hertfordshire reference APP/J1915/A/11/2149483 is relevant in that it concerns the location of new school facilities in the Green Belt which would release land for housing within the existing built-up area of Bishops Stortford. The Inspector attributed only significant weight to the fact that the proposal would achieve the required educational objectives and at a reduced cost to the public purse, because there appeared to be other alternative methods of achieving

the desired objective which would give rise to less harm in planning terms. These considerations he decided did not outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

6. In addition, it should be noted that the northwest education zone in Berkhamsted, directly abuts the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any development, irrespective of whether it is appropriate, should not be permitted to have an adverse impact on this sensitive area. Before any proposal is accepted to locate new school accommodation in the Green Belt a thorough assessment should be made to ascertain whether there is sufficient land available with the cartilage of existing schools to develop buildings to accommodate additional school places. Bridgewater School, Berkhamsted within the northwest education zone has extensive grounds including land that is neither built on nor used as school playing fields.
7. Notwithstanding the above, a report on educational provision in Berkhamsted is due to go to the Hertfordshire CC Cabinet meeting on Monday 23rd September 2012. It is expected that following consideration of this issue at the Education and Skills Cabinet Panel Meeting on 19th September, the Panel will recommend to the Cabinet that they approve the proposal to move from a three tier to a two tier education system in Berkhamsted. This will include changing the age range provided for at 9 existing schools. If this report is agreed, which is the expected outcome, the provision of two Education Zones on the edge of Berkhamsted will not be necessary. In this case there will be no justification whatsoever for establishing new education zones and building new school provision in the Green Belt.

Summary

- The release of large Green Belt sites for new built development in the form of new schools in tandem with redevelopment of existing school sites for housing is unsound.
- The proposal is not sound because it is neither justified nor consistent with national policy.
- References to defined education zones within the Green Belt should be deleted and 'Facilities will not be permitted if they conflict with Green Belt objectives and purposes.' added into Policy CS23.

- Add “ subject to compliance with Green Belt and countryside policies in the case of facilities outside existing settlements’ into the first sentence of paragraph 15.21