

CHAPTER 6 - GREEN BELT AND SAFEGUARDED LAND POLICIES

GB INTRODUCTION

Objections to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
220	O	001	GB		Mrs E Ainscough	Emery Planning Partnership Ltd	WMBC 220

Note

Objection 220/001 is dealt with in the section of this report which relates to policy GB1.

GB1 GREEN BELT

Objections to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
118	O	001	GB	1	Mr D. P. Bromilow	Acland Bracewell Surveyors Ltd	WMBC 118 GB1
134	O	001	GB	1	Mrs V. Keating		WMBC 134 GB1
179	O	001	GB	1	Mr Alan Stubbs		WIGAN MBC 179/A
219	O	001	GB	1	Mrs M P Anten		WMBC 219 GB1
220	O	007	GB	1	Mrs E Ainscough	Emery Planning Partnership Ltd	WMBC 220
222	O	001	GB	1	Jupiter Investments Ltd		WIGAN MBC 222/A
390	O	001	GB	1	Mark Crompton		WIGAN MBC
424	O	038	GB	1	Government Office for the North		WMBC 424 GONW
456	O	001	GB	1	Salford City Council		WMBC 456
467	O	005	GB	1	Wilson Connolly	Barton Wilmore Planning Partnership	WMBC 467
539	O	002	GB	1	Mr J Abbey – Brook Head Farm	Acorus Rural Property Services	WMBC 539/A
572	O	039	GB	1	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
572	O	040	GB	1	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
572	O	041	GB	1	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
572	O	044	GB	1	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
572	O	079	GB	1	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
583	O	023	GB	1	Peel Investment (North) Ltd	Halliwell Landau	WIGAN MBC 583/A
593	O	001	GB	1	Hallam Land Management Ltd		WMBC 593
593	O	011	GB	1	Hallam Land Management Ltd		WMBC 593
681	O	001	GB	1	Burtonwood Brewery Plc	Edmund Kirby	WIGAN MBC 681/A
697	O	002	GB	1	Viridor Waste Management Ltd		WMBC 697
698	O	008	GB	1	The Trustees of Legh Estate	Matthews and Goodman	WIGAN MBC 698/A
701	O	001	GB	1	David Moreno Masey		WMBC 701 GB1
721	O	001	GB	1	Milnes Gaskell Estate	How Planning	WMBC 721
726	O	001	GB	1	United Utilities Facilities and Property Services		WMBC 726/A

Draft Deposit Objections Unconditionally Withdrawn

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
424	O	002	GB	1	Government Office for the North		
572	O	007	GB	1	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		
585	O	001	GB	1	Wainhomes (North West) Ltd	Sedgwick Associates	WMBC 585/A

Objections to Revised Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
583	O	034	GB	1	Peel Investments North Ltd	Halliwell Landau	WIGAN MBC 583/A
747	O	046	GB	1	Wigan Borough Action Group		WIGAN MBC 747/A

747	O	034	GB	1	Wigan Borough Action Group		WIGAN MBC 747/A
747	O	035	GB	1	Wigan Borough Action Group		WIGAN MBC 747/A

Supporters of Draft Deposit

Ref No	A	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
140	S	001	GB	1	Nick Trotter		
345	S	001	GB	1	Mr and Mrs Morgan		
421	S	015	GB	1	Mrs E M Stephenson		
437	S	007	GB	1	Steve Fowler – NWTB	Paul Butler Associates	
449	S	001	GB	1	Timothy Eastham		

Note

Objections 583/023, 583/034 and 424/038 are dealt with in the section of this report which relates to policy EM1A12.

Objections 572/044 and 390/001 are dealt with in the section of this report which relates to policy GB2.

Objection 456/001 is dealt with in the section of this report which relates to policies EM1A12 and EM1A26.

Main Issues

Whether this policy is appropriate, having regard to:

- the title of the policy;
- the structure of the policy;
- conformity with the advice of PPG2;
- the merits of designating particular areas of proposed safeguarded land as green belt;
- the merits of extending green belt coverage onto unallocated land;
- the merits of re-wording policy GB1 to make provision for in-fill residential development within the green belt;
- the definition of the green belt boundary at the southern edge of Abram;
- the definition of the green belt boundary adjacent to Wigan Road, Shevington;
- the definition of the green belt boundary to the rear of the Holt Arms public house, Crank Road, Billinge;
- the definition of the green belt boundary on land opposite Sandup Farm, Lowton;
- the definition of the green belt boundary at Saddle Hill Farm, Standish;
- the merits of removing from the green belt the land at Leigh Fire Station;
- the merits of removing from the green belt the land lying between Atherleigh Way and St Helens Road, Leigh;
- the merits of removing from the green belt land at Helen Street/Hell Nook, Golbourne;

- the merits of removing from the green belt the land at Marklands Farm, Manchester Road, Astley;
- the merits of removing from the green belt the land to the rear of Blenheim Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield;
- the merits of removing from the green belt land at Hindley Green;
- the merits of removing from the green belt the land at Spring Park, Wigan;
- the merits of removing from the green belt the land at Wigan Road, Standish;
- the merits of removing from the green belt the land at Chorley Road Waste Water Pumping Station, Standish.

Inspector's Considerations and Conclusions

The title of the policy

6.1 Proposed policy GB1 provides that, within the green belt defined on the proposals map, approval will not be given except in very special circumstances for the construction of new buildings for purposes other than those specified. Other forms of development, including changes of use, will not be approved unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the green belt. Proposals will not be allowed within or conspicuous from the green belt where they would injure the visual amenities of that area.

6.2 In the FDD version of the plan, policy GB1 was entitled 'Green Belt Policy'. At RDD stage the word 'Policy' was deleted. An objector argues that it should be reinstated. That word is, however, superfluous given the clarification on page 8 that wording presented in that format should be regarded as a policy.

The structure of the policy

6.3 The third paragraph of RDD policy GB1 provides that proposals will not be allowed within or conspicuous from the green belt where they would injure the visual amenities of the green belt which, although they would not prejudice its main purpose, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design.

6.4 An objector argues that this paragraph should be presented as a separate policy and include further text relating to the areas of green belt in adjoining LPAs. He also seeks the insertion of cross references to other policies. The third paragraph of GB1 derives from the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 3.15). It is an integral aspect of green belt policy and should, for that reason, remain as a component part of policy GB1. The role of Wigan MBC is limited to providing a planning framework for its administrative area. It would not be appropriate for its UDP to seek to influence decisions elsewhere. The co-ordination of policy in areas wider than individual LPAs is the role of RSS. PPG12 advises that development plans should be succinct. This consideration militates against over-elaborate cross-referencing. The need for this is removed by the advice of the RDD introduction that the plan should be read as a whole.

Conformity with the advice of PPG2

6.5 An objector argues that policy GB1 should replicate national policy set out in PPG2 unless a different form of wording can be justified. PPG12 (paragraph 3.3) advises, however, that LPAs should not repeat large sections of PPGs. The emphasis should be on producing development plan policies which implement national and regional policy at the local level. The objector argues that the policy should anticipate all forms of development, including that for Waste Management, in the green belt. PPG12 (paragraph 3.14) advises, however, that policies in development plans should concentrate on those matters which are likely to provide the basis for considering planning applications or for determining the conditions to be attached to planning permissions. Excessive detail should be avoided. Waste Management policies are presented in Chapter 14 of the RDD. Policy GB1 does, in any case, provide the framework for the determination of Waste Management applications in the green belt. These can be approved if very special circumstances are demonstrated, they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the green belt.

6.6 The objector argues that the fact that development outside the green belt is visually conspicuous from within it is no reason to withhold planning permission. PPG2 (paragraph 3.15) advises that the amenities of green belts should not be injured by proposals for development within or conspicuous from the green belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in the green belt, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design. The objector argues that the phrase 'preserve the openness of the green belt' should be replaced with 'maintain the openness of the green belt'. The RDD wording does, however, reflect the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 3.4).

The merits of designating particular areas of proposed safeguarded land as green belt

6.7 An objector argues that land adjacent to the A580 at Astley; Rothwells Farm north of Golbourne; land by the A580 at Lowton; land by the A580 east of Lane Head; land by the A580 at Pocket Nook and land east of Thames Avenue, Leigh, up to the line of Pennington Brook, which is all proposed as safeguarded land (policy GB2) in the RDD should be re-designated as green belt ie that the adjoining area of approved green belt should be extended to include them. He contends that this would enhance the protection of this land from development and would complement the intention of the UDP to give priority to the development of previously developed land within the urban area.

6.8 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that detailed green belt boundaries defined in adopted development plans should be altered only exceptionally. That same guidance (paragraph 2.12 and annex B) advises that, when preparing development plans, LPAs should satisfy themselves that green belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period. In order to ensure protection of green belts within this longer timescale this will, in some cases, mean safeguarding land between the urban area and the green belt which may be required to meet longer term development needs.

6.9 For the reasons I give in the sections of this report which relate to policies R1A and R1B I have concluded that there is sufficient land available from sites with planning permission, the residential element of proposed mixed-use allocations and the reasonable expectation of windfall sites coming forward on previously developed land within the defined urban area to meet housing development needs within the plan period. Safeguarded land would, however, have a crucial role to play if an undersupply of housing land did arise. My recommendation in relation to policy R1B makes provision in specific circumstances for the allocation of housing land within safeguarded areas following a future review of the development plan. It is, therefore, necessary for safeguarded land to remain in that designation to avoid a possible need for an alteration of green belt boundaries at the end of the plan period. The extension of the green belt, as proposed by the objector, would run counter to this objective of PPG2.

The merits of extending green belt coverage onto unallocated land

6.10 An objector advocates extending the area of the adopted green belt so that it includes unallocated green-field land bounded by the A579 road, Westleigh Brook and Pennington Brook at the rear of Kirkham Road, Leigh. The RDD provides that, because this land is outside the area of the adopted green belt and proposed safeguarded land it should be regarded as part of the defined urban area.

6.11 The objector argues that including this land within the green belt would correct an anomaly in that it would allow the green belt boundary to conform with land ownership boundaries in the area. He notes that the development of the Leigh Sports Village on a site to the north on the east side of the A579 (on land outside the green belt) would erode the openness of the A579 corridor. He argues that, in compensation, it is necessary to secure the long term openness of the land adjacent to Westleigh Brook and Pennington Brook. Such action, he argues, would reinforce the intention of the LPA to give priority to the development of previously developed land within the urban area.

6.12 For the reasons I give in the sections of this report which relate to policies R1A and R1B I have concluded that there is sufficient land available from sites with planning permission, the residential element of proposed mixed-use allocations and the reasonable expectation of windfall sites coming forward on previously developed land within the defined urban area to meet housing development needs during the plan period.

6.13 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that detailed green belt boundaries defined in adopted development plans should be altered only exceptionally. LPAs should satisfy themselves that green belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period.

6.14 The terms of policy R1B, which I endorse, envisage that in the event of an undersupply of housing land, as an exceptional circumstance, the development of green-field sites within the defined urban area would be considered. This development of green-field land in exceptional circumstances is envisaged by PPG3 (paragraph 32). My conclusion on the adequacy of the housing land supply extends only to the period of the

emerging UDP. I am unable to reach a view on the relationship between housing land requirement and supply after that period. There is, therefore, no basis on which I can support the extension of the adopted green belt onto green-field land within the urban area in the confident expectation that, at the next plan review, this reduction in the area of green-field land outside the green belt will not lead to pressure for the release of green belt land for development, contrary to the advice of PPG2. For this reason I conclude that the land bounded by the A579 road, Westleigh Brook and Pennington Brook should not be included within the green belt.

The merits of re-wording policy GB1 to make provision for in-fill residential development within the green belt

6.15 An objector, who seeks to promote the residential development of a gap in the frontage of a sporadic residential development in the green belt along Newton Road to the west of Lane Head, Lowton, argues that policy GB1 should be re-worded to make specific provision for such in-fill development in the green belt. In the interests of consistency he contends that policy R1B should also make reference to this.

6.16 This matter is addressed by PPG2 (paragraph 3.4) which advises that the construction of new buildings within the green belt is inappropriate unless it is for one of several stated purposes. One of these is limited in-filling in existing villages. This guidance is a material consideration which must be taken into account, where relevant, in decisions upon planning applications. The restatement of this element of PPG2 in either policy GB1 or R1B is not justified, given the advice of PPG12 (paragraph 3.3). It is always open to prospective developers to apply for planning permission under the terms of policy GB1 and argue that, in a particular case, a scheme is for limited in-filling within an existing village and is, therefore, appropriate development. For these reasons I conclude that there is no justification for a re-wording of policy GB1 as sought by the objectors.

The definition of the green belt boundary at the southern edge of Abram

6.17 An objector notes that when the green belt boundary as presented on the RDD proposals map is compared in detail with that on the proposals map of the adopted UDP, there are differences in alignment to the west of the junction of Aye Bridge Road and Warrington Road at the southern edge of Abram. At the inquiry the LPA confirmed that it had not intended to make any changes in the boundary of the adopted green belt at this point. A detailed comparison of the two proposals maps shows that the green belt boundary on the RDD proposals map departs from the adopted green belt at a point to the west of No 462 Warrington Road. At this point the adopted green belt boundary cuts diagonally across a rectangular parcel of land, whereas that shown on the RDD proposals map follows its northern and western edges. Also, to the south of this, and to the west of the dwellings between Nos 492 and 518 Warrington Road, the boundary of the adopted green belt follows a gently curving line across several areas of allotments, whereas that shown on the RDD proposals map is drawn further to the east to follow existing land parcel boundaries.

6.18 An objector draws attention to plots A, B, C, D and E on a plan submitted with objection 222/001 which, he argues, are in use as domestic gardens and should, therefore, be excluded from the green belt. At my site inspection I noted that while part of this area was neatly tended and laid out with lawns, the majority was laid out as allotment plots. At the inquiry the objector confirmed that the land subject to his objection is undeveloped land let on annual leases, both to local residents and others for use as recreation space. Although he described these areas as gardens, I noted that only a small part is laid out with lawns or garden plants. The majority is laid out as allotments containing vegetable plots and their associated huts.

6.19 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that once the general extent of a green belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. The statutory provisions under which green belts are designated allow for them to cover not only individual dwellings and their curtilages but also small settlements. The inclusion of allotments and of domestic garden areas to the west of Warrington Road would, therefore, be perfectly consistent with the principles of green belt designation. In fact, in this particular location, the boundary of the adopted green belt has been drawn to exclude almost the entire area of plots A, B, C, D and E as defined by the objector. Only a small area of lawn located some 35m from the rear of the nearest dwelling is included within the adopted green belt. The inclusion of such an area is completely consistent with the principles of green belt designation. It does not prevent its continued use as an area of open land used for recreation.

6.20 At the inquiry the objector confirmed that the present pattern of occupation of the land to the west of the dwellings at the junction of Aye Bridge Road and Warrington Road was established more than 30 years ago. It was, therefore, in place when the boundary of the adopted green belt was defined in 1984. A continuation of that pattern of uses cannot, therefore, be inconsistent with the green belt designation.

6.21 I conclude that no exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify a modification of the boundary of the adopted green belt in this location. Since such a change was not intended by the LPA, the proposals map for the RDD should be modified to revert to the alignment of the boundary of the adopted green belt in this area.

The definition of the green belt boundary adjacent to Wigan Road, Shevington

6.22 The boundary of the adopted green belt at the southern edge of Shevington runs along the south side of Wigan Road and then follows the east and south sides of the St Bernadette's Church building. The LPA proposes to maintain this alignment in the RDD. An objector argues that it should be moved some distance to the south to exclude from the green belt an area of open land around his dwelling (No 17 Wigan Road) and also part of the field to the south of the Church with a view to its future residential development. PPG12 (paragraph 2.6) advises that once the general extent of a green belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.

6.23 The objector contends that his proposed new alignment would provide a more defensible boundary for the green belt. It would, however, replace a road line and the immediate curtilage of a prominent Church building with a boundary which is, at present, marked by an intermittent hedgerow along its eastern part and by no feature whatever along its western part. At this latter point the objector's proposed boundary would be an arbitrary line across an open expanse of farm land. I conclude that, in terms of defensibility, there is no benefit to be derived from the objector's proposed alignment.

6.24 The objector notes that, in the past, the land which he proposes to exclude from the green belt was on two occasions granted outline planning permission for residential development, but these were never implemented. These permissions were granted in the 1960s and 1970s. They pre-date the adoption of the green belt boundary in this area. They also pre-date the advice of PPG3 which seeks to promote the residential development of previously developed land within the built-up area. Green-field land beyond the edge of the built-up area, such as that proposed by the objector for exclusion from the green belt, is now accorded a low priority for development by both national and regional planning guidance. As I demonstrate in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A there is sufficient land available for housing without developing this particular area.

6.25 The objector argues that the inclusion of the site in the green belt promotes none of the stated purposes of designation. It does, however, in my view prevent the merging of neighbouring towns and safeguards the countryside from further encroachment. He contends that the land which he proposes to be excluded from the green belt has a different character from the area to the south of his proposed boundary revision. The western part of the area he seeks to exclude from the green belt is, however, agricultural land identical in appearance to the land to the south. The remainder is grassland, part mowed and part rough at the time of my site inspection. This has an open rural character and I note that the most important attribute of green belts is their openness.

6.26 The objector describes this area as a domestic garden to his home but the LPA confirms that it has been the subject of a planning application for change of use to form part of the objector's domestic curtilage. This was refused and the land should, for the most part, be regarded as open countryside. The objector refers to the recent construction of a new house to the west of the Church in a position which, he argues, demonstrates that the land he proposes for removal from the green belt has an urban character. That new dwelling is adjacent to the part of the area which the objector proposes for exclusion from the green belt which is part of a very extensive area of agricultural land. It is visually distinct from the area of rough and mowed grassland which comprises the eastern part of his site. This degree of separation ensures that the new dwelling has no effect on the open rural character of the objector's land as a whole.

6.27 The objector refers to the proposal of the LPA to exclude the land immediately to the south of the Church from the green belt as part of its proposals for the now adopted UDP. That proposal was rejected by the then inspector because the resulting green belt boundary would be unrecognisable and illogical. For the reasons I have given I come to

the same conclusion in respect of that same part of the objector's proposed new green belt boundary. For these reasons, I conclude that there are no exceptional circumstances sufficient to justify the modification of the adopted green belt in this location.

The definition of the green belt boundary to the rear of the Holt Arms Public House, Crank Road, Billinge

6.28 An objector argues that some 3.3ha of land to the north west of the junction of Crank Road and Upholland Road, Billinge, should be removed from the adopted green belt with a view to its residential development. At the inquiry a discrepancy between the various plans submitted by the objector was resolved to clarify that the objection relates to the area shown on the objector's Appendix 1, i.e. to an area of rough grassland which excludes the buildings, car park and bowling green of the Holt Arms Public House.

6.29 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that once the general extent of a green belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. The objector argues that the RDD makes insufficient provision for residential development and, as a consequence, there is a need for additional allocations of land for this purpose. He refers to the retail and public facilities in the adjacent settlements of Longshaw and Higher End. He argues that a residential development of his site would be in a sustainable location.

6.30 For the reasons I give in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A I have concluded that there is no need for such allocations. The objector doubts that the housing element of the mixed use allocations at the Wigan Pier Quarter and Bickershaw Colliery will come forward until late in the plan period. For the reasons I give in relation to policy R1A I consider that the likely margin of supply over requirement is sufficient to nullify the effect of any delayed development if this did arise. The objector's site is, in any case, green-field land. Even if a need for additional residential allocations had been established it would, in accordance with the advice of PPG3, be afforded a relatively low priority as an urban extension. Even if a need for the release of green-field land had been established, consideration would be given, in accordance with the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 12.12 and annexe B) to the use of safeguarded land before green belt sites such as this.

6.31 The objector has undertaken an appraisal of the character of the local landscape. He refers to the visual enclosure of the site on three sides by the rear of properties on Crank Road, Upholland Road and Smethurst Road and on the fourth side by a mature woodland on elevated land. This, effectively, cuts off the land from view from the wider area of open landscape to the west. For this reason he argues that the site does not contribute to the purposes of the green belt. In particular, its residential development would be apparent from only close vantage points within the built-up area. He contends that it should be regarded as an in-fill site at the urban edge.

6.32 PPG2 (paragraph 1.4) advises that the fundamental aim of green belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The test is not, therefore, whether land can be seen but whether it is open, i.e. undeveloped. PPG2 (paragraph 1.7)

advises that the quality of the landscape is not relevant to the inclusion of land within a green belt or to its continued protection. The residential development of this site would harm the stated purposes of the green belt. The settlements of Longshaw and Higher End are part of the straggling consolidated built-up area of Wigan. Development of the site would fail to check the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area and to safeguard the countryside from further encroachment. By making available a green-field site at the urban edge it would reduce the impetus for the reuse of previously developed land in the built-up area, thereby failing to assist in urban regeneration. I conclude that, not only are there no exceptional circumstances to justify the proposed change to the boundary of the adopted green belt in this location, but that such an action would harm the purposes for which green belts are designated. For these reasons the boundary of the adopted green belt should not be modified in this location.

The definition of the green belt boundary on land opposite Sandup Farm, Lowton

6.33 The objector's site is the roadside frontage of a large field in agricultural use. It forms part of an extensive area of the adopted green belt which extends from the A580 dual carriageway in the north, to the Borough boundary in the south. The green belt, at this point, not only includes the objector's site but also washes over the dwellings and other buildings which form the ribbon of sporadic development along both sides of Newton Road. The objector argues that, on the basis that the residential development of this land is needed in the period to 2016, it should be removed from the green belt and identified as a housing site.

6.34 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that once the general extent of the green belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. For the reasons I give in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A, I have concluded that there is sufficient land available from sites with planning permission, the residential element of mixed use allocations and the reasonable expectation of windfall sites coming forward on previously developed land within the built-up area to meet housing development needs. There is, therefore, no justification for the release of green-field land for this purpose. Even if such a need had been established the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 2.12 and annex B) would direct the search for sites to safeguarded land rather than to the green belt. For these reasons the objector has not demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist to justify removal of this land from the green belt.

The definition of the green belt boundary at Saddle Hill Farm, Standish

6.35 The objector's site is an extensive area of agricultural land to the north of the built-up area of Standish and the east of Preston Road. It is located within the adopted green belt. The objector seeks its removal from this designation and its classification as safeguarded land. PPG2 (paragraph 2.12 and annex B) advises that such land is safeguarded from development during the plan period in order that it may be available if required, to serve development needs in the longer term i.e. well beyond the plan period. Such a designation is intended to ensure that green belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period.

6.36 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that detailed green belt boundaries identified in adopted development plans should be altered only exceptionally. For the reasons I give in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A, I have concluded that there is sufficient land available from sites with planning permission, the residential element of mixed use allocations and the reasonable expectation of windfall sites coming forward on previously developed land within the defined urban area to meet housing development needs. The objector has not identified a need for any other form of development that is likely to be unsatisfied during the plan period. There is, therefore, no justification for green-field land releases during the plan period, let alone beyond it, sufficient to justify an increase in the stock of safeguarded land by a reduction in the green belt area. The objector argues that, because of its poor quality, the land is no longer used for farming. It is still green-field land, however. Even if its proximity to the facilities at Standish would make it a sustainable urban extension, development of such land has a lower priority than that of previously developed land.

6.37 The whole purpose of safeguarded land is to avoid the need to erode the green belt even after the end of the plan period. There can, therefore, be no justification in planning terms for increasing the area of safeguarded land if this results in the erosion of the green belt within the present plan period.

6.38 The objector argues that the Site of Biological Importance on Saddle Hill Farm is in decline, but even if this is so there is no reason to suppose that a remedy is to be found in removing the land from the green belt. The objector refers to the development of land at Taylor's Hole, but this site was within the defined urban area and not in the green belt. For these reasons I conclude that no exceptional circumstances exist to justify deletion of land from the green belt in this case.

The merits of removing from the green belt the land at Leigh Fire Station

6.39 An objector advocates the removal from the adopted green belt of the site occupied by Leigh Fire Station. This has been built at the north eastern end of the urban area of Wash End, Lowton, in the narrow section of green belt which separates that settlement from the southern edge of Leigh. The green belt at this point is, at its narrowest, only some 300m wide. This is much less than the width of several miles advocated by PPG2. Nevertheless the construction of the fire station has reduced the effective gap to only some 200m.

6.40 The fire station covers an extensive site with a densely grouped range of modern buildings of one, two and three-storeys. Due to the height and layout of the development the site no longer makes any contribution, whatever, to the openness of the green belt at this point. The openness of green belts is identified by PPG2 (paragraph 1.4) as their most important attribute. The fact that the site no longer serves this function and, due to the very recent date of its development is unlikely to revert to open land uses in the foreseeable future, is in my view an exceptional circumstance sufficient to justify removal of the site from the green belt.

The merits of removing from the green belt the land lying between Atherleigh Way and St Helens Road, Leigh

6.41 An objector advocates the removal from the adopted green belt of land lying between Atherleigh Way and St Helens Road, Leigh. He argues that this land is severed from the wider area of green belt by Atherleigh Way and has a clear physical and functional relationship with the residential and employment areas at Lowton Common and Wash End. He contends that the land should be used to meet the needs for housing and road side uses.

6.42 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that once the general extent of the green belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. For the reasons I give in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A, I have concluded that there is sufficient land available from sites with planning permission, the residential element of mixed use allocations and the reasonable expectation of windfall sites coming forward on previously developed land within the defined urban area to meet housing development needs. The objector has not demonstrated a need for roadside uses that is not capable of being satisfied on land outside the green belt. For these reasons I conclude that exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated to justify the deletion of this land from the green belt.

The merits of removing from the green belt land at Helen Street/Hell Nook, Golbourne

6.43 An objector seeks the removal from the adopted green belt of an area of land immediately to the west of the line of dwellings along the western side of Helen Street and to the south of Hell Nook at Golbourne. He argues that this makes no contribution to the character of the green belt and does not serve any of its purposes. He contends that its removal would create a long term defensible boundary.

6.44 The area is composed of rough grassland used as a paddock and an extensive lawned back garden. Further to the west is agricultural land. The area which it is proposed be removed from the green belt is open and undeveloped. The objector's proposal would result in the green belt boundary running between two such areas rather than, as at present, following closely to the rear of the dwellings along Helen Street. The present boundary clearly separates an open area from one which is densely built-up. The proposed boundary would, therefore, not be a more defensible one. No exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the removal of this area from the green belt. At present the green belt designation of the land serves two of the purposes of green belts. It helps to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. For these reasons I conclude that this area should continue to form part of the adopted green belt.

The merits of removing from the green belt the land at Marklands Farm, Astley

6.45 An objector advocates the removal from the adopted green belt of an area of land along the northern side of Manchester Road, Astley. This is, at present, occupied by a bungalow and several farm buildings. Rough grassland lies to the east and a bungalow on a spacious plot lies to the west. To the north is farmland. The objector describes his site as being under-used and occupied by untidy buildings. She argues that there would be an urban regeneration benefit if the site was redeveloped. PPG2 (paragraph 1.7) advises, however, that the quality of the landscape is not relevant to the inclusion of land within a green belt or to its continued protection.

6.46 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that detailed green belt boundaries defined in adopted development plans should be altered only exceptionally. The objector has not identified any such circumstances. She contends that the site already has the appearance of being part of the built up area. However, the low density of site coverage and its juxtaposition with open land immediately to the east and north give it the appearance of being part of a wider belt of open land. She argues that the site is no longer in agricultural use. It is still, however, for the above reasons clearly part of the countryside.

6.47 At present its green belt designation serves three of the purposes of green belts. It helps to check the unrestricted sprawl of a large urban area, helps to prevent the settlements of Astley and Higher Fold from merging together and safeguards the countryside from encroachment. For all these reasons I conclude that this land should be retained within the adopted green belt.

The merits of removing from the green belt the land to the rear of Blenheim Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield

6.48 An objector advocates the removal from the adopted green belt of an area of land to the rear of dwellings in Blenheim Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield. PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that detailed green belt boundaries, defined in adopted development plans should be altered only exceptionally. The objector refers to the fact that the site is surrounded on two and a half sides by housing. It is, in effect, a small wedge of open land which penetrates a short distance into the urban edge at this point. The fact that the interface between the green belt and the built-up area follows a circuitous route in the vicinity of the site cannot be regarded as an exceptional circumstance. Instead it is a common place occurrence. The inclusion of this land helps to achieve three of the stated purposes of the green belt by checking the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area, preventing the merging of Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golbourne and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. For these reasons I conclude that this land should remain within the adopted green belt.

The merits of removing from the green belt land at Hindley Green

6.49 An objector advocates the removal from the adopted green belt of land on the north side of Alder Lane at Hindley Green and its designation as what he refers to as

‘white land’ i.e. as part of the urban area. PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that detailed green belt boundaries defined in adopted development plans should be altered only exceptionally. The objector argues that the land is within an urban environment. It is, however, an area of agricultural land which is separated from the consolidated built-up area by Alder Lane to the south. To the north it abuts an extensive golf course. It is clearly part of the open countryside.

6.50 The objector argues that Marsh Brook along its northern edge would form a more defensible green belt boundary than Alder Lane. In my view, however, the existing boundary at the highway edge is sufficiently well defined. He contends that, to include the site within the urban area would allow for possible future development. As green-field land it would justify only a low priority for this when compared with available previously developed sites. Even if green-field land is, eventually, needed for development the RDD makes provision for extensive areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the green belt. In accordance with the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 2.12 and annex B) this should be developed before the use of green belt land is considered. For these reasons I conclude that exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated to justify the removal of this land from the adopted green belt. Its inclusion in the green belt helps to check the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area, prevents neighbouring towns from merging and safeguards the countryside from encroachment. These considerations reinforce my view that the land should continue to be designated as green belt.

The merits of removing from the green belt the land at Spring Park, Wigan

6.51 Objectors advocate the removal from the adopted green belt of an extensive area of agricultural land lying on the east side of the M6 between that highway and the built-up area of Wigan, to the north of junction 26. They argue that this area should be designated as safeguarded land to meet longer term needs for housing development with associated social, community, employment and retail uses. Such a development would, it is argued, allow the provision of a park-and-ride facility and a new road link (to be known as the Martland Orell Relief Road) between the existing urban area (including the Martland Business Park and the Robin Park areas) and junction 26.

6.52 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that detailed green belt boundaries, defined in adopted development plans, should be altered only exceptionally. For the reasons I give in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A, I have concluded that there is sufficient land available from sites with planning permission, the residential element of mixed-use allocations and the reasonable expectation of windfall sites coming forward on previously developed land within the defined urban area, to meet housing needs during the plan period. PPG3 does envisage that planned urban extensions are likely to prove the next most sustainable option after building on previously developed sites within the urban area. However, my appraisal of the housing land requirement and supply provides no basis for a conclusion that green-field land releases should be contemplated at this stage.

6.53 The objectors propose a significant element of employment development as part of their mixed-use scheme. As an outcome of my consideration of the objections to the employment policies of the RDD I have concluded that additional areas of employment land should be identified. These must, however, be identified on the basis of a full appraisal of options. I cannot, on the basis of the very limited information provided by the objectors, confidently conclude that release of employment land at Spring Park is the best option. In any case PPG2 (paragraph 2.12 and annex B) advises that the release of safeguarded land is to be contemplated before that of green belt land. Substantial areas of this are identified elsewhere in the Borough.

6.54 The benefits which would flow from the proposed park-and-ride facility and the new road link have been presented in only general terms. On the basis of the limited information before me these are not sufficiently compelling to justify the release of a very substantial area from the green belt or the safeguarding of land for the proposed Martland/Orell Relief Road. PPG3 does advise that where green belt boundaries have been tightly drawn, there may be a case for reviewing them. In Wigan, the green belt has been loosely drawn and this has allowed the LPA to identify substantial areas of safeguarded land between it and the built-up area. The objectors have not demonstrated that it is necessary to increase this stock. For all these reasons I conclude that there are no exceptional circumstances to justify the release of land at Spring Park, Wigan, from the adopted green belt.

6.55 The objectors advocate the removal of the site at Spring Park from the green belt in order that it may be designated as safeguarded land. The whole purpose of safeguarded land is to avoid the need to erode the green belt even after the end of the plan period. There can, therefore, be no justification in policy terms for increasing the area of safeguarded land, as the objectors seek, if this results in the erosion of the green belt within the present plan period.

The merits of removing from the green belt the land at Wigan Road, Standish

6.56 An objector advocates the removal from the green belt of an extensive area of agricultural land which lies beyond the frontage of dwellings along the western side of Wigan Road, Standish. He argues that this should be regarded as a green-field urban extension.

6.57 PPG3 (paragraph 67) advises that such extensions are likely to prove the next most sustainable option after building on appropriate sites within the urban area. For the reasons I give in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A, I have concluded that there is sufficient land available from sites with planning permission, the residential element of mixed-use allocations and the reasonable expectation of windfall sites coming forward on previously developed land within the defined urban area to meet housing needs. The objector has not identified a need for any other form of development that is unlikely to be satisfied during the plan period. There is, therefore, no justification for the release of this land as a green-field urban extension.

6.58 Even if such a need did arise, the proper course of action, in accordance with the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 2.12 and annex B), would be to release safeguarded land before green belt land. The objector has not, therefore, demonstrated the exceptional circumstances necessary to justify the alteration of the green belt, having regard to the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 2.6).

6.59 The objector argues that this land should be allocated for development if a future review of RPG13 advocates a review of green belt boundaries. That document, however, specifies in policy SD5, that there is no need to undertake a strategic study of green belts within Greater Manchester before 2011.

The merits of removing from the green belt the land at Chorley Road Waste Water Pumping Station, Standish

6.60 The objector advocates that the area of the Chorley Road Waste Water Pumping Station at Standish be removed from the green belt to allow additional built development. The boundary of the green belt would, the objector proposes, be realigned along the River Douglas which runs immediately to the east of the site. In my view, however, the existing urban edge provides a clear green belt boundary.

6.61 The objector does not clarify the nature of the proposed built development he seeks. If it is of a sort which is defined by PPG2 as inappropriate in the green belt, the scope is provided by paragraph 3.2 of that document for the prospective developer to demonstrate that it is justified by very special circumstances. Depending on the circumstances, and the arguments put forward, the strategic role of the Waste Water Pumping Station need not, therefore, be constrained by its inclusion in the green belt. I conclude that exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated for the exclusion of this site from the adopted green belt.

Recommendation

I recommend:

(REC 6.1) that the RDD be modified by a realignment of the boundary of the green belt, as shown on the proposals map to the west of the junction of Aye Bridge Road and Warrington Road at the southern edge of Abram, to conform to that of the adopted green belt as shown on the proposals map of the adopted UDP.

(REC 6.2) that the RDD be modified by the deletion from the adopted green belt of the land currently occupied by the built development of Leigh Fire Station.

(REC 6.3) that no other modification be made to the RDD in response to these objections.

GB1A RE-USE OF BUILDINGS

Objections to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref
381	O	007	GB	1A	Mrs A J Smith - County Bird Recorder		WMBC 381
424	O	003	GB	1A	Government Office for the North West		WMBC 424 GONW
437	O	004	GB	1A	Steve Fowler – NWTB	Paul Butler Associates	WMBC 437
538	O	002	GB	1A	Mr D R Taylor and Mrs J A Taylor	The Graham Bolton Planning Partnership Ltd	WMBC 538/A
572	O	008	GB	1A	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
725	O	001	GB	1A	David Hardman		WMBC 725/A

Objections to Revised Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref
572	O	084	GB	1A	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A

Supporters to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref
052	S	002	GB	1A	Peter J McLachlan		
105	S	002	GB	1A	Barbara McLachlan		
141	S	002	GB	1A	Joseph Oliver Partington		
422	S	001	GB	1A	Terrence Blackburn – Lancashire CPRE		

Main Issues

Whether this policy is appropriate, having regard to:

- the purposes for which land is designated as green belt and safeguarded land;
- the provision of utility services;
- the need for references to other policies and sources of information;
- the interests of nature conservation;
- the interests of tourism.

Inspector's Considerations and Conclusions

The purposes for which land is designated as green belt and safeguarded land

6.62 RDD policy GB1A provides that, in the green belt or on safeguarded land, the re-use of buildings will be permitted if the fully detailed submissions satisfy stated criteria. An objector argues that the criteria should be re-worded to accord more closely with those of PPG2 (paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9). PPG12 (paragraph 3.3) advises that LPAs should not repeat large sections of PPGs in plans. The emphasis should be on producing

development plan policies which implement national and regional policy at local level. The LPA considers that it has done so in this case, by augmenting the advice in PPG2 with experience gained in the control of development in Wigan. It is clear, however, that a vital element of PPG2 advice has been omitted from policy GB1A. This is that the re-use of buildings in the green belt must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land within it. Because the most important attribute of green belts is their openness, I conclude that it is vital that this factor be incorporated in the policy wording.

6.63 If this is to be done it is also necessary, in the interests of consistency, to reflect in the policy wording the stated purpose of safeguarded land i.e. that development should not be permitted if it would prejudice the later comprehensive development of such an area. Such a modification would recognise the different purposes for which green belts and safeguarded land are designated.

The provision of utility services

6.64 Criterion (f) of the FDD version of policy GB1A required that additional utility services must be provided by underground means. This was deleted at RDD stage, thereby satisfying the concerns of one objector. A further objector, however, seeks its reinstatement. No specific reason for this is given in the FDD version of the reasoned justification, but it is reasonable to assume that its purpose is to minimise the visual impact of such development in the interests of maintaining the openness of the green belt.

6.65 Policy GB1A is intended to apply not only in the green belt but also in relation to safeguarded land. PPG2 (paragraph 2.12 and annex B) confirms that such land is safeguarded not from development per-se but for possible longer term development. It must be located where future development would be an efficient use of land. This consideration removes the need to avoid minor harm to the open character of safeguarded land that might arise from the installation of utility services. Criterion (f) is not, therefore, in principle, appropriate to a policy relating to safeguarded land. I note, furthermore, that it is not present in other RDD policies that relate to the extension of existing dwellings or the erection of replacement dwellings in the green belt. For reasons of consistency it should remain deleted from RDD policy GB1A.

The need for references to other policies and sources of information

6.66 An objector argues that decision makers using policy GB1A should be referred, via a cross-reference, to policy G1A. The introduction to the RDD confirms, however, that the plan should be read as a whole. In practice, decision making would require consideration to be given to a number of policies, the combination changing with each specific case. If the potential for cross-referencing was meticulously applied it would burden the plan with excess detail, contrary to the advice of PPG12 that such documents should be succinct.

6.67 An objector contends that criterion (e) of policy GB1A would operate more effectively if the plan contained lists of conservation areas, listed buildings and buildings of local interest. The boundaries of conservation areas are shown on the proposals map. Listed buildings are identified in statutory lists which are available for public inspection. Lists of all other buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest which have been identified to date are presented in RDD Appendix 10. The LPA has confirmed its intention to extend the list as necessary and publish it as supplementary planning guidance. This will be incorporated in the development plan at the next review. I conclude that the usefulness of policy GB1A is not materially reduced by the need to consult documents other than the UDP.

The interests of nature conservation

6.68 An objector argues that policy GB1A should make reference to the need to safeguard species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The plan is to be read as a whole. The protection sought by the objector is provided by policy EV2D.

The interests of tourism

6.69 An objector argues that policy GB1A should encourage the use of redundant buildings for tourism purposes. The plan is to be read as a whole. This aspect is dealt with in policies EM2 and EM2A.

Recommendation

I recommend:

(REC 6.4) that the RDD be modified by the insertion of an additional criterion as follows. ‘On sites within the green belt the scheme must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land within it. On sites within safeguarded land the scheme must not prejudice the possibility of achieving later comprehensive development’.

(REC 6.5) that no other modification be made to the RDD in response to these objections.

GB1B - EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING DWELLING IN THE GREEN BELT AND IN SAFEGUARDED LAND

Objections to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
422	O	002	GB	1B	Terrence Blackburn – Lancashire CPRE		WMBC 422/A
424	O	004	GB	1B	Government Office for the North West		WMBC 424 GONW
538	O	001	GB	1B	Mr D R Taylor and Mrs J A Taylor	The Graham Bolton Planning Partnership	WMBC 538/A

Supporters of Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
052	S	004	GB	1B	Peter J McLachlan		
105	S	004	GB	1B	Barbara McLachlan		
141	S	003	GB	1B	Joseph Oliver Partington		

Main Issues

Whether this policy is appropriate, having regard to:

- the purposes for which land is designated as green belt and safeguarded land;
- the size thresholds for dwelling extensions.

Inspector's Considerations and Conclusions

The purposes for which land is designated as green belt and safeguarded land

6.70 Policy GB1B provides that, in the green belt and on safeguarded land, extensions to existing buildings will be allowed only where they do not exceed the cubic content of the original property by more than 75% and, in any case, are not of more than 200 cubic metres and that the sum of additions to the original property does not exceed 200 cubic metres. Policy GB1B is intended to apply to land within the green belt and also safeguarded land. These areas are designated for very different purposes. An objector argues that the policy should reflect these. Because a decision on a planning application must have regard to the objectives to be served by the policy I conclude that these should be articulated in its wording.

The size thresholds for dwelling extensions

6.71 Objectors argue that the amounts by which houses in the green belt may be extended, as set out in this policy, may be perceived as arbitrary and could lead to inappropriate development in the green belt. Others that the increase in cubic content should be restricted to no more than 50%.

6.72 PPG2 (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.6) advise that the construction of new buildings in the green belt is inappropriate unless it is for, among other things, the limited extension of existing dwellings. Provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building, the extension of dwellings is not inappropriate in the green belt. It is a matter therefore, of what is or is not a disproportionate addition. The policy could simply repeat the wording of PPG2, but PPS1 (paragraphs 8 and 9) advises that the certainty and consistency provided by the plan-led system is central to planning. To secure this it is, in my view, essential that policy GB1B should contain a quantitative element.

6.73 The LPA argues that the measures proposed are based on its experience in implementing national policy at a local level over many years. The threshold proposed has, therefore, the virtue that it is based on actual experience of implementation. No evidence has been presented to me to support a view that these particular quantitative measures have led to the creation of disproportionate additions.

6.74 Objectors argue that the provisions of RDD policy GB1B should be supplemented by a requirement that local building styles should be observed and that extensions must not be visually detrimental. The plan is to be read as a whole, however. Policies GB1, R1D, EV3 and EV3A would secure the objective of maintaining visual amenity. For these reasons I conclude that the particular quantitative measures presented in RDD policy GB1B should remain as elements of the UDP.

Recommendation

I recommend:

(REC 6.6) that the RDD be modified by the insertion of an additional criterion to policy GB1B as follows. ‘On sites within the green belt the scheme must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land within it. On sites within safeguarded land the scheme must not prejudice the possibility of achieving later comprehensive development’.

(REC 6.7) that no other modification be made to the RDD in response to these objections.

GB1C - REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT AND IN SAFEGUARDED LAND

Objections to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
538	O	003	GB	1C	Mr D R Taylor and Mrs J A Taylor	The Graham Bolton Planning Partnership	WMBC 538/A
572	O	009	GB	1C	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
703	O	001	GB	1C	Mr and Mrs D Finch		WIGAN MBC 703/A

Supporters to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
052	S	003	GB	1C	Peter J McLachlan		
105	S	003	GB	1C	Barbara McLachlan		
141	S	004	GB	1C	Joseph Oliver Partington		

Main Issues

Whether this policy is appropriate, having regard to:

- the purposes for which land is designated as green belt and safeguarded land;
- the merits of residential development of land at Newton Road, Lowton;
- the reference to buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest.

Inspector's Considerations and Conclusions

The purposes for which land is designated as green belt and safeguarded land

6.75 Policy GB1C proposes that, in the green belt and on safeguarded land, the replacement of existing buildings will be allowed only where three stated criteria are satisfied. Areas of green belt and safeguarded land are designated for very different purposes. An objector argues that the policy should reflect these. Because a decision on a planning application must have regard to the objectives served by the policy, I conclude that these should be articulated in its wording.

The merits of the residential development of land at Newton Road, Lowton

6.76 PPG2 (paragraph 3.4) provides that the construction of new buildings in the green belt is inappropriate unless, among other things, it is the replacement of an existing dwelling. Paragraph 3.6 of that guidance advises that the new dwelling must not be materially larger than the dwelling it replaces. Development plans should make clear the approach that LPAs will take, including the circumstances under which replacement dwellings are acceptable.

6.77 Although their objection is limited to the provisions of proposed policy GB1C the objectors, in respect of land at Newton Road, Lowton, do not argue that any element of

this policy is inappropriate or inconsistent with the advice of PPG2. Instead, they argue that their plot should be excluded from the adopted green belt with a view to its future residential development. They contend that even if the site remains within the green belt there are very special circumstances to justify its residential development.

6.78 The objectors' site is a small plot within a ribbon of sporadic development which is washed over by an extensive area of the adopted green belt. It, at present, accommodates a detached house but the remainder of the plot once contained a terrace of six houses which have been demolished. The objectors do not confirm when this occurred but the LPA, by reference to Ordnance Survey maps, argues that it cannot have been later than 1959. From my inspection of the site it is clear that the traces of the former dwellings, in the form of fragments of walls and floor surfaces, do not extend above the surrounding ground level and can be discerned only at close range. Traces of the former dwellings have disappeared to such an extent that the undeveloped part of the site has the character of open countryside. It cannot, therefore, having regard to the advice of PPG3 (annex C) be regarded as previously developed land.

6.79 Even if the terrace of houses was still standing, however, their presence would not in itself provide any support for the removal of the site from the green belt. The provisions made for the designation and adoption of green belts allow for these to include not only individual dwellings and other built development but also small settlements.

6.80 The objectors argue that their site does not serve any of the objectives for green belts which are set out in PPG2. That document (paragraph 1.7) advises, however, that the purposes of including land in green belts are of paramount importance to their continued protection and should take precedence over the land use objectives. The removal of the objectors' site from the green belt as a prelude to its intended residential development would fail to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. This is confirmed by PPG2 to be a purpose of green belt designation.

6.81 PPG2 (paragraph 2.6) advises that, once the general extent of the green belt has been approved, it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. The objectors have failed to demonstrate these. Even if the remains of the former dwellings on the site had been more prominent than they are, this would still not have justified the removal of the land from the green belt because, as paragraph 2.6 advises, detailed green belt boundaries should not be altered, or development allowed, merely because the land has become derelict.

6.82 The objectors argue that very special circumstances exist to justify the development of what they regard as a site which is in a sustainable location within the urban area. It is, in fact, situated within the open countryside. The nearest area of consolidated built development is over 800m distant to the north, on the other side of the A580 dual carriageway. The next nearest is some 1.4km to the east at Lane Head. An argument that very special circumstances exist to justify development is one which relates to an application for planning permission for inappropriate development in the green belt. It is not an argument which, even if it was conceded by a decision maker, is

relevant to the removal of the land from an adopted green belt. I conclude that the objectors have not demonstrated that policy GB1C should be modified or that land at Newton Road, Lowton, should be excluded from the adopted green belt with a view to its residential development.

The reference to buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest

6.83 The reasoned justification to RDD policy GB1C reminds the plan user that, in the context of this policy, buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest will be protected from demolition. An objector argues that the term ‘buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest’ is not consistent with usage elsewhere.

6.84 PPG15 (paragraph 6.16) advises that many buildings which are valued for their contribution to the local scene, or for local historic associations, will not merit listing. It is open to LPAs to draw up lists of locally important buildings and to formulate local plan policies for their protection through normal development control procedures. The LPA does this in policy EV4C. The same phrase is used to describe these buildings in both policy EV4C and the reasoned justification to policy GB1C. The wording used is, in my view, consistent with the advice of PPG15. The only difference between these two policies is that the reasoned justification to the latter informs that such buildings will be protected from demolition, whereas neither policy EV4C nor its reasoned justification refer to this policy aspect. They simply refer to encouraging the protection and enhancement of such building and structures. They note, correctly, that the LPA can exercise only its normal development control powers in respect of them. In order to secure consistency between these elements of the UDP, and also with PPG15, I conclude that the final paragraph of the reasoned justification to policy GB1C should be modified to reflect the objectives of policy EV4C.

Recommendation

I recommend:

(REC 6.8) that the RDD be modified by the insertion of an additional criterion to policy GB1C as follows. ‘On sites within the green belt the scheme must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt. On sites within safeguarded land, the scheme must not prejudice the possibility of achieving later comprehensive development’.

(REC 6.9) that the RDD be modified by the deletion of the final paragraph of the reasoned justification to policy GB1C and its replacement as follows. ‘The Council will encourage the protection and enhancement of buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest’.

(REC 6.10) that no other modification be made to the RDD in response to these objections.

GB1D - DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT SETTLEMENTS (HAIGH AND BICKERSHAW)

Objections to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
022	O	001	GB	1D	Mr F. W. Cottenden		WMBC 022 GB1D
711	O	001	GB	1D	Morston Western Region Properties	Carpenter Planning Consultants Ltd	WIGAN MBC 711/A
726	O	003	GB	1D	United Utilities Facilities and Property Services		WMBC 726/A

Objections to Revised Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
778	O	001	GB	1D	Mr Brian Smith	Frank Whittaker	WMBC GB1D

Main Issues

Whether this policy is appropriate, having regard to:

- the merits of the development boundary proposed for Bickershaw village;
- the merits of designating additional settlement boundaries.

Inspector's Considerations and Conclusions

The merits of the development boundary proposed for Bickershaw village

6.85 Policy GB1D provides that, within the settlements of Haigh and Bickershaw which are washed over by the green belt, development will be allowed only where it falls within the settlement boundary shown on the proposals map, there would be no adverse effects on amenity and the development can be accommodated in site planning terms.

6.86 An objector argues that the settlement boundary for Bickershaw village should be extended to include the undeveloped side of Atherton Street. Policy GB1D has, however, been devised to implement the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 2.11) in relation to existing villages in the green belt where infilling only is proposed. The development of the additional area referred to by the objector would effect an extension of the existing village rather than the infilling of a gap within it. For this reason, the settlement boundary should not be extended to include it.

6.87 A further objector argues that an area of land adjacent to that at Victoria Avenue, which was included within the settlement boundary for Bickershaw village at RDD stage, should also be included within this area. The development of that additional land would, however, effect an extension to the existing village rather than the infilling of a gap within it. For this reason the settlement boundary should not be extended to include it. The objector argues that the boundary should not have been extended to include the land at Victoria Avenue, itself. This small area adjacent to existing dwellings can, however, be

regarded as an infill site. Because the change did not involve the alteration of the boundary of the green belt but simply of a policy area within this, it was not necessary for the LPA to demonstrate exceptional circumstances in that case. The extension of the settlement as proposed by this objector would expose the countryside to further encroachment, contrary to the purposes of green belts which are stated in PPG2. It is inevitable that any settlement boundary that is defined will closely follow the edge of the built up area of the village, because its purpose is to encapsulate an area within which infilling is to be permitted and to exclude areas where development would lead to the expansion of the settlement. For that reason no weight should be given to the argument that a proposed change to that boundary would make it shorter or more direct.

6.88 An objector argues that the settlement boundary for Bickershaw village should be extended to include land to the south of the main part of the built-up area of Bickershaw, which lies to the east of Bolton House Road between dwellings and an area of industrial/commercial development. The settlement boundary relates to a completely different settlement some 400m to the west, however. Its purpose is, in conformity with the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 2.11), to encapsulate an area within which limited infill development will be permitted. The extension of this area, as proposed by the objector, would inevitably encompass a significant area of undeveloped land between the two settlements in addition to that to the east of Bolton House Road. It would render policy GB1D incapable of serving its intended purpose of defining an area where limited infill development, only, would be permitted. For this reason the settlement boundary at Bickershaw village should not be extended in the way sought by this objector.

The merits of designating additional settlement boundaries

6.89 An objector argues that a group of houses and buildings on Gathurst Road and Dean Wood Avenue, including the Dean Wood Pumping Station should be defined as subject to policy GB1D. That policy has, however, been devised to implement the advice of PPG2 (paragraph 2.11) in relation to existing villages in the green belt where infilling only, is proposed. The area referred to by the objector is not a functioning village. Instead it is a small sporadic development in the open countryside containing no supporting facilities. It is not the sort of place where additional development, even if limited to infilling, should be encouraged, having regard to the principles of sustainable development.

Recommendation

I recommend:

(REC 6.11) that no modification be made to the RDD in response to these objections.