

GB3 AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION

Objections to Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
538	O	007	GB	3	Mr D R Taylor and Mrs J A Taylor	The Graham Bolton Planning Partnership Ltd	WMBC 538/A
572	O	011	GB	3	Peter Sargeant FRTPI		WIGAN MBC 572/A
582	O	003	GB	3	Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd	Michael Courcier and Partners Ltd	WMBC 582/A
583	O	006	GB	3	Peel Investment (North) Ltd	Halliwell Landau	WMBC 583 WR

Supporters of Draft Deposit

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
345	S	003	GB	3	Mr and Mrs Morgan		
437	S	005	GB	3	NWTB	Paul Butler Associates	
449	S	003	GB	3	Timothy Eastham		

Main Issues

Whether this policy is appropriate, having regard to:

- the extent to which agricultural land is to be protected from development;
- the sequential approach to the allocation and release of land for housing development;
- the need for a cross-reference to guidance on agricultural land classification.

Inspector's Considerations and Conclusions

The extent to which agricultural land is to be protected from development

6.193 RDD policy GB3 provides that the LPA will protect agricultural land from irreversible development by applying a specified sequential approach. It will also seek to minimise adverse effects of development on farming by avoiding the severance and fragmentation of viable areas of uninterrupted farm land.

6.194 Objectors argue that policy GB3 should clarify that it is only the best and most versatile agricultural land that is protected for agricultural reasons. PPS7 (paragraph 28) advises that little weight in agricultural terms, should be given to the loss of agricultural land in grades 3b, 4 and 5. Where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable, LPAs should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in grades 3b, 4 and 5 in preference to that of higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. PPS7, therefore, presents a sequential approach to the development of agricultural land. Although land in the lower grades is to be given little weight, this is not the same as saying that it has no weight. Sustainability considerations may support the development of land in grades 1, 2 and 3a in preference to that in grades

3b, 4 and 5. It would, therefore, be wrong for policy GB3 to limit its protection only to the best and most versatile grades as the objector suggests. For this reason it would also be wrong to apply the provisions relating to the avoidance of severance and fragmentation of viable areas of uninterrupted farm land only to such areas.

The sequential approach to the allocation and release of land for housing development

6.195 An objector argues that the UDP should contain a policy which would allow the development for housing of agricultural land where a particular area of such land has sustainable locational attributes. Such an approach would not accord with the advice of PPG3 (paragraph 30) that, in identifying sites to be allocated in UDPs, LPAs should follow a search sequence starting with the re-use of previously developed land within urban areas, then urban extensions and finally new development around nodes in good public transport corridors. LPAs should not extend the search for housing land further than required to provide sufficient capacity to meet the requirement.

6.196 For the reasons I give in the section of this report which relates to policy R1A, I conclude 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 in the plan period. There is, therefore, having regard to the advice of PPG3 on the sequence of land allocation and development, no justification at this stage for the release of green-field land for housing development.

6.197 An objector argues that policy GB3 should protect only grade 1 and 2 land. PPS7 (paragraph 28) advises that the presence of best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and also 3a) should be taken into account, alongside other sustainability considerations when determining planning applications. Where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable, LPAs should seek to use areas of poorer quality (grades 3b, 4 and 5) in preference to that of a higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. This qualification is not incorporated within policy GB3. If this was done it would both render the policy in conformity with PPS7 and satisfy the objector's concerns that the protection of agricultural land should have regard to wider sustainability interests. The objector seeks the deletion of the reference to grade 3a land from the 'best and most versatile' category but PPS7 confirms that this is its correct classification.

The need for a cross-reference to guidance on agricultural land classification

6.198 An objector argues that the comprehension of policy GB3 would be improved if cross-references were inserted to relevant guidance on agricultural land classification. Advice on this matter, and its application to planning decisions, is provided by PPS7 (paragraphs 27 to 29). The companion document to PPS1, 'The Planning System: General Principles' (paragraph 13), advises that the Government's statements of planning policy are material considerations which must be taken into account, where relevant, in

decisions on planning applications. There is, therefore, no need for the cross-references that the objector seeks.

Recommendation

I recommend:

(REC 6.20) that the RDD be modified by the addition of wording to the end of clause 'B' of policy GB3 as follows: 'except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations'.

(REC 6.21) that no other modification be made to the RDD in response to these objections.

GREENBELT AND SAFEGUARDED LAND POLICY OMISSION

Draft Deposit Objections Unconditionally Withdrawn

Ref No	a	b	c	d	Name	Agent	Response Ref.
071	O	002	OM		Mr Ian Winstanley		