

Three Rivers District Council

Sub-Committee Report

3 August 2023

LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE - 3 AUGUST 2023

PART I – NOT DELEGATED

5 LOCAL PLAN – Urban Brownfield and Low to Moderate Green Belt Harm Sites, Excluding Strategic Sites (ADEIP)

Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the urban brownfield sites and sites within areas of low to moderate Green Belt harm recommended by officers for inclusion in the forthcoming Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers following the approach agreed at the 13 June 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee.
- 1.2 Strategic sites of circa 500 dwellings or more will be considered at the 24 August 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting. This includes those that fall into low to moderate Green Belt harm and those that fall into areas of moderate-high or high Green Belt harm.
- 1.3 At the 13 June 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee it was agreed that no sites that fall within areas of very high Green Belt harm would be considered acceptable even if they are strategic in nature.

Introduction

- 2.1 At the 13 June 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee it was agreed that a Green Belt as a constraint approach would be followed in selecting sites for inclusion in a further round of Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers later this year.
- 2.2 The approach includes sites that were agreed for consultation in the 2021 Sites for Potential Allocation and 2023 Additional Sites for Potential Allocation consultations that are either urban brownfield sites or that fall into areas of low to moderate Green Belt harm as set out in the Council's Stage 2 Green belt Review.
- 2.3 Further consideration will be given to strategic sites, of circa 500 dwellings or more, that fall within areas of higher Green Belt harm where the benefits of these sites in terms of sustainability, access to services and infrastructure provision may outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. This will be covered in a report to the 24 August 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee.
- 2.4 The sites included in this report and appendices fall within the urban area or within areas of low to moderate Green Belt harm and this report seeks agreement from Members to recommend to Policy and Resources committee that these sites be included in a further round of Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers later this year.

Background

- 3.1 In 2021 the Council consulted on a draft Regulation 18 version of the Local Plan. The document considered preferred policy options and set out the sites that could potentially be allocated for development in the Local Plan.

- 3.2 The Government's standard method for calculating housing need was used to determine the Local Plan housing requirement which at the time came to a requirement of 630 dwellings per annum.
- 3.3 In calculating housing need, a plan period of 2018 to 2038 was used resulting in a total requirement of 12,624 dwellings. Completions, commitments (approved planning permissions) and a windfall allowance were taken off this total leaving a residual target of 10,678. The draft Regulation 18 plan failed to meet this target and planned for 8,973 dwellings, 1,705 dwellings short.
- 3.4 As a result of this consultation a further 18 sites were submitted for the Council's consideration and a further three sites were re-submitted with updated proposals. These sites were assessed and six sites were considered appropriate for potential allocation.
- 3.5 The six sites were consulted on in 2022/23 in the Additional Sites for Potential Allocation document. Adding 825 dwellings to the total. In the meantime, a number of sites were removed or had dwelling capacities altered leaving the deficit to the residual housing target at 1,318 dwellings. This concluded this round of Regulation 18 consultation and the Council needed to then decide whether to press ahead with the Regulation 19 stage or whether to go out on further Regulation 18 consultation considering different levels of growth.
- 3.6 In December 2022 the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities wrote to MPs about proposed reform to the planning system. A key message set out in the letter was that whilst the standard method for calculating housing need would be retained it should be an advisory starting point, a guide that is not mandatory. They also emphasised that local planning authorities are not expected to review the Green Belt to deliver housing.
- 3.7 Following this the Government consulted on planning reform reiterating that the standard method calculation would remain unchanged at least until they have reviewed the implications on the standard method of new household projections data based on the 2021 Census, which is due to be published in 2024.
- 3.8 The ability for local authorities to use an alternative approach to the standard method where there are exceptional circumstances that can be justified was proposed to be retained. It was however proposed that it would be made clearer in the NPPF that the outcome of the standard method is an advisory starting point to inform plan-making, a guide that is not mandatory. They propose to give more explicit indications in planning guidance of local characteristics that may justify an alternative method. To date no such guidance has been produced. The examples given in the consultation were islands with a high percentage of elderly residents or university towns with an above-average proportion of students, neither of which apply to Three Rivers.
- 3.9 It should be noted that this was just a consultation and that neither the consultation nor the letter from the Secretary of State constitutes a statement of national planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance remain unchanged, and it is to this framework we are required to work.**
- 3.10 At Full Council in December 2022 Members unanimously agreed to add a further round of Regulation 18 consultation to the Local Development Scheme (Local Plan timetable). It was agreed that this further Regulation 18 consultation would be focussed on lower housing numbers than had been consulted on in the previous round of Regulation 18 consultation.

- 3.11 In December 2022 the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities wrote to MPs about proposed reform to the planning system. A key message set out in the letter was that whilst the standard method for calculating housing need would be retained it should be an advisory starting point, a guide that is not mandatory. It stated it would be up to local authorities, working with communities, to determine how many homes can actually be built, taking into account what should be protected in each area.
- 3.12 The letter went on to state that housing need in itself was not an exceptional circumstance for altering Green Belt boundaries. By stating that Green Belt release is not a requirement in order to meet housing need the Government aims to remove ambiguity about whether authorities are expected to review the Green Belt to meet housing need. Although there have not been any changes yet made to national policy, in making this statement officers believe the Government has already removed this ambiguity to an extent. For this reason, officers believe that the District's Green Belt constraint can now be used as an argument for lower housing numbers.
- 3.13 At the 13 June 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee Members agreed the approach to housing need and Green Belt where only sites in areas of moderate Green Belt harm or less, as set out in the Stage 2 Green Belt Review, are considered acceptable for residential development (subject to other considerations) unless the site is considered strategic and the benefits of the site are considered to outweigh the harm caused by its release from the Green Belt.

Details

- 4.1 Appendix 1 provides summary slides on the urban brownfield sites and Appendix 2 provides summary slides on the low to moderate Green Belt harm sites. The remaining appendices provide supporting information and maps to aid Members in their consideration of the sites.
- 4.2 Officers will run through the summary slides at the Sub-Committee meeting providing the criteria that Members should consider when making decisions on sites, a summary of site details, a summary of their performance in the Sustainability Appraisal and Sustainability Appraisal Working Note (appendices 5 and 6).
- 4.3 Officers recommend that all the urban brownfield sites and sites in areas of low to moderate Green Belt harm are included in the Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers later this year, however the merits of each individual site still need to be considered.

Table 1: Urban Brownfield Sites

Site Ref.	Site Name	Dwellings
AB18	Garage Courts, Parsonage Close, Abbots Langley	7
AB26	Garages, Tibbs Hill Road, Abbots Langley	7
AB31	Garages, Jacketts Field, Abbots Langley	6
AB32	Yard off Tibbs Hill Road, Abbots Langley	10
AB39	Garages, Rosehill Gardens, Abbots Langley	6

H3	Pin Wei, 35 High Street, Abbots Langley	11
H4	Furtherfield Depot, Furtherfield	36
H6	Hill Farm Industrial Estate, Leavesden	38
NSS14	Margaret House, Abbots Langley	25
CFS16	Land at Chorleywood Station, Chorleywood	190
CW9	Garages, Copmans Wick, Chorleywood	6
P4a	Quickwood Close Garages, Mill End	7
P33	Chiltern Drive Garages, Mill End	6
P38	Garages at Whitfield Way, Mill End	6
P39	The Queens Drive Garages, Mill End	6
RW31	Garden land off Uxbridge Road, Mill End	12
H15	Garages rear of Drillyard, West Way, Mill End	13
CFS40a	Land at Park Road, Rickmansworth	112
H17	Former Police Station, Rectory Road, Rickmansworth	24
H18	Royal British Legion, Ebury Road, Rickmansworth	6
H22	Depot, Stockers Farm Road, Rickmansworth	60
MC11	Garages to rear of Longcroft Road, Maple Cross	5
CFS20	Land at Croxley Station, Watford Road, Croxley Green	163
CG16	Garages, Owen's Way, Croxley Green	6
CG47	Garages off Grove Crescent, Croxley Green	19
CG65	British Red Cross, Community Way, Croxley Green	6
H9	33 Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green	59
PCS16	Vivian Gardens, Oxhey Hall	8
H24	The Fairway, Green Lane, Oxhey Hall	32
AS13	Garages at Blackford Road, South Oxhey	7
AS31	Garages at Woodhall Lane, South Oxhey	6
BR20	Northwick Day Centre, Northwick Road	48
CFS12	Kebbell House, Carpenters Park	68
	Total	1,022

Table 2: Sites within areas of low to moderate Green Belt harm¹

Site Ref.	Site Name	Dwellings
NSS2	56 High Street, Bedmond	20
NSS6	North Cott, Eat Lane, Bedmond	12
CFS3	Land adjacent to Fraser Crescent and Woodside Road	303
CFS4	Land at Warren Court, Woodside Road	26
CFS6	Land at Mansion House Equestrian Centre	133
CFS65	Land North of Bucknalls Lane, Garston	144
PCS21	Land at Love Lane	62
ACFS8b	Flower House, 2-3 Station Road (brownfield)	19
H7	Langleybury House/School (brownfield)	25
NSS10	Land at Mill Place, Hunton Bridge (brownfield)	20
ACFS1	Heath House, Rickmansworth Road (brownfield)	10
CFS61	Cinnamond House, Cassiobridge	133
	Total	907

- 4.4 Four sites included in the low to moderate Green Belt harm sites in the Briefing Note presented to the Local Plan Sub-Committee on 10 July 2023. These will all be considered at the 24 August Local Plan Sub-Committee.
- 4.5 EOS7.0, South of Shepherds Lane West of M25 (760 dwellings) and EOS12.2 Land West and South of Maple Cross (850 dwellings) are strategic sites and will be considered in more detail together with the higher Green Belt harm strategic sites. CFS18b has had its boundary changed and officers will be assessing the effects on the sites access. CFS59 Land at London Road is proposed for a care home but may come forwards together with a strategic site so these will be considered together at the 24 August Local Plan Sub-Committee.
- 4.6 To assist with Members' decisions regarding the additional sites the presentation will also set out the criteria that Members have to consider in reaching a decision to comply with national policy. This includes taking into consideration the technical assessment of the sites through the SHELAA, the sustainability of the site, it's access to services, and the spatial strategy.
- 4.7 It should be noted that the sites recommended for inclusion in the Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers have been determined to be suitable for development through the site assessment process of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) which has been informed by the evidence base studies. This means that policy and physical constraints (such as flood risk, Local Wildlife sites, TPOs, potential effects on landscape,

¹ For the purposes of this report brownfield sites within the Green Belt have been included in the list of low to moderate Green Belt sites even if they fall within an area of higher Green Belt harm.

historic environment etc.) have already been considered and it has been determined that the sites are suitable for development.

- 4.8 In order to assist Members, the slides in Appendices 1 and 2 contain a summary of each site's SHELAA assessment and the full SHELAA assessment forms are in the appendices to this report.
- 4.9 The environmental, economic and social credentials of the development options and policies in the emerging Local Plan have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and is a process undertaken at various stages of the Local Plan process. The SA plays an important role in demonstrating that the Local Plan reflects sustainability objectives and has considered all reasonable alternatives. It incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.
- 4.10 As previously reported to the Local Plan Sub Committee there is a legal requirement for the Council to consider the Sustainability Appraisal when making decisions on both policies and sites to be allocated for development.
- 4.11 In order to assist Members, the summary slides will include a table that summarises the assessment of each site against the SA objectives. The detail of the assessment is in the Sustainability Appraisal Report (June 2021) and Sustainability Appraisal Working Note (November 2022).

Significance Assessment	Description
✓✓	The option is likely to have a significant positive effect
✓	The option is likely to have a positive effect which is not significant
?	Uncertain – It is uncertain how or if the option impacts on the SA/SEA objective
-	Neutral – The option is unlikely to impact on the SA/SEA objective
x	The option is likely to have a negative effect which is not significant
xx	The option is likely to have a significant negative effect
✓/x	The option is likely to have some positive and some negative effects, none of which are significant

SA Objective	SA1 Biodiversity	SA2 Water	SA3 Flood risk	SA4 Climate change	SA5 Air quality	SA6 Soils	SA7 Resources	SA8 Historic envt.	SA9 Landscape	SA10 Health	SA11 Sust. locations	SA12 Communities	SA13 Housing	SA14 Economy	SA15 Employment
Site Location	SA1 Biodiversity	SA2 Water	SA3 Flood risk	SA4 Climate change	SA5 Air quality	SA6 Soils	SA7 Resources	SA8 Historic envt.	SA9 Landscape	SA10 Health	SA11 Sust. locations	SA12 Communities	SA13 Housing	SA14 Economy	SA15 Employment
Site XXX	x	?	?	✓	-	x	-	-	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-

- 4.12 Each site under consideration for allocation in the new Local Plan has been individually assessed in terms of its accessibility to services. This has been

achieved through an approximate distance measurement between potential housing sites and the location of the service. The distance measurement is taken from the centre point of the site, assumes a flat terrain and direct route as a result of the difficulty in mapping these aspects. It is recognised that in reality this may not be the case and further work will be undertaken in terms of access to services and fed back into the Regulation 19 stage of the plan-making process.

4.13 In order to determine levels of access to services, the following distance thresholds² have been used between housing and services, under which the service may be considered accessible.

4.14 **Table 3: Accessibility ideal standards:**³

Service	Distance Threshold
Stations	800m – 1600m
Primary Schools	400m - 800m
Secondary Schools	1600m - 3200m
GP Surgeries	800m – 1600m
Convenience shops	800m - 1600m
Open Spaces	400m – 800m
Convenience shops	800m – 1600m
Open Spaces	400m – 800m

4.15 Details of the distances and/or thresholds to existing services, have been provided in the site summaries.

4.16 In the consideration of sites, Members should take account of the infrastructure and services that are proposed to be provided on site as well as the accessibility to existing services.⁴ It should be noted that the majority of the sites being considered in this report and appendices will not be of a scale to provide significant infrastructure benefits.

4.17 The SHELAA assessments and SA report and working note for the sites is contained in the appendices to this report. The Green Belt Reviews, SHELAA methodology and other evidence base studies were published alongside the previous Regulation 18 consultations and are available to view on the Council's website at:

<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/planning/planning-policy/new-local-plan#Evidence%20base>

4.18 The sites agreed by Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee to be recommended to the Policy & Resources Committee for inclusion in the

² As was the case for the 2021 Regulation 18 consultation, the distance thresholds are based on Three Rivers Access to Services Study 2007, Barton, H. et al (1995), Sustainable Settlements: a guide for planners, designers and developers, UWE, Bristol and DETR (2001) PPG13: Transport, HMSO, London

³ Important facilities to which people can usually be expected to walk to should be a maximum of 400m away. Local facilities which are ideally accessible by foot should be a maximum of 800m away.

Local facilities to which it is not reasonable to expect all people to walk to, but which could be walked to by those who choose should be a maximum of 1600m away. Facilities which are less local but should be within cycling distance should preferably be within 5000m, and no more than 8000m away.

⁴ A site that is outside the accessibility thresholds of an existing service/facility may be capable of providing that service/facility on site.

Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers will be reported to the Policy & Resources Committee as part of the whole consultation document together with any strategic sites agreed by Members at the 24 August Local Plan Sub-Committee.

- 4.19 Appendices 7 and 8 provide summaries of the statutory consultee comments and non-statutory consultee comments respectively to the 2021 Sites for Potential Allocation and 2023 Additional Sites for Potential Allocation consultations. Not all the sites included in the report received relevant comments and therefore not all the sites are included in the summaries.

Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The sites recommended in this report contribute to an approach that would result in a moderate level of growth. Through the Regulation 18 consultations in 2021 and 2023 the Council has already consulted on a high growth option based on the standard method housing need. The low growth option would be no Green Belt land being released at all.
- 5.2 The 24 August Local Plan Sub-Committee will be considering strategic sites both in areas of low to moderate Green Belt harm as well as strategic sites that fall within moderate-high and high areas of Green Belt harm (but not any sites in areas of very high Green Belt harm). There will therefore potentially be further sites added beyond those included in this report.
- 5.3 Overall the amount of growth without going into the Green belt would be far too low as we would be unable to meet the needs of the District as required by national policy including affordable housing, housing for the elderly and delivering much needed infrastructure, whereas if we were to meet the standard method housing need in full it would result in unacceptable harm to the Green Belt. It is for this reason that officers recommend a moderate growth approach and the sites recommended within this report together with any strategic sites agreed at the 24 August Local Plan Sub-Committee would contribute to this approach.
- 5.4 Although officers consider this approach to be justified based on the District's constraints, it should be noted that this moderate growth approach may not be considered acceptable by the Inspector at Local Plan examination. A recent example being the Mole Valley Local Plan examination where the Inspector concluded that the Green Belt sites should be retained in the plan despite the council wishing to remove them following the government's consultation on planning reform.

Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

Financial, Legal, Staffing, Equal Opportunities, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

- 7.1 None specific.

Financial Implications

- 8.1 None specific.

Legal Implications

9.1 None specific.

Risk and Health & Safety Implications

10.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

10.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Planning Policy and Conservation service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
Failure/Delay in delivering Local Plan	Increase in speculative planning applications	Local Development Scheme	tolerate	6
Local Plan found 'unsound' a examination	Main modifications may be required which will result in an extended examination and costs and/or the Plan may have to be withdrawn.	Ensure that the Local Plan is evidenced based and justified	tolerate	6

10.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely Likelihood <small>100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0%</small>	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8

	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
	Impact			
	Low ----->		Unacceptable	

Impact Score

- 4 (Catastrophic)
- 3 (Critical)
- 2 (Significant)
- 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

- 4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
- 3 (Likely (21-79%))
- 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
- 1 (Remote (≤5%))

10.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

Recommendation

11.1 That the Local Plan Sub Committee:

- Note the contents of this report
- Note the contents of the summary slides
- Consider the sites as set out in the summary slides against the criteria set out in this report and slides.
- Agree the urban brownfield sites and sites within areas of low to moderate Green Belt harm as set out in this report and slides.
- Recommend to Policy & Resources Committee the sites to be included in the Regulation 18 consultation on lower housing numbers.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Urban brownfield sites summary slides
- Appendix 2 – Low to moderate green belt harm sites summary slides
- Appendix 3 – SHELAA forms – urban brownfield sites
- Appendix 4 – SHELAA forms – low to moderate harm green belt sites
- Appendix 5 – Interim SA report (June 2021)
- Appendix 6 – SA Working Note (January 2023)
- Appendix 7 – Statutory consultee response summaries
- Appendix 8 – Non-statutory consultee summaries
- Appendix 9 – District map
- Appendix 10 – Bedmond area map
- Appendix 11 – Abbots Langley & Garston area map
- Appendix 12 – Abbots Langley & Kings Langley area map
- Appendix 13 – Langleybury & Hunton Bridge area map

Appendix 14 – Chorleywood area map
Appendix 15 – Mill End area map
Appendix 16 – Rickmansworth area map
Appendix 17 – Croxley Green area map
Appendix 18 – South Oxhey, Oxhey Hall & Carpenders Park area map
Appendix 19 – Maple Cross area map

Background Papers

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)
Planning Practice Guidance
Core Strategy (2011)
Green Belt Review Strategic Analysis (Stage 1) (2017)
Stage 2 Green Belt Assessment (2019)
Regulation 18 Part 1: Preferred Policy Options (2021)
Regulation 18 Part 2: Sites for Potential Allocation (2021)
Regulation 18 Part 3: Additional Sites for Potential Allocation (2023)
Potential Sites consultation (2018)
Regulation 18 Issues & Options consultation (2017)
Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy (2022)
Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment (2020)
Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment Addendum (2023)
Urban Capacity Study (2020)
13 June 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee
10 July 2023 Local Plan Sub-Committee Briefing Note

