

City of Derby Local Plan Review

Public Local Inquiry

Green Wedge Topic Paper

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DERBY CITY COUNCIL

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Green Wedge Topic Paper

SUMMARY

Green wedges are intended to define and enhance the urban structure of the City as a whole. They penetrate the urban area and provide an uninterrupted link to the open countryside. Given their importance to the City's structure it is considered that once properly defined, they should have a long and certain future. However, the boundaries of green wedges do not have the same degree of permanence as Green Belts. The boundaries are subject to re-examination through the local plan review process.

In April 1989, the Council approved a Green Wedge Policy in order to strengthen the long-standing principle of maintaining open land. It established a consistent approach to the principle and definition of green wedges. The policy has been carried forward through the Local Plan for Southern Derby (1994) and the City of Derby Local Plan (1998). Over the years, the green wedge principle has consistently been supported on appeal.

The Key Planning Objective ST2 h) of the Local Plan Review is to ensure the environmental well being of the City including the conservation and enhancement of its key natural and cultural resources, its heritage, local distinctiveness and community identity. The green wedge policy helps to meet this objective.

Through the Local Plan Review the Council has had regard to major areas of recent development, but has not found the need to change many green wedges boundaries. It is considered that their general nature and function remains as important now as it was when they were first defined. In most cases, it was not considered that there was either a need, or sufficient justification, to alter existing boundaries.

The Council has identified opportunities within in the City's urban area for housing development through urban capacity studies to accommodate the Structure Plan requirement. These sites utilise previously developed land.

However, there has still been a need to identify some "Greenfield" land within the City in order to meet the Structure Plan requirement. Generally, the Council gives priority to identifying greenfield land outside the green wedges to meet development needs. However, there have been some cases where the inclusion of some green wedge land within development sites has presented significant sustainability opportunities that justify the loss to the green wedge. However, in all cases, the Council believes a viable green wedge will still be maintained.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Topic Paper looks at the broad principles and rationale of green wedge policy. It outlines the history of the policy's development throughout successive local plans. It also considers the definition of wedges and the criteria by which the boundaries are set. Finally, the Paper identifies and gives reasons for the changes that the Council has made to the green wedge boundaries throughout the First and Revised Deposit stages of the Local Plan Review.

2.0 PRINCIPLE OF THE GREEN WEDGE

- 2.1 As the City has grown over the last few decades, settlements that once lay beyond the City boundaries such as Mickleover or Spondon have joined the main urban area of the city. The wedges of open land left between these settlements have played an increasingly important role in maintaining their respective identities and helping to overcome an impression of anonymous suburban sprawl.
- 2.2 The wedges help to provide a sense of place and belonging to a particular neighbourhood. They also provide city dwellers with the opportunity to be close to undeveloped and open areas where they can benefit from an attractive environment and have access to open space for leisure and recreation. Green wedges can contribute to the well being of the city's residents.
- 2.3 Green wedges are intended to define and enhance the urban structure of the City as a whole. They penetrate the urban area and provide an uninterrupted link to the open countryside. Given their importance to the City's structure it is considered that once properly defined, they should have a long and certain future. However, the boundaries of green wedges do not have the same degree of permanence as Green Belts. The boundaries are subject to re-examination through the local plan review process.

3.0 FUNCTION OF THE GREEN WEDGE

- 3.1 The areas of green wedge as defined on the Proposals Map have different functions according to their location. The wedges between Spondon and Chaddesden, Allestree and Mackworth, Littleover and Mickleover, and Alvaston and Chellaston have the function of preventing coalescence of neighbouring communities and maintaining a sense of place and local identity. Other wedges separate residential communities from existing and proposed business and industrial areas. These help to foster community identity and provide buffer zones to protect residential amenity. The wedges between Chaddesden and the Upper Derwent industrial area and between Allenton and the Sinfyn industrial area fall within this category.
- 3.2 Much of the Lower Derwent Valley wedge has a different function. In seeking to maintain a predominantly open corridor for the River

Derwent, its role is to contribute to the attractiveness of the City's urban structure by enhancing its major physical feature.

- 3.3 The policies for the green wedges contain a general presumption against most forms of built development, including housing and business/ industry. This is essential if the wedges are to perform their major role. However, the Council is mindful that land within green wedges should have a beneficial use. They can and do accommodate a variety of formal recreational facilities, including public and private sports pitches and golf courses, and provide important and convenient opportunities for informal recreation such as countryside and cycling. Agriculture and forestry will be encouraged. Essential buildings and activities ancillary to existing education establishments are acceptable in principle. Also acceptable are public utilities where it can be shown that a suitable site outside the Green Wedge is not available.
- 3.4 The green wedges provide important wildlife corridors within the plan area, accommodating a large number of the identified wildlife sites.
- 3.5 Through the Local Plan Policy E3, the Council seeks to enhance the environmental quality, the recreational and ecological value of the green wedges. Since the early 1990's, the Council has coordinated countryside management projects in order achieve these aims. The Council also publicises recreational routes and nature trails in some of the green wedges.

4.0 HISTORY OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The City Council has long sought to preserve a measure of identity for communities by retaining areas of open land, which penetrate into the built-up area and separate them. The following, now superceded, local plans contained policies which identified areas of open land for protection against encroaching development:

- Chellaston Local Plan November 1985, Policies 11.2 and 11.3
- Spondon Local Plan, January 1989, Policy 16.1
- Friar Gate/ Markeaton Local Plan, January 1990, Policies 10.1 and 10.2
- Upper Derwentside Local Plan, January 1990, Policy 19.1 a), b) and c)

The boundaries of some of these areas changed as they were taken forward through later local plans.

- 4.2 In April 1989, the Council approved a Green Wedge Policy in order to strengthen the long-standing principle of maintaining open land. This established a consistent approach to the principle and definition of green wedges. The policy provided a basis for development control and a framework for the preparation of site specific policies in local plans. It also became a guide for positive action in green wedges by the City Council and other

organisations. The Policy statement identified the broad locations of the Green Wedges in the City. These are listed in Appendix 2.

4.3 In the early stages of the preparation of the Local Plan for Southern Derby (LPSD), the boundaries that had been shown strategically under the 1989 Green Wedge Policy were surveyed in detail. In some cases, the boundaries of the areas that were identified in previous local plans were further refined to take account of needs for development identified in the LPSD. The Plan incorporated the principles of the 1989 Policy into a new Policy E2. This new policy superseded all the policies protecting areas of open land in previous local plans.

4.4 At the LPSD Public Inquiry, the Inspector stated support for the green wedges in paragraph 7.36 of his report:

“I believe the wedges as proposed perform an important function through their ability to separate and divide communities and through their presence as open areas of land adjacent to built-up areas. They are of considerable merit in their own right and their extent, I believe, should be maximised where possible and where a degree of physical continuity can be achieved, in a manner consistent with the demands of other Plan policies.”

The Plan was adopted in June 1994.

4.5 The City of Derby Local Plan (CDLP) adopted in April 1998 rolled forward the LPSD Policy E2 and also defined the boundaries of the green wedges in the northern half of the City. Over the years, the green wedge principle when tested on appeal has consistently been supported by the Planning Inspectorate and successive Secretaries of State.

4.6 The strategic importance of the green wedge policy has been further recognised by the Derby and Derbyshire Joint Structure Plan, which was adopted in January 2001. The General Development Strategy Policy 3 states that:

“new development (should) respect patterns of open land within and between settlements.”

This objective is further reflected in Housing Policy 4 and Environment Policy 4: Environmental Priority Areas.

5.0 DEFINITION OF GREEN WEDGES

5.1 The boundaries for the green wedges were drawn up using similar criteria to drawing up green belts. Guidelines for boundary definition were established to ensure consistency. Wherever possible and appropriate, boundaries follow features which are easily identifiable on the ground. Details of the guidelines are contained in Appendix 1. Certain land uses such as allotments, cemeteries and school playing fields, were identified as features for inclusion when falling at the wedge boundary, subject to local circumstances. These essentially open land uses are considered to being acceptable in principle in the wedges.

- 5.2 The intention has not been to include as much open land as possible within the wedges, but to include only that land which is justifiably included. A key consideration is the contribution a piece of land makes to the wedge. Often, the final boundary line is a matter of judgement. Although no hard and fast guidelines were established about the necessary minimum width of wedges, a guiding principle has been that if at a point a wedge is narrow and therefore vulnerable, safeguarding open land at that point becomes all the more important.

6.0 THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

- 6.1 The Key Planning Objective ST2 h) of the Local Plan Review is to ensure the environmental well being of the City including the conservation and enhancement of its key natural and cultural resources, its heritage, local distinctiveness and community identity. The green wedge policy helps to meet this objective.
- 6.2 Through the Local Plan Review the Council has had regard to areas of recent development, but has not found the need to change many green wedges boundaries. It is considered that their general nature and function remains as important now as it was when they were first defined. In most cases, it was not considered that there was either a need, or sufficient justification, to alter existing boundaries.
- 6.3 Within the period of the Derby and Derbyshire Joint Structure Plan, adopted 2001, no significant difficulties are envisaged in providing the land necessary for housing or industrial/ business development. The Council has identified opportunities within the City's urban area for housing development through urban capacity studies to accommodate the Structure Plan requirement. These sites utilise previously developed land. Other evidence presented to this Inquiry will address this issue.
- 6.4 The wording of the green wedge policy itself was reviewed to allow the redevelopment of redundant buildings within green wedges for residential uses in certain circumstances. This would be on the basis that the site is closely related to existing residential areas. The reason for this being that it would make it easier to find alternative uses for redundant buildings and might help to bring previously developed land for housing sites forward. It is envisaged that such development will only occur occasionally.
- 6.5 However, there has still been a need to identify some "Greenfield" land within the City in order to meet the Structure Plan requirement. The Council has identified some area of green wedge where it feels that the sustainability advantages of including such land within development sites, justifies the loss to the green wedge. However, in all cases, the Council believes a viable green wedge will still be maintained. The areas of green wedge affected in this way include:

University Campus, Mickleover

- 6.6 The most significant change to a green wedge boundary in the First Deposit, was at the University Campus in Mickleover. The site comprises university buildings, a running track and a sports field. Part of the site lies within the green wedge in the adopted Plan. The Council considers that the site is suitable for housing because it has strong sustainable benefits, being well related to the existing residential area and being predominantly previously developed. In the First Deposit of the Review, the boundary was redrawn along the Bramble Brook, which provides a clear, identifiable boundary on the ground.

Land at the former Manor Kingsway Hospital

- 6.7 The green wedge boundaries at the Manor/ Kingsway site (Policy R4) were amended in response to representations received through the First Deposit consultation. The Council considered that as the overall scheme offers significant employment and sustainability benefits, there was a case to reduce the green wedge and increase the amount of employment land in the mix of uses. The amendment incorporated more of the green wedge into the proposed development site. The revised Policy R4 requires more landscaping along this edge. The amendment to the boundary is shown on Map R4, Res. No. 2, from the Revisions to the Proposals Map, Revised Deposit Autumn 2002.

Wilmorton College

- 6.8 In the First Deposit, Policy LE5 identified part of the allocated site at Wilmorton College as part employment land and part green wedge. This was intended to show that some green wedge land had potential to be included as part of any re-development of the site. The green wedge boundary was amended in the Revised Deposit to provide clarity as to the precise boundaries of the wedge and the potential development site. The Council considered that there was a good case for a small part of the green wedge lying between the existing college building and Alvaston Park to be included in the potential development site. This could either help provide better educational facilities on the campus, or contribute towards a more satisfactory redevelopment scheme. The amendment to the policy was made on the basis that other open land in the green wedge to the north of the existing buildings is dedicated to the Council as public open space. The amendment to the green wedge boundary at this point is shown on Map LE5 (a), Res. No. 4, in the Revisions to the Proposals Map from the Revised Deposit Autumn 2002.

Racecourse Park, Chaddesden

- 6.9 A minor change to the green wedge was made at the Racecourse Park in response to comments by the Derwent Community Partnership. The change was made in order to enable significant benefits to the local community through the New Deal initiative. The council considered that the small area of land removed for this purpose would have a minimal impact on the overall green wedge.

The amendment to the boundary is shown on Map E2. Res. No. 4, Revisions to the Proposals Map, Revised Deposit Autumn 2002.

Breadsall Hilltop

- 6.10 In the First Deposit, a minor extension to the green wedge boundary was made at Breadsall Hilltop, in the interest of providing a rational and defensible boundary. However, at the Revised Deposit, the Council resolved to remove the green wedge designation in order to reflect an outline planning permission that was granted for residential development at Windmill Garage Hilltop, Breadsall. The green wedge boundary was reverted to the boundary as defined in the adopted CDLP. The amendment to the boundary is shown on Map E2, Res. No. 5, from the Revisions to the Proposals Map, Revised Deposit Autumn 2002.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1:

Guidelines for drawing up Green Wedge boundaries

Position of boundaries

Where roads, lanes, bridleways and footpaths form the boundary, the boundary should be the green wedge side of the route.

Where the boundary follows a railway line, the permanent way should be used as the boundary.

Uses excluded from the edge of the wedge:

House gardens

Primary schools

Churchyards abutting the wedge

Areas with a valid permission for built development

Uses included at the edge of the wedge:

Parks and sportsgrounds

Secondary schools (more extensive playing fields than primary schools)

“Ribbon” development where it is surrounded by, or extends into land, which is clearly part of a wedge, nurseries, chicken runs, garden centres and sewage works.

Categories of development in which specific cases need to be individually assessed on their merits:

Garages

Isolated industry

Tips

Hospitals

Land allocated in older plans

Appendix 2

Appendix 2

Green Wedges strategically identified in the Green Wedge Policy 1989 and carried forward into the adopted City of Derby Local Plan 1998.

Alvaston/ Chellaston

Allenton/Sinfin Industrial Area

Sinfin/ Sinfin Industrial Area

Littleover/ Sunnyhill

Mickleover/ Littleover

Mackworth/ Mickleover/ Littleover

Allestree/ Mackworth/ Markeaton Brook

Upper Derwent Valley

Chaddesden/ Derwent Industrial Area

North Oakwood, incorporating Chaddesden Wood and Oakwood Park

Lees Brook Valley

Spondon/ Chaddesden

Lower Derwent Valley