

# Core Strategy for Chiltern District

## Chiltern District Council - Response to Inspector's Questions [ID/4]

### MAIN MATTER 5: Green Belt SUB MATTER: Policy CS23 Green Belt Boundaries

**DATE: 18 March 2011**

#### Final

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The following Paper sets out the Council's response to Section 6 (Main Matter 5: Green Belt, Sub Matter: Policy CS23 Green Belt Boundaries) of the document 'Inspector's Main Matters and Questions' ID/4. The Paper has been structured to include the specific questions raised by the Inspector and the Council's detailed response to them.

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**Q6.4) What is the Council intending to indicate in CS23: change to Green Belt boundaries where the Green Belt abuts the edges of settlements which are outside the Green Belt and/or changes to the envelopes of villages within the Green Belt (LP GB4 and GB5 policy areas) and which would remain in Green Belt? Does the policy title and text appropriately signal what the Council intend? Is any change in wording required for clarity?**

#### **CDC Response:**

Policy CS23 is intended to indicate that the Council will review the boundaries of those settlements identified within the existing Green Belt as being suitable for limited infilling as defined by policies GB4 and GB5 in the Local Plan. It is conceded that the existing wording in the CS could be misleading for those reading the Core Strategy document in isolation from the saved Local Plan policies which relate to these Green Belt settlements, and that it could imply that villages close to the boundary of the Green Belt (i.e. excluded from the

Green Belt) could also have their boundaries with the Green Belt reviewed. The title of the Policy also refers to reviewing village boundaries. In fact, the existing Local Plan policies which identify the Green Belt settlements cover both larger villages and just rows of dwellings in the Green Belt. Therefore it would be more accurate to refer to settlements. It is suggested that minor changes could be made both to the explanatory text and the title of the policy. These changes would not change the meaning or intent of policy CS23 but should hopefully clarify the aim of the policy.

Proposed changes to wording:

Para 14.4 – after the 8<sup>th</sup> sentence (ending “harm the character of the area”), insert a new sentence as follows: ‘*The Core Strategy does not seek to remove any land from the existing Green Belt as defined in the adopted local plan or to amend any of the existing Green Belt boundaries.*’

Replace the title of policy CS23 as follows – ‘*Review of the Boundaries of Identified Settlements within the Green Belt*’

**Q6.5) Bearing in mind the advice in PPG2, paragraphs 2.6, 2.7 and 2.11 (and the text in the box), are exceptional circumstances required to trigger any type of review of actual Green Belt boundaries around settlements? If so, do such circumstances exist? Would a demonstrable inability to meet the SEP housing requirement from non Green Belt sites provide such exceptional circumstances? If they do, does that mean that Green Belt boundaries should be reviewed or is this still a choice for the Council to make?**

**CDC Response:**

National policy in PPG2 stresses the importance of retaining Green Belt and the Government in its document “The Coalition: our Programme for Government” has stated its intention to maintain the Green Belt. Paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7 of PPG2 deal with defining the Green Belt and more specifically Green Belt boundaries - the general extent of the Green Belt once approved

should be altered only exceptionally. This point is also reinforced in the Planning Inspectorate's document, "Examining Development Plan Documents: Learning from Experience" (page 11). Accordingly, it is clear that exceptional circumstances would have to exist to trigger a review of Green Belt boundaries. Such circumstances do not exist. It is also submitted that changes to the Green Belt should not be made unless a higher plan (paragraph 2.7 of PPG2 refers to the Structure Plan but this would now be the South East Plan) indicates an alteration is required or other exceptional circumstances exist which necessitate a revision. The South East Plan did not recommend any Green Belt release in Chiltern District and the Council does not consider it necessary to release Green Belt land to accommodate housing or any other development. Paragraph 2.11 of PPG2 deals with Green Belt settlements. Nothing within the PPG suggests that identification of Green Belt villages should alter the overall extent and/ or boundaries of the Green Belt. Although the option of developing some of the Green Belt has been examined as part of the process of drawing up the CS, the chosen strategy quite specifically does not require land to be taken out of the Green Belt to accommodate new development. It is also stressed that retention of all of the existing Green Belt has very strong public support.

**Q6.6) Are exceptional circumstances required to review the boundaries of villages washed over by the Green Belt and if so, do they exist? What is the purpose of this exercise?**

**CDC Response:**

There is nothing in PPG2 or in other policy statements that suggests that exceptional circumstances need to exist to review the boundaries of settlements identified as being suitable for limited infilling within the Green Belt. Most of the infilling boundaries of the identified Green Belt settlements were originally drafted in 1989. Whilst some additional Green Belt settlements were added in later reviews of the Local Plan, most boundaries have not altered. In the intervening years, appropriate infilling and new development has taken place in the villages to the extent that in some cases the boundaries as drawn may no longer follow recognisable or logical boundaries.

The Council is proposing that it will review the boundaries of identified settlements to see if their delineation is still appropriate. The Council does not consider this will lead to large-scale changes to the identified boundaries or add to the potential for significant infilling to take place.

**Q6.7) Did the Council undertake any review of which villages should be excluded from the Green Belt? If not, does PPS2 require such a review of villages if they have already been identified in a development plan?**

**CDC Response:**

Excluding additional settlements from the Green Belt would be counter to national policy and was not contemplated as an option in the development of the CS. Significant development in the small villages which are in the Green Belt would not be sustainable.