

Agenda

Session 1 – 09.30 Tuesday 4 February 2020

Matter 1

Biddulph – safeguarded land and provision for housing

Background

The matter considers the proposals for safeguarded land at Gillow Heath and the modifications to Policies DSB1 (Wharf Road) and DSB3 (Tunstall Road). The Inspector's Post Hearing Advice (EL6.004) indicated that the release of BDNEW from the Green Belt had not been justified stating, amongst other things that: *'exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated for the specific proposals in Biddulph¹ and this aspect of the Plan is unsound. In the first instance I would ask that the Council set out how this soundness issue is to be resolved. In reviewing whether exceptional circumstances exist consideration should be given as to whether it would be appropriate to identify areas of 'safeguarded land' in order to meet longer-term development needs in Biddulph'.*

The Council, after undertaking a review of the options, proposed that three sites at Gillow Heath be removed from the Green Belt and shown as safeguarded land (paragraph 85 of the Framework refers) (MM12). No new allocations are proposed. The Green Belt Reviews and Options Analysis have assessed the Gillow Heath sites against Green Belt purposes suggesting limited impacts overall. The proposed allocations at Wharf Road and Tunstall Road were also reviewed. Following a master planning exercise an adjustment was made to the housing that could be accommodated (MM39 and MM41).

Biddulph Town Council is progressing a neighbourhood plan, but it does not include site allocations.

Issues:

1. Consideration of options for Biddulph, including safeguarded land

1.1 Is the overall analysis of options for Biddulph, following the Inspector's Post Hearing Advice, robust?

The Council refers to the Options Planning Analysis (EL10.005), the various Green Belt Review documents (SD22.4, 22.6 and 22.7) and the Sustainability Appraisal of the options (EL10.006).

1.1a Should the analysis of options have included other land, including that at Biddulph Moor?

1.2 Does the evidence base, including the Sustainability Appraisal, Green

¹ The BDNEW site to the west of Biddulph Valley Way

Belt Reviews and Options Analysis, support the identification of the three sites at Gillow Heath as safeguarded land?

See documents referred to under 1.1.

1.2a Does the analysis of options in EL10.005 and EL10.006 include the relevant information and apply a consistent approach?

1.2b Are there any implications arising from the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan evidence base for the proposals to safeguard land at Gillow Heath, particularly in relation to biodiversity information?

1.2c What are the implications of the proposed designation of 'Gillow Fold Field' as Local Green Space in the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan?

1.3 Is the conclusion that there will be a limited effect on Green Belt purposes from the Gillow Heath sites justified?

The Council refers to the Green Belt Reviews and the conclusions that the sites make limited contributions to Green Belt purposes, particularly in comparison to other sites on the edge of the town.

2. Other potential impacts of sites in Gillow Heath – landscape, highways, flood risk, drainage, odours, biodiversity, infrastructure

2.1 Are there any overriding constraints that are likely to prevent the Gillow Heath sites coming forward to meet any longer-term needs beyond the Plan period?

The Council refers to the evidence base and responses from statutory consultees which it believes point to no overriding constraints. It is noted that, for the sites to be allocated, additional assessment work will be required.

2.2 Should Policy SS6 and MM12 be further modified to make it clear that consideration would need to be given to potential impacts if the sites were brought forward for development in the future?

The Council has proposed further changes to MM12 (EL12.020a) in relation to the above.

3. Proposals for Wharf Road and Tunstall Road

3.1 Are the increases in density and housing numbers following master-planning work justified?

The Council notes that the masterplans take into account constraints and

market demand. This has resulted in MMs (MM9, MM39 and MM41) to reflect increased housing numbers. The Council is suggesting a further change to MM41 to clarify the land available for residential development.

3.2 Does the master planning work take into account biodiversity considerations?

3.3 Are the densities proposed at Wharf Road and Tunstall Road justified taking into account likely land available?

4. Housing supply in Biddulph

Policy SS4 as modified by MM9 shows a net housing requirement of at least 3802 dwellings whereas total potential provision is 3419 dwellings, although a further proposed change to MM9 now shows a net requirement of 3763 dwellings to reflect updated information. Potential provision remains at 3419 dwellings. The difference is greatest in Biddulph (962 dwelling requirement against potential provision of 734 dwellings).

4.1 Is it necessary to identify sufficient land in Biddulph at this stage to meet the housing needs of the town over the Plan period?

The Council refers to its objective of ensuring that sufficient land exists for at least 10 years as referred to in paragraph 47 of the Framework. It is not considered that exceptional circumstances exist for further Green Belt release at this point in time.

4.2 If it is considered necessary to identify sufficient land, how is it to be achieved?

The Council does not consider that it is necessary to identify sufficient land for the whole of the Plan period.

4.3 Notwithstanding the Council's stated position, is there justification for allocating the Gillow Heath sites in this Plan rather than designating them as safeguarded land?

4.4 What contribution, if any, can be made to housing supply from sites within the existing built-up area, including the town centre?

Main Evidence Base

EL10.001 - Schedule of Main Modifications (MM12, MM39 and MM41 in particular)

EL10.002 - SA of SMDC Local Plan proposed Main Modifications

EL10.005 - Biddulph Options Planning Analysis & Maps

EL10.006 - SA Report Biddulph Options

EL10.007 - Wharf Road Masterplan Exec Summary
EL10.008 - Tunstall Road Masterplan Exec Summary
SD13.2 – Site Allocations Topic Paper Biddulph
SD22.4, 22.6 & 22.7 – Green Belt Reviews

Participants

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC)
Nina Pindham (on behalf of Robert Simcock)
Andy Williams of Advance Land and Planning (on behalf of Seabridge Developments)
Roy Leigh of Leigh Ecology (on behalf of Seabridge Developments)
John Coxon of Emery Planning (on behalf of Mr & Mrs Webb)
Sarah Haydon of Biddulph Town Council
Angie Turner on behalf of Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Statements

SMDC (EL12.005)
SMDC revised schedule of MMs (EL12.020a)
Angie Turner (EL12.001)
Emery Planning for Mr & Mrs Webb (EL12.002)
Mr D Nixon (EL12.003)
Biddulph Town Council (EL12.004)
Robert Simcock (EL12.006)
Advance Land and Planning (EL12.007)