

Examination of Oadby & Wigston Borough Council Local Plan

Statement on behalf of Bloor Homes Ltd

Submitted by Define Planning & Design Ltd

MATTER 10 – GREEN WEDGE

1. The Council's Local Plan evidence base sets out an assessment of the role of the existing designated Green Wedge areas in the Borough against the stated policy objectives using the methodology agreed across the County. However, whilst that Assessment also recommends the extension of the Green Wedge between Oadby and Wigston no justification whatsoever is given for that in terms of the specific merits of the extension area in relation to the express purposes of the designation. The "Green Wedge Note" provided by the Council, at the Inspector's request following the Examination hearing session in relation to Matter 10, now seeks to provide that justification by considering the potential role of the extension area against the 4 functions of the Green Wedge as set out in Policy 42. It is, however, apparent from the reasoning given in Section 2 of the Note that it is essentially a post rationalisation of an unsound proposal.
2. In relation to the "**preventing the merging of settlements**" the note refers to a potential threat of future development "*wrapping around the bottom of the Green Wedge, joining the two settlements*". There has been no suggestion in the preparation of the Local Plan that this is a realistic, let alone likely, prospect. Indeed, even if it was, it is difficult to see how the proposed extension to the Green Wedge would make any difference in that regard as the Council later state in their Note that it is a less restrictive designation than countryside and development could still in any case (theoretically) wrap around the southern end of the extended Green Wedge.
3. The designation of the Cottage Farm site for development does not itself result in the coalescence of Oadby and Wigston, and the extension of the Green Wedge is not, therefore, necessary to prevent the merging of settlements. That is agreed by the Council in their Note, that also later correctly highlights that the allocation is not dependent on the extension to the Green Wedge. Indeed, following the development of the Cottage Farm site there would still be a wide expanse of countryside between Oadby and Wigston (much wider than the area to the north that is currently designated as Green Wedge), and there would be no physical coalescence or, indeed, a perception of coalescence given the limited inter-visibility between the two urban areas in this locality.
4. The Council's Note then refers to potential future settlement coalescence if the new Local Plan's policy triggers be "set in motion" and further land for development is required to the south and east of Wigston. It also later refers to a risk of curtailing the "**green lung**" into the urban area in this regard. However, if and when that scenario occurs then that would be the time to consider whether the nature and scale of development required would result in a risk of coalescence between settlements and/or a need to protect a green lung into the urban area, and therefore, a consequent need to extend the Green Wedge.
5. In terms of "**guiding development form**" the Council's Note refers to the distinct definition of the urban area and the Green Wedge, but that clear distinction is also apparent between the urban area and countryside in the Borough. It later refers to the extended Green Wedge area "guiding" the extent of built development in the Cottage Farm allocation site. The extent of the built development is, however, actually initially dictated by the extent of the allocated area, and will then be refined through the further masterplanning required and the planning application process taking account of the

specific nature and capacity of the site itself and the quantum of development and required green infrastructure.

6. The Council's Note also suggests that the extension would "link" the (private) Glen Gorse Golf Course to the other recreation areas in the existing Green Wedge. It is not clear, however, what purpose that would serve or public benefit it would realise. In reality nothing would change on the grounds and the only actual link between the areas would be the existing public rights of way. Indeed, in relation to "**acting as a recreational resource**" the Council concedes that there are no specific proposals for using the extension area for a recreational purpose or even increasing public access to it. The reality is that the area remain a fully functional part of the wider countryside in agricultural use with public access limited to the few existing public rights of way that run through the area.
7. Furthermore, the extension area is rural in character and in no way reflects the nature of the Borough's Green Wedges as characterised by the Council's Note in Section 3.
8. As such the proposed extension to the Green Wedge between Oadby and Wigston is neither necessary nor justified. Moreover, there are sufficient policies within the Local Plan to appropriately guide development management decisions in this area without the imposition of further restrictive measures. Bloor Homes, therefore, maintain their objection to the proposal to extend the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge which remains unjustified and is, therefore, unsound. The proposal should therefore, be deleted from the Local Plan.