

Matter 10 – Green Wedges

March 2018

Local Plan Examination Matter Statement



*Oadby and Wigston
Borough Council*

Issue: Whether the retention and designation of Green Space in the LP is justified?

Q1. Is the retention and designation of Green Wedges in the LP supported by a robust evidence base? (See Green Wedge review)

Council response;

1. Yes. The Council considers that the Green Wedge designations as set out within the Submission Local Plan are justified by robust evidence base.

2. The Green Wedge designations applicable to the Borough area were first introduced in 1987 in the Leicestershire Structure Plan. They are a longstanding planning mechanism that are well established in the County and the City areas with many crossing local authority boundaries. Since this initial introduction the designations have been safeguarded due to their particular strategic and local importance. Extant adopted policy relating to Green Wedges and their designation are contained within the Council's Core Strategy.

3. Through the production of the Council's Local Plan evidence was produced in relation to the Green Wedge areas of the Borough, namely the Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge and the Oadby, Thurnby, Stoughton Green Wedge. The evidence base comprised of a Green Wedge Review 2017 (LP9/01), that was undertaken in conformity with the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology (joint methodology). The joint methodology was produced and endorsed by local authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire due to the importance given to the role of green wedges in local and strategic planning at a HMA wide level. The methodology allows for green wedges within the Leicester and Leicestershire area to be reviewed at either a 'macro' or 'micro' scale. A macro scale review looks at a green wedge designation in its entirety and not individual or specific areas of a green wedge. The joint methodology sets out, that regardless of the scale of the review, the green wedge as a whole should achieve all of the functions as set out within the joint methodology.

4. The Council's Green Wedge Review assesses both of the green wedge designations within the Borough at a macro scale with conclusions suggesting that each of the current boundary extents achieve each one of the four functions specified within the joint

methodology. These conclusions are set out within the tables at page 24/25/26 and page 36/37 of the Green Wedge Review. Following the tables, is a summary of each green wedge review.

5. Upon the conclusions and summary of each green wedge review, the report goes on to highlight potential recommendations taking into account the Council's specified Broad Location for Growth Areas identified within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the greenfield release sites identified within the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation document. As specified within the report, the recommendations are subject to the Council requiring further land for development within the new Local Plan. Due to the development needs of the Borough up to 2031, requiring the Council to utilise its specified Broad Location for Growth Areas identified within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the greenfield release sites identified within the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation document, the Submission Local Plan took account of the recommendations set out within the Green Wedge Review 2017.

6. The Council would like to confirm that the Green Wedge Review, did not take account of potential development locations (for example, the Council's specified Broad Location for Growth Areas identified within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the greenfield release sites identified within the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation document) within the macro level review, it assessed each of the green wedges in their current form to ascertain whether or not the green wedge achieved all four of the functions specified in the joint methodology.

7. In addition, it should be noted that the Broad Locations and potential greenfield release sites that have been utilised for the Submission Local Plan have been identified throughout the production of the Local Plan, and were chosen on the basis of taking into account all of the evidence that supports the Submission Local Plan, for example that relating to the highway and transport infrastructure network.

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Q2 – Are the restrictions on certain types of development in Green Wedges justified and consistent with national policy?

Council response;

8. Yes. The Council considers that the allowed development uses set out in Policy 42 of the Submission Local Plan are justified and consistent with national policy.

9. One of the Core planning principles set out at paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to *'...take account of the different roles and character of different areas'*. Paragraph 58 states that policies should be based on *'stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics'*. NPPF at paragraph 157 also states that *'Local Plans should...identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance'* and *'should...contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment...'*. Furthermore, paragraph 73 states that *'access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities'*.

10. The National Planning Practice Guidance at paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 8-001-20140306, reiterates the policies of the NPPF stating that *'Local Plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape'*.

11. As previously mentioned, the Borough is an extremely unique area, that is relatively compact and densely built up. The Borough has limited areas of open space outside of the urban areas and considers these areas extremely important, not only to the natural environment and social wellbeing of its residents, but also its built form. Outside of the urban extent of the Borough, the areas comprise of designated countryside and green wedges.

12. The Council recognises the intrinsic character and value of the designated green wedge areas of the Borough. The Council also recognises the important role that green wedges play within its communities and its green infrastructure network, as well as its biodiversity. Due to their importance, within the Submission Local Plan, the Council sets out

policies for their conservation and enhancement, as well as setting out types of appropriate development and land uses.

13. The green wedge policy (Policy 42) sets out the four key principles / objectives of the green wedges within the Borough, which are; preventing the merging settlements; guiding development form; providing a 'green lung' from the urban areas to the countryside; and, acting as a recreational resource. The policy then goes onto prescribe specific allowed uses that are in keeping with the key principles and objectives; these are, agriculture, horticulture, and allotments (not accompanied by retail development), outdoor leisure, recreation and sporting facilities, forestry and bodies of water, footpaths, bridleways and cycleways, and burial grounds.

14. The Council considers that the land uses and types of development prescribed within the green wedge policy reflect the character of the green wedge landscapes as well as the four objectives of the green wedges. The Council also considers that the policy strikes a balance as it seeks to conserve the areas open and undeveloped character appropriately without having a blanket approach to restricting all forms of development.

15. In addition, the Council considers that the green wedge policy, as well as stating the objectives for the future of the areas, illustrates an understanding of green wedges defining characteristics, which influences development pattern, the health and well being of residents, as well as influencing the Borough' green infrastructure network.

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