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UNITED KINGDOM

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Cheshire West and Chester Council – Planning Policy Team

The Portal
Wellington Road
Ellesmere Port
CH65 0DA

Dear Planning Policy Team ,

Reference: Dunkirk Farm, Backford

Stantec has been instructed by Redrow Homes North West ('Redrow') to prepare a representation in respect of their land interests at Dunkirk Farm, Backford, Ellesmere Port (the 'Site') to Cheshire West and Chester Council's ('CWaC') Local Plan Issues and Options Regulation 18 Consultation which was published for consultation on 4th July 2025.

Redrow is a leading, premium housebuilder who have been building high quality homes and communities across the country for over 50 years. The company have a long-standing history of developing residential sites in CWaC and have provided 2,600 homes in the authority since 2010, out of which 27.5% have been affordable dwellings, delivered across 10 sites.

The Issues and Options Local Plan consultation is the first formal stage in preparing CWaC's new plan and outlines what the key challenges are, what options are available to respond to them, and invites views from residents, businesses, and organisations. Consultation on this document provides the opportunity to comment on the approach that the Council should be taking to planning for future growth within the authority.

This representation outlines the context of the Site and draws on national policy to demonstrate that the Site should be allocated for housing in the CWaC's new Local Plan.

The Site has previously been promoted through the Council's Call for Sites exercise and was supported by technical information to demonstrate the deliverability of the Site. Technical work undertaken to date demonstrates the site as having capacity for 550 dwellings at a density of 35dph, and that there are no technical considerations which would preclude development at the Site.

This representation is supported by, and should be read in conjunction with, the following documentation:

- Site Location Plan
- Development Framework
- Preliminary Traffic and Transport Statement
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2024)
- Indicative Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (and Metric) (2024)

Reference: Dunkirk Farm, Backford

Site Background

The Site comprises of 2 land parcels, divided by Dunkirk Lane, extending to approximately 23.06 ha (57 acres) of arable land to the south-west of Ellesmere Port in the area of Backford. Ellesmere Port is a sustainable settlement, reflected in it being designated as a top tier sustainable settlement within the Council's adopted Settlement Hierarchy.

The Site lies within the Green Belt, just beyond the current Ellesmere Port settlement edge. The northern edge of the Site is bordered by agricultural fields. To the east, the Site is bordered by an existing Redrow scheme known as 'The Pastures' which was a housing allocation (the site formed part of a wider site allocated for housing development under policy H1(2) of the Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Local Plan). To the south lies the A5117 Dunkirk Way, and the western edge of the site is bordered by the Chester-Liverpool railway line.

National Planning Policy

In December 2024, the Government published an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which reinstated mandatory housing requirements (calculated using the Standard Method) and introduced a new concept of 'Grey Belt'.

Consequently, CWaC's housing requirement has increased substantially to 1,914 dwellings per annum (a 75% increase compared to the adopted housing requirement). Where it is necessary for local authorities to release Green Belt land for development to meet housing needs through the local plan process, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider 'grey belt' land which is not previously developed (paragraph 148).

At Annex 2: Glossary, a definition of Grey belt is provided: 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, preventing neighbouring towns merging, or preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (excluding Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Local Plan Consultation

CWaC's Issues and Options consultation document sets out three potential spatial strategy options to deliver a minimum of 1,914 new homes per annum, equating to 28,710 new homes over the 15-year plan period.

Spatial Option A looks to retain the Green Belt, Option B would follow the current Local Plans level and distribution of development, and Option C would place development near sustainable transport corridors. Redrow is firmly of the view that development should continue to be directed to sustainable locations such as Ellesmere Port and that Green Belt release will be needed to meet housing needs in full. Redrow are therefore supportive of Options B and C.

Specifically, Redrow support the growth option area EP02 for housing in Ellesmere Port. It would equate to a logical extension of the existing urban area and would be consistent with the Council's current spatial strategy and thus can be considered organic growth.

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For CWaC to meet its housing requirement, it is essential that development is directed towards deliverable sites. Redrow's land holding at EP02 represents a suitable, sustainable, and achievable location for housing. The technical work undertaken to date, and submitted in support of this representation, demonstrates that there are no technical constraints which preclude development at EP02 and that it is deliverable in the short-term.

Green Belt

The Council has historically only assessed the Green Belt around the settlement of Chester, and we believe that a more comprehensive approach to Green Belt Review is needed. A spatial approach that does not include Green Belt release is not appropriate to deliver the Council's local housing needs in full.

As set out above, in releasing Green Belt land for development, local authorities should direct housing to previously developed land before considering grey belt sites in the Green Belt that have not been previously development. For Green Belt land to be considered grey belt, it should not contribute 'strongly' to purposes a, b, and d of Green Belt. How the Site contributes to these purposes is set out below:

- Purpose a - check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas: the Site at Dunkirk Farm has clear, well-defined boundaries and has little connection with the Green Belt beyond the railway line to the west and the A5117 to the south. It is also directly adjacent to existing development and thus the Site has a strong relationship with the urban area of Ellesmere Port.
- Purpose b - prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another: the Site is not located within a gap between towns, and the Site plays no role in maintaining the separation between towns due to the presence of significant separating features and significant distances between the nearest towns.
- Purpose d - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns: the Site makes no contribution to this Green Belt purpose for it does not form part of the setting or contribute to the special character of a historic town.

Accordingly, the Site does not contribute strongly to purposes a, b, or d. It is therefore low performing Green Belt land which meets the tests of Grey Belt. Redrow consider that land is required to be released from the Green Belt to meet the Council's housing needs and that the Site at Dunkirk Farm is an ideal Grey Belt site candidate.

Conclusion

These representations have been submitted by Stantec on behalf of our client Redrow Homes North West in response to the Council's Regulation 18 Issues and Options Consultation. Our client considers that land at Dunkirk Farm, Backford, provides a prime opportunity to facilitate residential development in Ellesmere Port. The site is available and the technical work undertaken to support the site's promotion demonstrates the site is suitable for residential development and deliverable. Accordingly, Redrow support the identification of EP02 in the Issues and Options Paper and the site should be allocated for residential development in the Local Plan.

We hope these representations have proved useful to the Council in informing their emerging local plan. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this site in further detail with the Council at the appropriate time.

Reference: Dunkirk Farm, Backford

Best regards,

Nayal Khawaja



Planner

Phone: 



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