

CWaC Issues & Options (Reg.18) - New site Suggestion, on behalf of Chester Zoo

Land off Caughall Road, Upton, Chester CH2 1LH

- Gross site area circa 6.0 ha.
- Net developable circa 4.0 ha.
- @ density assumption of 35/ha = 140 units
- Current designation as Green Belt
- Directly adjacent settlement boundary & meets Grey Belt definition

Green Belt Release / Grey Belt opportunity

'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 any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 155 of the NPPF also refers to forms of development which are not inappropriate in the Green Belt. They are:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157.

Given the above, in consideration against the Council's current housing position aligned with the new NPPF policy, the site merits consideration as a Grey Belt opportunity, subject to infrastructure improvements in the locality, open space / recreation / BNG improvements, and affordable housing provision 15% above standard LPA policy (will be 45%).

Opportunities / Constraints

- Single landowner and available now
- Sustainable location
- Well related to the urban built form
- Defendable boundaries

- Good utility connections – inclusive of main drains infrastructure for foul drainage, subject to adopted sewer capacity checks, appropriate statutory permissions and detailed drainage design.
- Limited biodiversity value – initial assessment work identifies the site as principally agricultural land with limited biodiversity value. Existing boundary trees will be retained and offer opportunity for enhancement. The agricultural fields are likely to hold very limited value for fauna and are therefore considered the most suitable for development. Hence, a net developable area in the region of 4.0 ha.
- Limited landscape impact – preliminary assessment work regarding visual analysis demonstrates that the visibility of the site is highly localised, with views contained almost within the confines of the site boundaries.
- Limited flood risk impact – preliminary assessment confirms the majority of the site lies in Flood Zone 1. There is clearly therefore no flood-related technical constraints that would prevent the future development of this site.
- Highway network connection – preliminary assessment work has identified a number of access options, together with specific assessment of the junction of Caughall Road and Moston Road (A41), which offers appropriate capacity and junction specifications.
- Limited agricultural land value
- Limited on-site constraints

Reviewed as part of previous Green Belt Study

- No
- Suggestion as per separate representations - What is required is an updated Green Belt Study, comparable to that undertaken for the last Local Plan review. However, unlike the previous Study, which only assessed Green Belt around the settlement boundary of Chester, any new Study is now required to include assessment of additional Green Belt around the Tier 1 settlement.

Deliverability

- Heads of Terms agreed with housebuilder
- Planning application deliverable within 6-months

Availability

The land is wholly within the control of one landowner, Chester Zoo, who are working in partnership with a housebuilder to bring the site forward. If acknowledged in principle for release from the Green Belt or supported in the shorter term as Grey Belt, the landowner and their contracted partner are committed to bringing the site forward for development immediately, subject to planning and as such the site would be able to make a positive contribution to the Boroughs development needs in 3-5 years.

Suitability

A number of preliminary assessments, including matters such as highways, flood risk, ecology and landscape, have been undertaken. These demonstrate that the site has no known constraints that would prevent development coming forward on the site.

The site is in a sustainable location and is accessible by a range of sustainable modes of transport, including by active travel.

The development of the site would form a logical extension to the existing settlement, being directly adjacent to the Chester conurbation boundary as identified on the Local Plan Policies Map. The presence of the existing landscaped boundaries, existing development on three sides and a proposed development limit to correspond with the extent of the existing built form, ensures minimal impact upon the wider landscape. Given this, the site's development would not impact on the wider function of the Green Belt, as it would provide for new strong, permanent and defensible boundaries. The suggested Green Belt Review would endorse this.

Achievable

The development of the site for residential is entirely achievable as there are no known environmental, physical, ownership or viability constraints which would prevent the development of the site.