

## SECTION 9 - Chapter C1 - Green Belt

### Chapter C1 - General, Paragraphs C1.1-C1.8 and Diagram 9

3298/B3	Cam Valley Wildlife Group	Section C
745/B35	South Stoke Parish Council	C1.1
878/B19	The Bath Society	C1.3
3298/B34	Cam Valley Wildlife Group	C1.7
564/B25	London Road Area Residents Association	Diagram 9
3251/B8	Prospect Land Ltd	C1.8

### Issue

- i) Is the wording of these paragraphs and Table 6A appropriate?

### Inspector's Reasoning

- 9.1 In this introduction to the Green Belt policies of the plan reference is made to Government policy as set out in PPG2. Whilst it may be helpful to users of the plan to have an indication of where national policy may be found, there is no need to include any detailed repetition of the contents of PPG2. I therefore consider that paragraph C1.3 should be deleted.
- 9.2 Paragraph C1.8 requires modification to reflect my recommendations in relation to land at Keynsham and at Newbridge. I make no recommendation for any change in the boundary at Batheaston for the reasons which I set out in Section 5 in relation to Policy HG.4.
- 9.3 I agree with the Council that Objective 1 of Table 6A should continue to refer to Norton-Radstock since it is a large centre of population within the District whose residents should be able to access the open countryside within and outside the Green Belt.

### Recommendations:

R9.1 Modify the plan by deleting paragraph C1.3.

R9.2 Modify paragraph C1.8 as follows:

reinstate sentence beginning "At Keynsham" from the DDLP;

delete from "These proposed" to "Newbridge";

insert "and at";

reinstate "at" and "in Bath --- proposed";

delete ( ).

## Chapter C1 - Paragraph C1.10A - E

120/C271	Ms Helen Woodley	C1.10A/A
3251/C62	Prospect Land Ltd	C1.10A/A
3438/C6	Mr R V Garroway	C1.10A/A
3463/C3	Stothert & Pitt Sports Club	C1.10A/A
3547/C5	Mr & Mrs D F Bye	C1.10A/A
120/C270	Ms Helen Woodley	C1.10B/A
3251/C63	Prospect Land Ltd	C1.10B/A
3438/C1	Mr R V Garroway	C1.10B/A
3463/C4	Stothert & Pitt Sports Club	C1.10B/A
3547/C4	Mr & Mrs D F Bye	C1.10B/A
120/C269	Ms Helen Woodley	C1.10C/A
3251/C64	Prospect Land Ltd	C1.10C/A
120/C268	Ms Helen Woodley	C1.10D/A
3251/C65	Prospect Land Ltd	C1.10D/A
3421/C2	Mr & Mrs T Ebert	C1.10D/A
120/C267	Ms Helen Woodley	C1.10E/A
3251/C66	Prospect Land Ltd	C1.10E/A

## Inspector's Reasoning

- 9.4 The concern of Mr and Mrs Ebert regarding a change in the Green Belt boundary at Lambridge is misdirected since no such change is proposed.
- 9.5 Paragraphs C1.10A – E are concerned with the proposal to remove land from the Green Belt at Newbridge and to develop it for a park and ride, transport interchange, and civic amenity facility. I deal with this proposal in detail in Section 7 of my report under Policy GDS.1/B1A. I recommend changes to the scheme which would enable it to be accommodated within a reduced site which would not need to be taken out of the Green Belt in this plan. As a result paragraphs C1.10A – E should be deleted.

## Recommendation:

- R9.3 Modify the plan by deleting paragraphs C1.10A – E and inserting:

"Provision is made for a new park and ride facility at Newbridge which could incorporate a transport interchange for a future rapid transit system. The park and ride will be at ground level only, and with appropriate layout and landscaping it will not affect the openness of the Green Belt. Any built infrastructure necessary to support the transport interchange would be carefully designed to sit within the site to minimise its effect on openness. It will not be necessary to change the boundary of the Green Belt in order to accommodate this scheme."

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## Chapter C1 - C1.10F-C1.10K - University Site

*There are large numbers of representations to this policy; details are listed at Appendix 1.*

## Issues

- i) Which Green Belt 'purposes' are fulfilled by the land proposed to be excluded from it?
- ii) What exceptional circumstances are advanced to justify the land's exclusion?
- iii) How should the claimed exceptional circumstances be weighed against damage to Green Belt purposes?
- iv) Would development on the land at issue undermine the natural beauty of the AONB and require the deletion of Policy GDS.1/B11?
- v) Should Policy GDS.1/B11 be extended over the whole of the university site?

### **Inspector's Reasoning**

9.6 The proposal to draw back the Green Belt boundary was inserted at Revised Deposit Draft stage and further developed in the Pre-Inquiry Changes as now set out at paragraphs C1.10F to C1.10K of the consolidated plan. The Council's explanation of the suggested exceptional circumstances was also amplified in association with the University in Topic Papers 7 and 8 and in Proof 182. I can understand the frustration expressed by some objectors that the Council's full case was revealed in a series of somewhat disjointed steps rather than in a comprehensive way at the outset but I am satisfied that all the inquiry participants had a full opportunity to state their cases within the structure of the issues that I identified for discussion at the relevant inquiry sessions.

#### ***Issue i)***

9.7 I consider first the Green Belt purposes fulfilled by the land in question. The Council accepts that it fulfils two of the 5 Green Belt purposes, namely numbers 1 and 3 (contributing to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment). It considers that purpose 2 (preventing the merging of neighbouring towns) is not applicable to local circumstances and that purposes 4 and 5 (preserving the setting and character of Bath and assisting in urban regeneration) have limited application. On the other hand some objectors suggest that the land contributes to all five of the Green Belt purposes.

9.8 Since the land in question lies in two distinct sections, to the north and south of The Avenue respectively their contributions to the Green Belt can be considered separately. On its western side the Green Belt land to the north of The Avenue consists of the fairly recent buildings of the English Institute of Sport and its outlying complex of hard-surfaced pitches constructed on raised and levelled land and bounded by perforate and imperforate enclosures. On its eastern side are grass sports pitches, some at the southern end on obviously raised land and others (extending to the campus boundary) appearing to be at more natural ground level. Beyond these is the National Trust parkland field known as Bushey

Norwood. North of the Green Belt boundary is a car park and land partly developed with student accommodation.

- 9.9 The developed portions of the Green Belt land consist of the substantial sports centre and the enclosed hard-surfaced pitches, all of which have little genuine 'openness' about their appearance. These areas already effectively amount to an extension of the continuously-developed non-Green Belt area of the city stretching up Bathwick Hill to the university. In my view they make little discernible contribution to any Green Belt purposes. On the other hand the grass pitches do make some contribution to purposes 1 and 3. I do not consider that they assist with purpose 2 (preventing neighbouring towns from merging) since this is not one of those instances in which a Green Belt preserves a relatively small undeveloped and threatened area between two sizeable towns or villages.
- 9.10 Addressing purpose 4, the World Heritage Site (WHS) extends to the edge of the campus and, to the north of The Avenue, has a common boundary with the land proposed for exclusion from the Green Belt. However, I do not consider that the grass pitches contribute anything very meaningful towards 'preserving the setting and character of a historic town'. As observed by English Heritage, the site is not viewed in the context of the city to the west or the Avon Valley to the east. All that is seen of the WHS from the grass pitches (or from the footpath at Bushey Norwood) are the university's highest buildings on the skyline, the modern sports buildings, the more organic profile of the older student housing at Eastwood and the uncompromising outline of the more recent housing. The character and appearance of these disparate buildings is so different from the prevailing image of the historic city reflected in the WHS Management Plan that in my view purpose 4 would not be infringed by excluding this land from the Green Belt. As for purpose 5, I consider it unlikely that "urban regeneration" in Bath would be materially affected in a positive or negative way whether or not this land were released from the Green Belt.
- 9.11 The second section of the Green Belt land at issue lies at the entrance to the campus on both sides of Norwood Avenue. The smaller western portion consists of enclosed hard-surfaced tennis courts, heavily screened from the road by trees and abutting back gardens to houses in Beech Avenue to the west. In my view this area contributes relatively little to Green Belt purposes 1 and 3 since it has a largely urban character.
- 9.12 The much larger section of this area is St John's Field, east of Norwood Avenue, which is used as sports pitches. From my visits to the campus I concluded that St John's Field makes a more positive contribution to Green Belt purposes 1 and 3 than the areas north of The Avenue or west of Norwood Avenue. This extensive field is surrounded by trees on all sides and in that sense is more enclosed than nearby land within the "Cotswolds plateaux and valleys" landscape sub-type at Rainbow Farm on the other side of Claverton Down Road. However, this undeveloped land provides a strong sense of identity and openness at the entrance to the university and there is little sight of the university buildings to the west

and north or the Cats and Dogs Home to the east. Retraction of the Green Belt at this point would therefore permit the extension of the built-up area of the city/university onto land with a less developed character than is the case with the land north of The Avenue. I therefore conclude that purposes 1 and 3 would be compromised by the local plan proposal. As the site is closer to the city conservation area and the houses and tennis courts at the top of Bathwick Hill/Widcombe Hill there would also be more effect on purpose 4 than is the case with the land north of The Avenue. However, in my view purposes 2 and 5 would be similarly unaffected.

***Issue ii)***

- 9.13 The 'exceptional circumstances' claimed by the Council, assisted by the University, fall into 3 broad but closely linked categories: Government priorities for higher education; the spatial needs for increased accommodation; and the lack of alternative non Green Belt sites to accommodate these needs.

*Government priorities for higher education*

- 9.14 The national priorities referred to by the Council and University arise from a number of factors. Firstly, there is the commitment to make progress towards 50% participation in higher education by 18-30 year-olds by 2010 which will result in year-on-year increases in student numbers. Although some of this growth is expected to be catered for in less "traditional" ways the university wishes to take an active share in it as one way of underpinning its financial sustainability. In particular, it wishes to strengthen its role in teaching high-unit-cost disciplines of national significance, such as science and technology. National funding is being focussed on building up the stronger research-intensive centres in these fields and, as a leading institution in these subjects, Bath has secured substantial resources in the bidding process. Further investment and growth in these important areas would meet a second national priority as expressed in the Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-14 especially as some universities' courses in these fields are under threat or have closed.
- 9.15 A third national priority was said to be to increase international student numbers in the UK both from EU accession countries and more widely. It appears that the short term Government target for this has been met, although a recent report suggests that demand from overseas students at UK universities may treble by 2020. Although it is clear that accommodating such demand has financial attractions to universities in their drive to sustain financial health it is not clear to me that this factor should necessarily any longer be accorded great weight as an "exceptional circumstance".
- 9.16 A fourth national priority is the drive for higher education institutions to enhance their role in increasing UK international economic competitiveness through knowledge transfer and commercial exploitation

of intellectual property. Public funding for this role is increasing substantially and the Government wishes to ensure that university/business partnerships are enhanced. Staying in the top rank in this field requires the university to keep investing in order both to expand and to ensure that its research facilities are fit to compete at international level. Only in this way can it attract very high quality staff in appropriate emerging fields of activity and create the infrastructure for knowledge transfer through ventures such as business incubation and support for spin-off enterprises is in place. In recent years Bath has been active in this field, creating over 100 spin-out firms in the past 3 years.

- 9.17 Some objectors feel that these national educational priorities are in effect footloose: Bath has no stronger claims upon them than any other university and they could be satisfied at alternative institutions with potential for expansion without over-riding another national policy such as the Green Belt. This view appears to have been shared by the authors of the draft sustainable development appraisal of the plan. However, it seems to me that national educational priorities can only be successfully addressed if individual institutions respond to them in ways which best fit with their own specialities, strengths and other circumstances. As a leading university with recognised high academic standards, located in a well-known and attractive city, the university is well placed to respond positively to many of these national priorities. Moreover, it can by no means be assumed that potentials and opportunities foregone at Bath will be made up in equivalent ways elsewhere.
- 9.18 In my view the Council and University have made a generally sound case for affording weight to national educational priorities as an “exceptional circumstance” and I conclude that appropriate expansion of the university would make a significant contribution towards meeting national priorities for higher education by consolidating and building upon its strengths and realising its potentials.

*Spatial needs for increased accommodation*

- 9.19 In responding to the broad national priorities referred to above and addressing its other needs, the University has identified a requirement for a considerable increase in floorspace at the campus. As explained in Topic Paper 8 the total need amounts to about 83,250 sq.m of additional floorspace. About 43,250 sq.m of this would be for non residential accommodation for a wide variety of non-residential space serving the needs of research, business incubation and knowledge transfer, general teaching, IT, creative arts, health and sports, administration, catering and conference activities. In addition, and over the same period, the university aims to provide bed spaces on campus for all its first year students and for a variety of other groups including students with special needs. It also sees it as highly desirable to provide accommodation for a significant proportion of final year undergraduates, including overseas and returning placement students and a percentage of postgraduate students who might experience difficulty in locating appropriate accommodation. Taking account of existing shortfalls in accommodation and projected

increases in numbers of students an additional 2000 bedspaces are sought, amounting to some 40,000 sq.m of accommodation. This assumes that the university retains its existing 1000 bedrooms within the city but does not add to them.

- 9.20 In my view there is nothing to suggest that these quantified spatial needs unreasonably overstate the university's legitimate aspirations although as was accepted on their behalf it is likely that only 60-70% will be completed during the plan period to 2011. The remainder will be built to a 10 year timescale to 2015 if building proceeds at the rate achieved over the past 3 years.

*Alternative non Green Belt sites*

- 9.21 Off-campus options A common theme among the objections was that the university should consider off-site options for expansion elsewhere in Bath, adding to its current accommodation in the city, mainly comprising Carpenter House and some 1000 or so student bedrooms in dispersed halls of residence. The large number of site-specific suggestions included Bath Western Riverside, MOD sites at Foxhill and Warminster Road, land at Rush Hill, sites in Lower Bristol Road, St Martins Hospital at Odd Down, land west of Swainswick Bypass, land south-east of Peasdown St John Bypass, Somerdale at Keynsham, Radstock railway lands, Paulton Printing Factory and Fullers Earthworks. Many of these sites are discussed elsewhere in this report in the context of other objections and in my view are either better committed to meeting other local demands for land or too remote from the campus to represent realistic and sustainable alternatives. In any case it seems to me that the mainly campus nature of Bath University is one of its defining characteristics and is perceived as one of its major strengths. In my view the university is right to seek to reinforce rather than reduce this character. Consolidating further growth at the campus also brings benefits in terms of underpinning a high and sustainable level of bus service to the campus and giving some relief to the competitive pressures otherwise exerted by students in the less expensive residential areas of the city.

- 9.22 Turning to the option of absorbing the pressures for expansion at the university's proposed campus in Swindon, the Vice-Chancellor explained that the Swindon project aims to develop new areas of full-time, part-time and short-course activities in areas such as arts, media, IT and health sciences, sometimes in partnership with other regional stakeholders. It is not the intention to duplicate or split the teaching of the main courses already taking place in Bath. While the Swindon site may well be a location capable of making a major contribution to national aims for increased participation in higher education I consider that it would be unreasonable to try to break up the university's existing Bath-based infrastructure and create directly linked courses and activities in centres this far apart. Overall Bath's approach to these two sites seems to me broadly consistent with that taken at other multi-centred universities.

- 9.23 Finally, objectors referred to Emersons Green Science Park as a possible base for the new floorspace needs for incubation/knowledge transfer activities. However, this new development, in which the University is a participant, appears to be primarily aimed at accommodating emerging and growing commercial spin-off enterprises rather than the smaller-scale activities still very closely linked with continuing on-campus research which are the subject of the space requirements identified by the university.
- 9.24 On-campus options The University has examined the development capacity of non Green Belt land within the campus in association with its consultants Allies & Morrison, informed by the University of Bath Environmental Development Capacity Report 2000. In their estimation the main built area has the potential to accommodate 32,000 sq.m of non-residential space by redevelopment and infill, together with approximately 250 student bedrooms: further additions within this area would require building on land of high sensitivity to the landscape and amenity of the campus and/or risk too much impact on the sensitive Bath skyline. This leaves a shortfall of 11,250 sq.m of non-residential space and 35,000 sq.m of residential floorspace (1750 rooms) which can only be accommodated within the Green Belt land.
- 9.25 Objectors felt that the development capacity of the non Green Belt land within the campus was greater than estimated by the Council with some (eg the National Trust and the Campaign to Preserve the Green Belt at Claverton Down) suggesting a number of specific locations where further development might take place. I made a number of visits to the campus to familiarise myself with all the locations referred to by the University and the objectors. Leaving aside the 'western field' and certain other green areas mainly around the perimeter of the campus (all of which are inappropriate for development) it seems to me that the University's assessment of campus development potential identifies most of the areas with obvious potential for further building. I also agree with the University that there is a swathe of attractive landscaped land running through the centre of the campus which it is essential to retain as a green heart for the site. However, contrary to the university's assessment, I consider that some currently undeveloped land at the western end of the campus between the Chemistry Building and Quarry Road is not so essential to that green heart. It seemed to me that careful reappraisal of this area, perhaps together with the western car park, could yield further development potential without having an unacceptable effect on skyline views from higher points to the west which (as I saw) are already variously impacted by Norwood and Wessex Houses and Polton Court.
- 9.26 I also conclude that there is another general area worthy of re-consideration with a view to identifying more development potential. This comprises a series of spaces stretching southwards from the remaining undeveloped areas of land to the south of Eastwood, through the car park and the bus arrival area to the raised planted bank opposite the Sports Institute and further land to the south of that building. While the University's assessment shows that some developments are planned

within these areas I consider this series of spaces worthy of more ambitious and comprehensive consideration, perhaps including some re-arrangement of land uses. Key objectives for this crucial area seem to me to be to maximise its development potential and to present the best possible image for those arriving at and departing from the site. I am not convinced that the University's indicative plans of potential development sites would achieve either of these. At present the eastern end of the main densely-developed university spine peters out disappointingly in uninviting steps leading down to a rather bleak bus terminal, a combination which seems to me to provide a poor first/last image and sense of arrival/departure for an institution of such standing. Also, while the green bank opposite the Sports Institute is not unattractive, it also contributes to a weak and confined sense of arrival without offering any wider ground-level view into the green heart of the campus. In my view it is important that the master-planning exercise fully considers integrated options for all these areas, possibly including eastwards extension of the main spine as a more attractive entrance to the university and a worthy neighbour for the Sports Institute. To that extent I agree with objectors that this area has unexploited potential.

### ***Issue iii)***

- 9.27 Dealing first with Green Belt purposes, I have concluded above that the Green Belt area comprising the sports centre and the raised and enclosed land to the east of it have little genuine 'openness' and effectively amount to an extension of the continuously-developed non-Green Belt area of the city. They therefore make little discernible contribution to any Green Belt purposes. On the other hand, the grass pitches further to the east do make some contribution to Green Belt purposes 1 and 3. As for St John's Field, I have concluded that this makes more contribution towards Green Belt purposes 1 and 3 and some contribution to purpose 4.
- 9.28 Turning to the claimed "exceptional circumstances", I have found that there is a generally sound case for affording weight to national educational priorities as an "exceptional circumstance". I also concluded that appropriate expansion of Bath University would make a significant contribution towards meeting national priorities for higher education by consolidating and building upon its particular strengths and realising its potentials. Moreover, I found nothing to suggest that the quantified spatial needs unreasonably overstate the legitimate aspirations of the University, despite having some reservations about whether all of this considerable amount of development could be achieved within the plan period. In addition, I have not been convinced by the suggested off-campus options for accommodating this growth and have supported its concentration at the main site.
- 9.29 For the most part I accept that the Council and University have identified the main non Green Belt areas of the campus where growth should be centred, but I have agreed with objectors that some of these areas should be re-examined with a view to accommodating more development and thus minimising the need for extension into the Green Belt.

- 9.30 Without knowing the precise results that such re-examination would yield I consider that the extent of the needed floorspace is such as to make it unlikely that it could be provided without some development on Green Belt land. Therefore my overall conclusion is that circumstances here are sufficiently exceptional to justify retraction of the Green Belt north of The Avenue. Although the grass pitches here make a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes the largely raised nature of the land as seen from The Avenue prevents long views past a small group of trees into the more natural parts of the site. In addition, in my view the definite edge of the National Trust's inalienable land at Bushey Norwood presents a firmer and much more defensible permanent Green Belt boundary than the present one to the west of the sports centre or any alternative line that could be (inevitably rather artificially) defined across this part of the campus.
- 9.31 Turning to the land west of Norwood Avenue, I have concluded that the urban character and limited openness and visibility of this area also makes its contribution to Green Belt purposes 1 and 3 rather small. In my view the exceptional spatial needs of the university outweigh the maintenance of that contribution.
- 9.32 As for St John's Field, in view of my conclusions about (a) the development potential of the non Green-Belt parts of the campus and (b) the greater contribution of this part of the campus to Green Belt purposes (and to the AONB, as discussed below) I am not convinced that there are exceptional circumstances to justify drawing back the boundary here.
- 9.33 Although the University sought to retract the Green Belt to the eastern boundary of the Cats and Dogs Home this point was not greatly pressed at the Inquiry and in view of my recommendation relating to St John's Field I find no merit in this suggestion.
- 9.34 In my view this review of the Local Plan is an appropriate time to provide the University and others with certainty about the Green Belt. This will enable a properly efficient long-term approach to be taken to master-planning the overall site. It will allow identified needs to be met through implementation of individual phases of development when and where may be most appropriate within the overall strategy set out in the master plan. I do not regard it as satisfactory or in the public interest for the Green Belt boundary to be retained as it is at present with the intention of (a) directing each and every phase to present non-Green Belt sections of the campus regardless of the nature of the development and until such land has been exhausted and/or (b) requiring very special circumstances to be demonstrated through a series of individual planning applications whenever it is proposed to accommodate a particular phase within the existing Green Belt before the exhaustion of such land. In my view that is precisely the kind of situation which paragraph C16 of PPG2 seeks to avoid when urging that the expansion needs of HE establishments in or adjacent to Green Belts be taken into account when reviewing development plans.

***Issue iv)***

- 9.35 I now turn to issues concerning the AONB. The Cotswolds AONB was extended to include the valleys and plateaux around Bath in 1990, including the area now proposed for exclusion from the Green Belt. From my visits I saw that the wider topography and landscape of the Claverton Down/Avon Valley area is typical of the “Cotswolds plateaux and valleys” sub-type identified by the landscape character assessment for B&NES. From the evidence of those with long knowledge and experience of the area it is clear that the university campus was once an open plateau landscape firmly within this sub-type. However, with the progressive development of the university over recent decades the character of this part of the plateau has been transformed. Moreover, even since the relatively recent extension of the AONB the character and appearance of the campus north of The Avenue has been subject to further heavy modification by construction of the buildings and enclosed pitches comprising the Institute for Sport as well as by the additional student accommodation just to the north of the AONB. This severely limits its present contribution to the undoubted attractions of the wider AONB. In particular, walkers using the popular Bath Skyline Walk through the National Trust’s parkland landscape at Bushey Norwood look across this land towards the university’s tallest buildings on the skyline with older and more recent student accommodation and the Institute for Sport in the middle-ground.
- 9.36 Since the statutory purpose of AONBs is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, paragraph 22 of PPS7 requires that major developments shall not take place within them except in exceptional circumstances and in the public interest. Matters to be assessed in each case are need, the scope for (and cost of) developing outside the designated area or meeting demand in some other way, and any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape, and recreational opportunities.
- 9.37 In my view the above matters are very similar to those considered above in relation to Green Belt exceptional circumstances. Weighing those important matters against the present limited contribution to the “natural beauty” of the AONB of the undeveloped land north of The Avenue and the land west of Norwood Avenue I do not consider the designation a reason for the Local Plan to prevent the construction of university buildings on these areas as a matter of policy. However, it is imperative that development is appropriately designed and landscaped in order to avoid the kind of piecemeal erosion of the qualities of the AONB that seem to have happened in the recent past. Referring to the land north of the Avenue, the University must seize this important opportunity to provide a more sensitive edge to the campus than is currently presented to Bushey Norwood and ensure that its master plan adopts a “landscape-led” approach as a crucial guiding principle. This requirement needs to be adequately reflected in the Local Plan policy and followed through in subsequent development control decisions. My recommendations therefore include some strengthening of Policy GDS.1/B11 in that respect.
- 9.38 As in the case of the Green Belt issues, I consider that St John’s Field makes a greater contribution to the AONB since it has a more apparent

undeveloped nature and greater affinity with the original open plateau landscape sub-type. This conclusion adds weight to my recommendation that Policy GDS.1/B11 should not sanction development here.

***Issue v)***

- 9.39 The University sought inclusion of the whole campus within the area identified under this policy on the Proposals Map, partly as a means of confirming the significance of the institution to the town. In my view there is merit in this suggestion, especially as the University is Bath's third largest employer. It would make sense to expand the area of Policy GDS.1/B11 to cover the whole campus as there will be much development there during the plan period, most of which will not be within the area currently covered by B11. My recommendation for the policy also includes a summary of the spatial requirements identified by the University, set within a requirement for a master plan, as suggested by the National Trust. I also consider that the master plan should be required to include a precise identification of the area to be included within the green heart for the site (which could be included in a future LDD) as well as other issues concerning the AONB as discussed above.
- 9.40 Although there was some discussion at the Inquiry about whether or not displacement of campus sports pitches would have knock-on effects on other land within the Green Belt or AONB I have concluded that the current requirement of Policy GDS.1/B11 requires only minor modification in relation to this matter. In my view the master plan and the development control process are capable of dealing adequately with any future issues concerning this issue.

**Recommendations:**

R9.4 Modify paragraphs B3.54 to B3.55 of the plan by:

- i) substituting the following after "include" in the third sentence of B3.54:- "university-related non-residential development for uses including learning, research and allied business incubation and knowledge transfer, conferences, university administration and IT and sports, health, creative arts, social, recreational and catering purposes and additional student residential accommodation." and
- ii) amending the second sentence of B3.54A to read "Therefore policy GDS.1/B11 allows for further development on the campus including some development on land now to be excluded from the Green Belt.", and deleting the fourth sentence.

R9.5 Modify paragraphs B7.132 to B7.134A by replacing paragraphs B7.134 and B7.134A as follows:-

"...The university has identified a need for a further 2000 bedspaces of student accommodation to be provided on campus during the plan period. Policy GDS.1 makes an allocation to meet that need, together with the academic needs of the university."

R9.6 Modify Policy HG.17 as follows:

in criterion (i) delete the existing wording and substitute “it is on previously developed land or other land allocated for the purpose”;

delete PIC/B/45 criterion iii)c) and insert new iii)c): “within the areas identified for development for student accommodation in the university master plan (see policy GDS.1/B11)”.

R9.7 Modify paragraphs C1.10F to C1.10K by replacing them as follows:

“C1.10F Changes to the Green Belt boundary are also proposed at the campus of the University of Bath at Claverton Down. The Green Belt boundary here will be redefined to exclude two areas of land. The larger area is to the east of Convocation Avenue, consisting of the buildings and enclosed outdoor facilities of the English Institute of Sport and some grass pitches to the east of them. The grass pitches make some contribution towards Green Belt purposes 1 and 3 (contributing to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment) but are not considered to serve any meaningful role in meeting purposes 2, 4 and 5. The smaller area mainly comprises enclosed tennis courts to the west of Norwood Avenue which also make a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes 1 and 3.

C1.10G However, the Council considers that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant excluding these areas from the Green Belt. Briefly, these result from Government priorities for the development of higher education and the opportunity for Bath, as a leading research-intensive university with particular strengths in the fields of science and technology, to contribute towards the aims of increasing participation, supporting growth in science, innovation and knowledge transfer.

C1.10H The University has identified a substantial requirement for additional accommodation to meet a wide range of needs as summarised in policy GDS.1/B11. This amounts to some 43,250 sq.m for non residential floorspace and 40,000 sq.m of student accommodation. It is expected that this new development will need to be provided over a 10 year timescale to 2015, extending beyond the plan period. It is also considered highly desirable and more sustainable to concentrate and consolidate this growth at the existing campus rather than seeking to disperse it across a variety of sites in the city. In any case, the main development sites in the city outside the campus are more suited to meeting other important local needs and have been allocated accordingly.

C1.10I While a substantial amount of this development can be accommodated within the present non-Green Belt areas of the campus, not all can be met in this way without unacceptable encroachment on the important green heart of the campus or skyline views.

C1.10J Weighing the limited harm that would be caused to Green Belt purposes against the above exceptional circumstances, the Council

has concluded that the Green Belt boundary should be redrawn in two places: (a) to exclude land to the north side of The Avenue as far as the edge of the campus and then along the boundary between the campus and the adjoining land at Bushey Norwood and (b) to exclude land west of Norwood Avenue between Claverton Down Road and The Avenue."

**R9.8 Modify the Proposals Map to:**

exclude the land north of The Avenue and west of Norwood Avenue from the Green Belt as well as from coverage by policies SR.1A and BH.15; and

include the whole of the university campus within the GDS.1 allocation.

**R9.9 Modify Policy GDS.1/B11 by deleting the existing wording and inserting:**

"B11 University of Bath Campus, Claverton Down – site area [insert entire campus area]

*Development Requirements*

A comprehensive scheme expressed within a university-wide master plan providing for:

- a. approx 43,250 sq.m of additional university-related non-residential development for uses including learning, research and allied business incubation & knowledge transfer; conferences; university administration and IT; and sports, health, creative arts, social, recreational and catering purposes and
- b. approx 40,000sq.m (2000 bedrooms) of additional student residential accommodation.

Precise identification of a protected green heart to the campus (also to include St John's Field which is covered by Green Belt designation) and other visually and ecologically important planted areas and landscape screens

Adequate and suitable replacement on or off-site of any displaced existing sports pitches.

On and off-site transport infrastructure necessary to deliver an integrated transport solution.

High quality design and landscaping that responds positively and sensitively to the Cotswolds AONB designation and ensures that development on the campus has an appropriate and much-improved visual and landscape relationship with neighbouring land, particularly Bushey Norwood."

## Chapter C1 - Paragraphs C1.11 and C1.12

564/B24	London Road Area Residents Association	C1.12
3343/C36	Mr C J Beezley	C1.12/A
3443/C8	Mr N Morgan	C1.12/A

### Supporting Statement

878/B20	The Bath Society	C1.11
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### Inspector's Reasoning

9.41 Paragraph C1.12 has been substantially amended in the consolidated version of the RDDLP, and this meets the concerns of one objector. Other objections relate to the proposed changes at the University which I have addressed above.

**Recommendation: no change**

## Chapter C1 - Paragraphs C1.17-C1.25

3299/B23	Bovis Homes (South West Region) Limited	C1.17
601/C28	House Builders Federation	C1.19/A
2601/C42	Linden Homes (Developments) Limited	C1.19/A
3098/C60	George Wimpey Strategic Land	C1.19/A
3098/C63	George Wimpey Strategic Land	C1.19/A
3257/C194	Somer Valley Friends of the Earth	C1.19/A
3299/C55	Bovis Homes (South West Region) Limited	C1.19/A
3446/C8	Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd	C1.19/A
2601/C43	Linden Homes (Developments) Limited	C1.21/A

### Supporting Statements

S3116/C102	Bath & North East Somerset Allotment Association	C1.19/A
S3251/B7	Prospect Land Ltd	C1.25

### Inspector's Reasoning

9.42 The main issues raised by objectors relate to the definition of the Green Belt boundary around Keynsham. I have dealt with the issue of the release of land for housing at Keynsham in Section 5 and recommended the reinstatement of the land to the SW which was identified in the DDLP. I recommend that paragraphs C1.19 and C1.20 be reinstated to the DDLP version accordingly.

9.43 I have also referred in Section 5 to the proposal to remove the employment site at Lays Farm from the Green Belt, and conclude that there are no very special circumstances to justify a change to the boundary. I therefore recommend the deletion of paragraph C1.21.

## **Recommendations:**

R9.10 Modify paragraphs C1.19 and C1.20 by reinstating the wording in the DDLP.

R9.11 Modify the plan by deleting paragraph C1.21.

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## **Chapter C1 - Policy GB.1 and Paragraphs C1.27-C1.29A**

*There are large numbers of representations to this policy; details are listed at Appendix 1.*

### **Issues**

- i) Whether the wording of C1.27, C1.29 and C1.29A is appropriate.
- ii) Whether Green Belt policy should be more permissive in order to prevent the decline of rural areas.
- iii) Whether changes are required to the wording of Policy GB.1.
- iv) Whether changes should be made to the Green Belt boundary to accommodate additional housing development or to redress anomalies.

### **Inspector's Reasoning**

#### ***Issue i)***

9.44 I find the wording of paragraphs C1.27, C1.29 and C1.29A reflects that set out in Government advice in PPG2 and PPG13. The changes suggested by objectors would not be appropriate.

#### ***Issue ii)***

9.45 It is Government policy to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development. Much of the development referred to by the objectors Messrs Glass and Weston would fall within the category of inappropriate development as defined in PPG2. The amendment of Policy GB.1 to allow for such development would clearly be in conflict with Government policy and therefore I recommend no change in response to this objection.

#### ***Issue iii)***

9.46 The purposes of including land within the Green Belt as defined in the plan reflect those established in PPG2. Reference to damaged or derelict land in this context relates to encouraging the re-use of such land within the urban areas, not such land which is included within the Green Belt. Any development of land within the Green Belt could only take place if it is

appropriate or if there are very special circumstances, and subject to a number of other policy considerations.

- 9.47 There is no need for the policy to include a reference to horticulture since this is included within the definition of agriculture for planning purposes. Horse riding activities would be judged in the same way as any other recreational activity in the Green Belt and I see no reason for a specific reference to be included here.
- 9.48 In relation to Policy HG.15, I see no incompatibility between “limited extensions” and extensions which are “disproportionate” as suggested by the objector. It would be a matter of judgement whether a scheme met these criteria.
- 9.49 Clause i)d) is amended in the consolidated version of the plan to include a cross reference to Policy HG.6 which in my view would meet many of the concerns of objectors. In addition, any proposals for infilling would be subject to other policies of the plan which seek to secure good design and protect neighbouring residents’ amenities.
- 9.50 Any proposal for residential development in the Green Belt under Policy HG.9 would need to be consistent with the purposes of including the land within the Green Belt. The general presumption against inappropriate development would remain. I find no reason to change the approach taken in the plan which accords with Government policy.
- 9.51 It would be inappropriate to refer to a specific site such as Freshford Mill in a general policy such as GB.1, and the reference to very special circumstances reflects Government policy. I find no reason for any change in response to this objection.
- 9.52 The reference to park and ride introduces Policy GB.1A which sets out the detailed matters which would need to be considered in the assessment of any scheme. I find no reason to add to Policy GB.1.

#### ***Issue iv)***

- 9.53 The main reasons given by objectors for the removal of land from the Green Belt are either to provide for additional residential development or to correct anomalies in the way in which the Green Belt boundary has been defined.
- 9.54 Apart from land at Keynsham, there is no provision in the JRSP for the release of further land from the Green Belt for residential development. RPG10 refers to the need to review the boundaries of the Green Belt to assess whether alterations are needed to allow for long term sustainable growth and it is in the next round of development plan preparation that this exercise should be considered.
- 9.55 There are a number of sites put forward by objectors for exclusion from the Green Belt in order to provide for additional residential development in the plan period. However, in Section 5 I have identified those sites which

I consider to accord with the policies of the JRSP and the strategy of the plan, and which would be sequentially preferable. There are a number of options for the Council to consider which could more than adequately meet the strategic housing requirement that I have identified without the need for any further release of Green Belt sites. In these circumstances I am not considering any of the Green Belt sites put forward for residential development in any detail. Apart from the land south west of Keynsham, I make no recommendation to amend the Green Belt to provide for further housing sites.

- 9.56 Turning then to the objections which relate to possible anomalies in the definition of the Green Belt boundary, most of the detailed boundaries have been defined in adopted Local Plans. The Bath inner Green Belt boundary is defined in the Bath Local Plan and the Wansdyke Environs of Bath Local Plan. The inner Green Belt boundary for Bristol which falls within B&NES is defined in the Keynsham and Chew Valley Local Plan. The Wansdyke Local Plan carried forward the boundary as set out in the Wansdyke Environs of Bath Local Plan and the Keynsham and Chew Valley Local Plan. It also defines the detailed boundary between Clutton and Shoscombe. Although the Wansdyke Local Plan has not been adopted, it reached an advanced stage in its preparation having been subject to Inquiry and a detailed Inspector's report. It therefore carries considerable weight.
- 9.57 In reviewing Local Plans, PPG2 states that Green Belt boundaries should not be changed unless alterations to the structure plan have been approved, or other exceptional circumstances exist which necessitate such a revision. It is against this policy base that I assess the changes put forward by objectors and the Council.
- 9.58 Although the planning permission has expired at **Hazelton Gardens**, I agree with the Council that this does not amount to an exceptional circumstance of the sort to justify a revision to the Green Belt boundary.
- 9.59 A change was proposed to the Green Belt boundary at **Hilliers Garden Centre** in the DDLP to correct an anomaly in the boundary shown in the 1997 Local Plan, but this would include the main commercial buildings within the Green Belt. I agree the change to the DDLP put forward by the Council which would exclude the developed part of the garden centre from the Green Belt. The remainder of the garden centre is mainly open and should therefore remain in the Green Belt.
- 9.60 The Green Belt boundary at **Horsecombe Vale** and in the **Kelston Road** area of Bath was defined in 1990 and retained in the 1997 Local Plan. In both locations the boundary was subject to objections to that plan, but the Inspector recommended no change. There have been no significant changes in circumstances since the last Inspector considered the boundary which would justify its review in these locations and therefore I recommend no change.

- 9.61 There is some dispute as to the history of the Green Belt line to the rear of **140 and 146 London Road, Bath**. A number of older plans have been produced purporting to demonstrate that the boundary on the most recently adopted Local Plan was incorrect and therefore unlawful. However, the legality of the line of the boundary is a matter that only the courts can determine and is therefore outside my remit. In the absence of any ruling to the contrary, the statutory Green Belt boundary is as defined in the adopted Bath Local Plan 1997.
- 9.62 Whilst I cannot rule on the legitimacy of the existing boundary it remains open to me to correct minor anomalies in the defined boundary. PPG2 advises that the Green Belt boundary should follow recognisable features on the ground where possible, and in the case of the rear of no 140 it is amended in the RDDLP to follow the stone wall which marks the southern boundary of the garden. However, this is more difficult in relation to land at the rear of no 146. There is no long standing boundary such as a wall to be followed, and the rear garden merges visually with the more rural and undeveloped Green Belt land to the south. The objector argues that the line should follow the wire fence to the south of the property, but in my view this in itself is not an established feature and it would result in land of more rural character being taken out of the Green Belt. There are no exceptional circumstances to justify such a change in the line of the Green Belt.
- 9.63 As amended in the RDDLP the boundary lies along the northern elevation of a stone barn, heading south following the eastern elevation of the barn, and then drawn in a straight line to the western curtilage of no 148 following the northern elevation of some other buildings which lie within the land south of no 146. The objector argues that the barn and the other buildings should be excluded from the Green Belt but the buildings are rural in character and it is quite common for such buildings to be located in the Green Belt. In my view the line shown in the RDDLP provides a reasonable solution to the problem of defining a boundary in this location, and I recommend no change.
- 9.64 A number of sites within the urban area of Bath are put forward by an objector to be designated as Green Belt. These include **Stirtingale Farm, Twerton Farm, The Tumps, Twerton Round Hill, Beechen Cliff, Lyncombe Hill and Mount Beacon**. However, it is not the function of the Green Belt to protect open spaces within the urban area considered to have visually attractive landscapes.
- 9.65 At **South Lodge, Sion Hill** objection is raised to the Green Belt boundary as amended in the RDDLP and further amended by PIC/C/2. The objectors agree that to the north east of the property the boundary should follow the low railings immediately to the east of the driveway, but argue that to the west the boundary should follow the southern edge of the track which runs east west to the north of properties fronting Sion Hill and Summerhill Road. However, the track is surfaced in loose stone/gravel as far as the property known as Summergate and west of this it becomes grassed and increasingly merges into the vegetation and grassed parkland

to the north. As a result I prefer the boundary proposed by the Council which from the low railings north east of South Lodge follows the low stone wall and gates across the driveway, then runs south along a line of trees and shrubs before running west along the stone walls marking the rear of South Lodge and properties to the west. Although the wall is not uniform along the entire length and some small parking areas and flowerbeds would remain in the Green Belt, this represents the most clearly identifiable boundary which I therefore recommend should be adopted.

- 9.66 In respect of **Northend Joinery, Batheaston**, I agree with the Council that there has been no change in circumstances which would amount to exceptional circumstances to justify a review of the Green Belt boundary at this site.
- 9.67 Although new development has taken place to the south of **Bannerdown View Farm**, this was as the result of an allocation which has already been taken into account in the definition of the Green Belt boundary. I therefore agree with the Council that there are no exceptional circumstances to justify a review of the Green Belt in this plan.
- 9.68 Within the area of land between **Box Road, Bathford** and the railway embankment there is a scatter of development but this has not changed since the Green Belt boundary was defined and I find no exceptional circumstances to justify any change to the Green Belt boundary in this location.
- 9.69 Camerton Parish Council seeks an extension of the Green Belt from the present boundary at Timsbury to the **Cam Brook at Carlingcott and Weekesly Lane at Radford**. However, the Green Belt was last reviewed for the Wansdyke Local Plan to reflect the change set out in the Avon County Structure Plan 1994. There is no proposal in the JRSP to justify a further extension of the Green Belt.
- 9.70 At **Dean Hill Lane, Charlcombe** the Green Belt was considered in detail in the Wansdyke Environs of Bath Local Plan. There has been no significant change in circumstances which would amount to the very special circumstances which would justify any change to the boundary as proposed by the objector.
- 9.71 There is concern about development at **Batch Farm, Clutton**, but the site is within the Green Belt and subject to the relevant policy control. I find no reason for any change in response to this objection.
- 9.72 There are no very special circumstances to support the removal of the **Fullers Earthworks, Combe Hay**, from the Green Belt. I agree with the Council's reasons for retaining the site within the Green Belt.
- 9.73 There is no provision in the JRSP for the extension of the Green Belt to include land at **Greyfield Road, High Littleton**, therefore I have no justification for recommending any change.

- 9.74 The exclusion of **Keynsham** from the Green Belt is established in strategic policy and there is no basis for any change in the current Local Plan. An amendment to the Green Belt boundary around Keynsham is part of the strategy of the JRSP, and I recommend in Section 5 that the land to the **South West** of Keynsham be allocated for residential development in the plan. I find that this site best meets the criteria set out in the JRSP for the identification of a suitable site for release from the Green Belt.
- 9.75 The **Ralph Allen School at Monkton Combe** lies within the Green Belt as defined in the 1997 Bath Local Plan. The assertion of a need for the provision of extra facilities at this site does not amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the removal of the site from the Green Belt.
- 9.76 I recommend in Section 7 that land at **Newbridge** should not be removed from the Green Belt to accommodate a park and ride and civic amenity site. **Bath City Football Club** seek a new stadium and identify this as a suitable site. However in my view the desire of the Club to locate at this site does not amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the removal of the site from the Green Belt, and therefore I recommend no change to the designation of the site. Furthermore there is no policy in the JRSP to support the removal of a wider area of land including land at Oldfield School, the marina and caravan site from the Green Belt. I recommend no change to the Green Belt boundary at Newbridge from that defined in previous plans and the DDLP.
- 9.77 Although lands at **Eastfield**, and **east of Ashgrove Farm, Peasedown St John** adjoin other houses, they form part of the Green Belt which was reviewed in the Wansdyke Local Plan. There have been no significant changes in circumstances which would amount to the very special circumstances to justify the removal of land from the Green Belt in this plan.
- 9.78 Land **south east of the bypass at Peasedown St John** is a long standing commitment for employment development, with an extant planning permission. As a result there is no justification for the site to be included in the Green Belt.
- 9.79 In the vicinity of **Timsbury** the boundary of the Green Belt was reviewed as part of the Wansdyke Local Plan Inquiry. There has been no change in circumstances at Lansdown Crescent or on land to the north of Timsbury which would amount to the very special circumstances to justify a further review in this plan.
- 9.80 At **Whitchurch** the Green Belt boundary was defined in the Keynsham and Chew Valley Local Plan 1992 and there has been no change in circumstances which would amount to the very special circumstances to justify any change to the boundary in this plan at Church Road or Manor Farm.

9.81 I note the concerns of the objector in relation to changes to the Green Belt boundary at **Bailbrook Farm**. Whilst there has clearly been no change in circumstances to warrant a review of this boundary, I agree with the Council that the change would correct an anomaly arising from the line of the former administrative boundary of what was the City of Bath. A fence has been erected on the line of the Green Belt as defined in the City of Bath Local Plan, but this does not affect the visual relationship of the site to the wider undeveloped area which serves the purposes of the Green Belt. I therefore recommend no change to the boundary of the Green Belt at Bailbrook as proposed in the RDDLP.

### Recommendations:

R9.12 Modify the Green Belt boundary to reinstate GDS.1/K2 as shown on the Proposals Map in the DDLP.

R9.13 Modify the Proposals Map in accordance with PIC/C/2.

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## Chapter C1 - Policy GB.1A

120/C264	Ms Helen Woodley	GB.1A/A
686/C154	Bath Preservation Trust	GB.1A/A
3626/C7	Bath Friends of the Earth	GB.1A/A

### Supporting Statements

S1999/C15	Bristol City Council	GB.1A/A
S3257/C196	Somer Valley Friends of the Earth	GB.1A/A
S878/B24	The Bath Society	C1.31

### Issue

- i) Whether there should be a policy dealing with park and ride sites in the Green Belt, and whether it is appropriately worded.

### Inspector's Reasoning

9.82 Government policy in PPG13 lends support to well designed and well conceived park and ride schemes which can contribute to sustainable travel patterns and improve the accessibility and attractiveness of town centres. Where a Green Belt location is the most sustainable of the options, PPG13 advises that a park and ride scheme may be permissible. Policy GB.1A accords with that advice.

9.83 In terms of the wording of the policy, it is not Government policy at this time to take into account matters such as climate change and oil prices therefore it would be inappropriate for this plan to do so. In requiring a proposal to come forward in a LTP the travel impacts can be properly assessed to avoid encouraging the use of the car in place of public transport.

9.84 The policy is a general rather than a site specific one and therefore it would be inappropriate to include any reference to the river, and there is no basis for limiting the life of a scheme to 2010.

**Recommendation: no change.**

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## Chapter C1 - Policy GB.2

442/B2	Campaign for Dark Skies	GB.2
685/B24	Batheaston Parish Council	GB.2
3238/B11	Cadbury Ltd	GB.2
3233/B18	Mr & Mrs M Williams	GB.2

### Issue

- i) Whether the policy is appropriately worded.

### Inspector's Reasoning

9.85 The policy does not include a criterion relating to external lighting but this is not necessary since external lighting is controlled by Policy BH.22. There is no need to repeat the requirements of BH.22 here.

9.86 PPG2 requires the effects of development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt on the visual amenity of the Green Belt to be taken into account. This policy follows that advice.

9.87 Although the policy does not refer specifically to mitigation measures, any such measures would influence the extent to which a proposal would be visually detrimental and would therefore be taken into account in the overall assessment of impact. I do not therefore consider that additional wording as suggested by the objector is necessary.

9.88 An objector refers to schemes for a park and ride and rugby training grounds which would be visible from Bathampton, but this comment relates to the application of the policy, and no suggestion is made as to how the policy might be changed to accommodate the views expressed.

**Recommendation: no change**

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## Chapter C1 - Policy GB.3 and Paragraph C1.39

3267/B3	C S J Planning Consultants Ltd	C1.39
88/B46	William & Pauline Houghton	GB.3
167/B5	Mr & Mrs M Pickman	GB.3
564/B23	London Road Area Residents Association	GB.3
564/B41	London Road Area Residents Association	GB.3
564/B42	London Road Area Residents Association	GB.3
564/B43	London Road Area Residents Association	GB.3
564/B44	London Road Area Residents Association	GB.3

2368/B1	Surrey & Counties (Sutton) Limited	GB.3
2434/B1	Oldfield School	GB.3
2597/B2	Dr R C Rafferty	GB.3
2597/B3	Dr R C Rafferty	GB.3
2603/B1	Northern Racing Limited	GB.3
2915/B1	De La Rue plc	GB.3
2915/B2	De La Rue plc	GB.3
3085/B2	Yardbrook Estates	GB.3
3240/B4	Westbury Homes	GB.3
3242/B10	Davies Street (Bathampton) Ltd	GB.3
3267/B2	C S J Planning Consultants Ltd	GB.3
3295/B1	G L Hearn Planning	GB.3
3626/C8	Bath Friends of the Earth	GB.3/A
2915/C5	De La Rue plc	GB.3/G

## Supporting Statements

345/B26	Freshford Parish Council	GB.3
581/B25	Batheaston Society	GB.3
2963/B1	Prior Park College	GB.3

## Issue

- i) Whether any additional sites should be identified as major developed sites (MEDS) in the Green Belt in Policy GB.3 and whether the wording of the policy is appropriate.

## Inspector's Reasoning

- 9.89 The former Radford Retail Systems site at Chew Stoke is allocated for development under Policy GDS.1. A change is made to the wording of GB.3(c) in the RDDLP to cross refer to GDS.1, and this largely meets the concerns expressed regarding any conflict between the two policies. Any further detail regarding the mix of development within Policy GB.3 is unnecessary since this is set out in GDS.1. I note that the site is also being considered as a possible doctor's surgery for Chew Magna and have dealt with this matter in relation to Policy GDS.1.
- 9.90 In his report on the Wansdyke Local Plan, the Inspector provided the Council with guidance as to the approach which should be taken in determining which sites should be included within the plan as MEDS. B&NES has followed this advice in the preparation of this plan, and the detailed assessment of potential MEDS is attached to Topic Paper 7 as Annex 2. In the absence of any detailed advice in PPG2 as to the definition of major existing sites, I fully endorse the approach taken by B&NES.
- 9.91 There was some dispute as to the assessment adopted by the Council, but in my view such an approach is preferable to the sort of criteria argued in relation to the Jewson site. If considerations such as the context of the site and its environmental impact were to be included, the situation could arise where a factory of modest scale next to a small village would be included whereas a large educational institution outside a town would not. By assessing the scale of relevant sites and then considering whether they would be suitable for infilling or redevelopment, a consistent approach is

established across the District. In addition the threshold adopted by the Council is in my view appropriate having regard to the proportion of sites which are included as MEDS and the significant difference in terms of (for example) building mass and footprint between the smallest of the sites selected as a MEDS and the next site on the list in Annex 2 to Topic Paper 7. Whilst any threshold must be somewhat arbitrary, there is a clear difference of scale between the MEDS and those sites which fall below the threshold.

- 9.92 The Bath Clinic, Freshford Mill, the Jewson site, Yardbrook Estate and the Fuller's Earthworks at Combe Hay were included in the assessment of MEDS, and the scale of the Jewson site has been recalculated, but they fall well below the threshold size established by the Council. As a result I agree with the Council that they should not be identified as MEDS. Any redevelopment of these sites would need to be assessed against normal Green Belt policies.
- 9.93 I note the plans for a new doctor's surgery at Chew Magna but the fact that the Sacred Heart School may be a suitable site is not sufficient to qualify the site as a MEDS since it is well below the threshold set in the plan. Any re-use of existing buildings within the Green Belt would fall to be considered against Policy GB.1 ii).
- 9.94 Kingswood School and the University of Bath are not within the Green Belt therefore designation as a MEDS is not relevant. Oldfield School has been added as a MEDS in the RDDLP.
- 9.95 In my view the criteria listed in GB.3 reflect national advice and therefore there is no justification for a change to redevelopment criterion (ii). The boundary of the Bathford Paper Mill site has been changed in the RDDLP to include the car park and western end of the site. However, I agree with the Council that it would not be appropriate to include the access road; and the land to the south is undeveloped land which does not form part of the existing site and does not therefore qualify to be included as part of the MEDS. I note the business plan for the Mill which would take in this additional land for operational purposes, but any plans to extend the site would need to be considered against normal Green Belt policy.
- 9.96 Bath Racecourse does not meet the criteria for a MEDS and is therefore properly excluded from this policy. However, I do see some merit in consideration being given to the introduction of a policy in the plan to guide the future development of the site. The objector gives an example of another plan where such an approach has been taken, but I am not familiar with the other racecourse, and do not know whether it is subject to the same Green Belt and landscape constraints as Bath. Although the objector also proposes some wording for a policy, I do not have sufficient information on which to judge whether the wording would be appropriate and must therefore leave it for the Council to consider whether there should be a separate policy to deal with the racecourse.

9.97 The complex of buildings at Clutton Hill Farm are identified as a MEDS suitable for infilling for employment purposes, but any proposals would be subject to all the relevant policies of the plan.

9.98 Student accommodation is included in criterion (a) for the Bath Spa University College, with a cross reference to Policy HG.17 which ensures consistency between the two policies. I find no reason to delete this cross reference.

### **Recommendation:**

R9.14 The Council consider the introduction of a new policy to deal with future development of the racecourse at Bath.

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## **Chapter C1 - Policy GB.4 and Paragraphs C1.41 and C1.44**

2975/B15	Crest Nicholson Properties Limited	C1.41
2340/C2	Mr & Mrs S Wiseman	C1.44/A
3098/C59	George Wimpey Strategic Land	C1.44/A
3299/C59	Bovis Homes (South West Region) Limited	C1.44/A
3605/C24	Nicholson Estates	C1.44/A
447/B31	Wilcon Homes	GB.4
580/B8	Hignett Brothers	GB.4
2636/B1	The Jollands Trust	GB.4
2648/B3	Persimmon Homes (Wessex) Ltd	GB.4
2959/B2	Mr L F James	GB.4
2975/B16	Crest Nicholson Properties Limited	GB.4
3098/B35	George Wimpey Strategic Land	GB.4
3299/B1	Bovis Homes (South West Region) Limited	GB.4
721/C64	Government Office for the South West	GB.4/A
2340/C3	Mr & Mrs S Wiseman	GB.4/A
3098/C58	George Wimpey Strategic Land	GB.4/A
3299/C58	Bovis Homes (South West Region) Limited	GB.4/A
3493/C7	Bath & Wells Diocesan Board of Finance	GB.4/A
3605/C23	Nicholson Estates	GB.4/A

### **Issues**

- i) Whether land at Brookside Drive, Farmborough should be safeguarded as a longer term development opportunity.
- ii) Should the safeguarded land at Whitchurch be released for housing in this plan period?
- iii) Whether additional sites should be safeguarded in the plan for longer term development.

### **Inspector's Reasoning**

#### ***Issue i)***

9.99 Land at Brookside Drive, Farmborough was allocated for residential development in the DDLP and in Section 5 of my report I recommend that

it be reinstated as an allocation in the plan. Whilst I appreciate the issues raised by objectors in relation to the sustainability of rural sites, some small scale residential development is necessary in the rural areas in order to support their economic and social vitality in accordance with the policies of the JRSP. An alternative site is also proposed at Tilley Close, but the Brookside Drive site is well contained within the landscape and in my view its development would not intrude into the wider rural area and Green Belt. In view of my recommendation to allocate the site in this plan, I recommend that reference to Farmborough be deleted from the safeguarding section of the plan.

***Issue ii)***

9.100 Land at Whitchurch is safeguarded pending the review of the A37 bypass. Even if that proposal has now been dropped, I have identified sufficient sites for the Council to consider which have the capacity to meet strategic housing sites without the release of this piece of land. RPG10 refers to the need for a review of the Green Belt to identify sustainable options for residential development. The future of this land should be considered as part of that review which should take place as part of the preparation of the next round of development plans.

***Issue iii)***

9.101 A number of Green Belt sites are proposed by objectors to be included in this plan as safeguarded for long term development. However, apart from the release of land at Keynsham, there is no requirement in the JRSP for land to be taken out of or safeguarded in the Green Belt. I acknowledge that RPG10 provides for a review of the Green Belt boundary, but as I have already stated, whilst the document is a material consideration in the formulation of policy in this plan, the plan is founded in the strategy of the JRSP, and it should seek to implement that strategy. The Green Belt review is an exercise which should take place to inform the next round of development planning.

9.102 In Section 5 I have identified more than sufficient sites to meet strategic housing land requirements to 2011. The sites are in accord with the strategy of the JRSP and are sequentially preferable to the release of further Green Belt land. In the absence of any requirement in the JRSP to safeguard further Green Belt land to meet long term requirements, or any requirement to identify further sites to meet housing needs up to 2011, I do not consider it necessary or appropriate to review in detail any of the sites put forward by objectors for safeguarding.

**Recommendations:**

R9.15 Modify the plan by deleting heading "Farmborough" and paragraph C1.44.

R5.16 Modify Policy GB.4 by deleting "and Farmborough".