

Examination of the Craven Local Plan

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13.11.2018

Dear Ms Watson,

Craven Local Plan – Further Main Modifications

I write further to the conclusion of the hearing sessions as part of the examination of the Craven Local Plan. You may recall that during Hearing Days 8 and 10 I advised that site visits would be required in order to consider the proposed Local Green Space designations. In particular, land north of Skipton (Ref SK-LGS64) and land west of Hellifield (Ref HE-LGS1). These visits have now been concluded and my initial conclusions are as follows.

Land north of Skipton – SK-LGS64

As you are aware, paragraph 77 of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') states that Local Green Space designations will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, and is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

With regard to size, the Planning Practice Guidance ('the PPG') advises that there are 'no hard and fast rules' on how big Local Green Spaces can be. Instead, because places differ, a degree of judgement will be required. It does, however, confirm that the blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements is not appropriate, that and Local Green Spaces should not be used as a 'back door' to achieving a new area of Green Belt.¹

¹ Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 37-015-20140306

I understand that the area of land to the north of Skipton town centre is locally important, particularly due to its historic significance and association with Skipton Castle. The area includes the popular Skipton Woods and the earthworks of a Civil War battery on Park Hill.

However, the designation extends to over 75 hectares and encompasses a vast area of land stretching from the High Street, over Park Hill, all the way up to the A59. Based on observations at my site visit the contiguous agricultural fields, combined with Skipton Woods, represent an extensive tract of land that would result in a blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to the main built up area of Skipton. SK-LGS64 therefore conflicts with paragraph 77 of the Framework, and the advice contained within the PPG, and should be deleted.

Land west of Hellifield – HE-LGS1

Based on the representations received in support of this designation, and participation at the hearing sessions, 'Hellifield Flashes' is clearly a valued and well used area of open space. It is also a relatively self-contained area bounded by Waterside Lane and the railway line to the north, Station Road to the east and the A65 to the south and west.

Despite having clearly defined boundaries, the designation relates to a large area consisting of several different parcels of land. This includes fields separated by walls and fences, an area of woodland and the pond to the north. In total, it measures over 35ha and extends beyond the main built up area of Hellifield and the outlying station buildings. Compared to the size of the village it is a far-reaching, extensive tract of land.

A similar conclusion was reached in the January 2017 *Draft Local Green Space Assessment*.² It found that the Flashes failed to meet test 2 – is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land? Although the areas of built development associated with the tourism commitment have been removed from the designation, this has only reduced its size from around 41.7 hectares to roughly 35.5 hectares. In my opinion, the conclusions of the 2017 assessment therefore continue to apply. By reason of its size and coverage the site fails to meet the criteria set out in national planning policy and should also be deleted.

The Council should note that these comments do not represent my full findings on these matters, which shall be set out in the final report taking into account any representations made. I shall also consider whether or not these changes should be recommended for soundness after the public consultation exercise.

I trust that the necessary changes are self-explanatory and that you are able to accommodate the amendments into the schedule of previously agreed Main Modifications. If this is not the case please advise me as soon as possible, in order that I can consider the way forward for the Examination.

² Document Lo001

Should you have any queries, or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me through the Programme Officer.

Yours Sincerely,

Matthew Birkinshaw

Inspector

13 November 2018