

JCS Meeting with DCLG Notes of Meeting
Friday 21 March 2014 11:00
Tewkesbury Borough Council - Chamber

Chair:

Jim Claydon

Speakers:

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG): Jane Everton and Lucy Hargreaves

Planning Inspectorate (PINS): Keith Holland

In attendance:

Councillors and officers from Cheltenham, Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Councils and invited guests

The open meeting had been convened following recent interventions by MP Nick Boles, Planning Minister, on the subject of Green Belts. These interventions took the form of letters between him and Sir Michael Pitt (PINS) and a written parliamentary statement. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify policy in relation to Green Belt and to consider the implications for the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) being prepared by the three planning authorities. The meeting took the form of questions from the audience and answers from the speakers.

The representatives of the DCLG/PINS made it clear that policy on Green Belts had not been changed and was clearly set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Nick Boles' letters were designed to re-emphasise that Green Belts should only be reviewed in the process of local plan preparation and that they should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. The approach being taken in the JCS was endorsed.

It was explained that the NPPF has to be looked at as a whole and individual policies not taken in isolation.

The importance of the 'duty to cooperate' was emphasised, and not just in relation to housing provision. In the case of the JCS the duty will be considered both between the three authorities and outside their boundaries. However there is not a requirement to agree with authorities beyond those boundaries.

Meeting housing need as established in the 'objectively assessed need' (OAN) is an important consideration in justifying the exceptional circumstances for a review of Green Belt. Provision of a five-year supply would be considered across the JCS area. Failure to provide sufficient housing allocations to meet OAN or failure to agree a local plan may make sites vulnerable to planning applications and appeal including sites in the Green Belt.

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The importance of public consultation is in contributing to the evidence base of plan preparation and informing the political process of decision making. The planning relevance of representations is of greater import than the volume of representations on any one subject.

At the Local Plan examination the inspector will test whether the strategy will deliver to meet need but will not propose alternative strategies. If alternatives are presented by objectors then these will be considered.