

Note on policy LPP72 Green Buffers

Braintree District Council

Introduction

Policy LPP72 on Green Buffers is designed to prevent coalescence of certain settlements in the District by identifying those areas of landscape value, where their value is defined in part by the role they play in visually separating one town or village from another. Thus these areas merit an additional protection than that offered by a 'Countryside' designation alone.

The Green Buffers are shown on the individual Inset Maps. However to aid discussion at the hearing, and their identification, the Council has attached a District wide map to this note which includes all the green buffers in the District.

Context

One of planning's key roles in paragraph 7 contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

One of the Core Planning Principles in NPPF 2012 paragraph 17 requires planning to

1. "take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it"; and

2. "contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;"

And further to this in Paragraph 109.

"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by;

protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils'

SP3 of the adopted Local Plan Part 1 requires future growth to be planned to ensure existing settlements maintain their distinctive character and role, to avoid coalescence between them and to conserve their setting. The reference to coalescence was inserted as MM7 in the Inspector's Schedule of Recommended Main Modifications.

What factors were taken into account in determining the extent of the proposed Green Buffers?

Council officers considered the District's larger towns and settlements (set out in the towns and key service village within the spatial strategy) where the majority of the growth is directed, and considered whether any additional growth not allocated within

the Local Plan, could put that settlement at risk of merging or coalescing with each and/or reduced the perception of the settlements having separate identities. A number of settlements were identified where this could be a risk.

Larger settlements where Settlement Fringes Landscape Area Evaluation Studies had been conducted were examined for (a) areas of lowest and (b) medium to low landscape capacity and proximity to nearby settlements. A judgement was made as to where a buffer should be drawn.

In undertaking this assessment, and specifically when determining the extent of the proposed Green Buffers, Officers considered the 2015 Landscape Capacity Analysis (BDC047 1 27 – BDC047 27 27) which was conducted on the Main Towns and Key Service Villages and built on the work of the earlier 2007 study (BDC045 4 6 and BDC047 2 27,) which divided the District into a 22 different character areas. The settlement fringes study created smaller parcels with common characteristics, eg landform, scale of field patterns, amount and type of vegetation. Physical boundaries were used to define the boundaries of parcels. Each parcel was scored against a set of evaluation criteria and the results ranked from Low to High Landscape capacity according to their ability to absorb development without harming its character. Evaluation criteria include, slope analysis, enclosure by vegetation, complexity/scale, landscape character quality/condition, openness to public or private view, relationship with urban conurbations, prevention of settlement coalescence, scope to mitigate and landscape value.

The Green Buffer boundaries have been chosen to reflect the landscape character area parcels described above where the areas identified have low or medium to low capacity to accommodate change and doing so they largely also follow physical defensible, boundaries. Some deviations from the landscape parcels in the Landscape Capacity Analysis have occurred, where for example parcels such as river valleys are larger than necessary to guard against coalescence. In such a case, planning judgement was made as where to where the boundary should be located.

Modifications

In SDBDC008a the Council is not proposing any changes to this policy, however on further consideration it proposes the following changes to the bullet points in the first part of the policy in order that the wording of the policy properly reflects the areas identified on the inset Map and intended to be included.

- Land between Braintree, Panfield, **Rayne**, Bocking and High Garrett
- **Land between Earls Colne and White Colne**

The addition of the village of Rayne to the first bullet point is to more accurately reflect the green buffers purpose and position to the west of Braintree

The addition of the second bullet point is to correct an error where a Green Buffer is marked on the Inset Map but was not individually listed within the policy

