

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF HALTON DELIVERY AND ALLOCATIONS LOCAL PLAN

Response to Inspector's Matters, Issues and
Questions (MIQs)

Matter 16 – Safeguarded Land

On Behalf of Hale Bank Parish Council

February 2020

LANDOR Planning
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This representation is prepared and submitted by Landor Planning Consultants Ltd, acting on behalf of Hale Bank Parish Council (HBPC) in relation to the Independent Examination Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan 2014-2037.
- 1.2 This submission follows on from previous representations made by and on behalf of HBPC. The representations made in this statement should be considered in the context of previous representations.
- 1.3 In addition, this representation is to be read in conjunction with the response to Matter 4: The Housing Requirement, prepared by Startegic Planning Research Unit at DLP Planning Ltd, for and on behalf of HBPC.



Figure 1: The extent of 75 hectares of land proposed for release from the Green Belt around Hale Bank (in a combination of sites for residential allocation and safeguarded land) (Source: Google Earth Pro). As can be seen from the aerial imagery, the land is open, undeveloped, in agricultural use and has no correlation with any existing settlement. The proposed release of 75 hectares of Green Belt does not provide a sustainable urban extension and does not 'round off' the existing urban area.

2.0 MIQ16- SAFEGUARDED LAND

- 2.1 Policy GB2 (SD01) identifies a series of sites comprising 155.34 hectares in total for potential future development, should a future Local Plan review deem it necessary. Safeguarded land is not required to meet the development needs of the current Plan period, but potential development needs beyond, i.e. after 2037.
- 2.2 Sites SG11 and SG13 are safeguarded sites of interest to HBPC. Policy GB2 quotes Paragraph 83 of the 2012 version of NPPF, which has been superseded. Paragraph 139c) of the NPPF 2019 states that plans should, 'where necessary identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period'.
- 2.3 GB2 does not state what purpose safeguarded land is intended for and thereby fails the test of demonstrating necessity. It is not explained whether safeguarded sites are for residential, employment, retail or some other purpose. No indicative site capacities are set out for any form of development on safeguarded land. The approach taken is inappropriate and contrary to national planning policy guidance. In order to robustly assess the amount of land required beyond this plan period, the Council would need to take into account a variety of social and economic factors, which cannot be accurately assessed at the current time. Furthermore, the implications of emerging local plans within neighbouring districts would need to be considered along with the dynamics of housing and employment markets which will change over the next 15 to 20 years.
- 2.4 In short, the necessary evidence base to establish whether this site is "likely" to be required for the subsequent plan period does not yet exist. The LPA has no clear intended purpose as to quantum and the type of development which the safeguarded sites might accommodate. Therefore, the proposal to remove SG11 and SG13 from the protective Green Belt status is not justified.
- 2.5 Paragraph 3.78 of EL003 refers to sites with particularly strong Green Belt function, which are '*sites that are generally open in character with weak boundaries, used for countryside purposes and generally not encroached or contained by development*'. Around Hale and south Widnes, these sites with strong Green Belt function are described as, '*predominantly located to the east of Liverpool and round an arc between Hale and Halebank down towards the River Mersey and stretching from just south of Pickering's Pasture all the way to Hale Lighthouse.*'
- 2.6 Site SG11 Land at Hale Gate Road is 27.01 hectares of open undeveloped land located within a zone with strong Green Belt function. SG13 is similarly located and comprises 22.67 hectares. Both sites are poorly contained with boundaries undefined by any permanent physical features (contrary to NPPF 159f)). The western boundary of SG11 clings to the back gardens of properties on Hale Gate Road which itself is a ribbon of development which encroaches into the countryside. Land at Hale Gate Road is safeguarded for unspecified future development. It

is partly located within Flood Zone 2 and the inner public health consultation zone and is therefore unsuitable for housing.

- 2.7 The perimeter of SG11 measures circa 2,520m. Approximately 47% of the perimeter boundary is adjacent to open land. Therefore its connection to existing development is not substantial.
- 2.8 SG13 has a perimeter boundary of circa 2200m. Approximately 88% of the perimeter boundary is adjacent to open land. Therefore it has virtually no connection with existing developed or built form. Moreover, part of the north-west boundary and southern boundary of SG13 is totally arbitrary and has no reference whatsoever to any features physical or landscape features. It is thus in conflict with paragraph 139f) of NPPF.
- 2.9 The Green Belt that separates Hale Bank, Hale and the south-west edge of Liverpool (including John Lennon Airport) has form and cohesion. It constitutes a buffer that serves to separate and protect the spatial identity of these communities. SG13 in particular, constitutes an encroachment into the countryside contrary to NPPF (paragraph 134c). In combination with SG11, the purpose of safeguarding is to bookend and justify the allocation of Site W24. The three sites result in the removal of 75 hectares from the Green Belt.
- 2.10 SG11 and SG13 are not sustainable urban extensions as neither has any apparent connection to any existing settlement. Accessibility to the site is poor. The Green Belt Review Methodology confirms that the site is not within reasonable proximity of any of the following essential services and facilities: railway station, secondary school, further education, town centre, district centre, local centre, leisure centre, GP or Health Centre.
- 2.11 Both SG11 and SG13 are open, undeveloped land Grade 2, (i.e. very good quality) agricultural land within the Hale Shore and Farmland Landscape Character Area. There are a number of restrictive constraints affecting SG11 including Pickerings' Pasture Local Wildlife Site, the proximity of the Mersey Estuary RAMSAR. The proposed removal of SG11 and SG13 from the Green Belt may only be justified against fully evidenced exceptional circumstances (NPPF 136). Exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated as Halton Council has not stated the form and quantum of development the safeguarded sites may be required for. Clearly, there is no evidence to justify the removal of these sites from the protection of the Green Belt.
- 2.12 In addition, and in keeping with adjacent allocated site W24, safeguarded sites SG11 and SG13, are located within an area at High Risk of Surface Water/Flood Risk Area, as indicated in Figures 2 and 3. The following images were taken in between 20 January-29 January 2021 at Potters Lane/ Halebank Road (WN8 8NG), overlooking W24 and demonstrate that the land drainage issues are acute during periods of heavy rainfall.
- 2.13 In the absence of exceptional circumstances and no clear intended purpose for safeguarded land, we consider that the Halton Local Plan is not positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy (NPPF, February 2019).

2.14 The Inspector is invited to modify Local Plan Policy GB2: Safeguarded Land and remove SG11 (W13) Land at Hale Gate Road and SG13 (W48) Land to the south of Hale Bank Road as safeguarded land and as identified on the Halton Plan Policies Map.

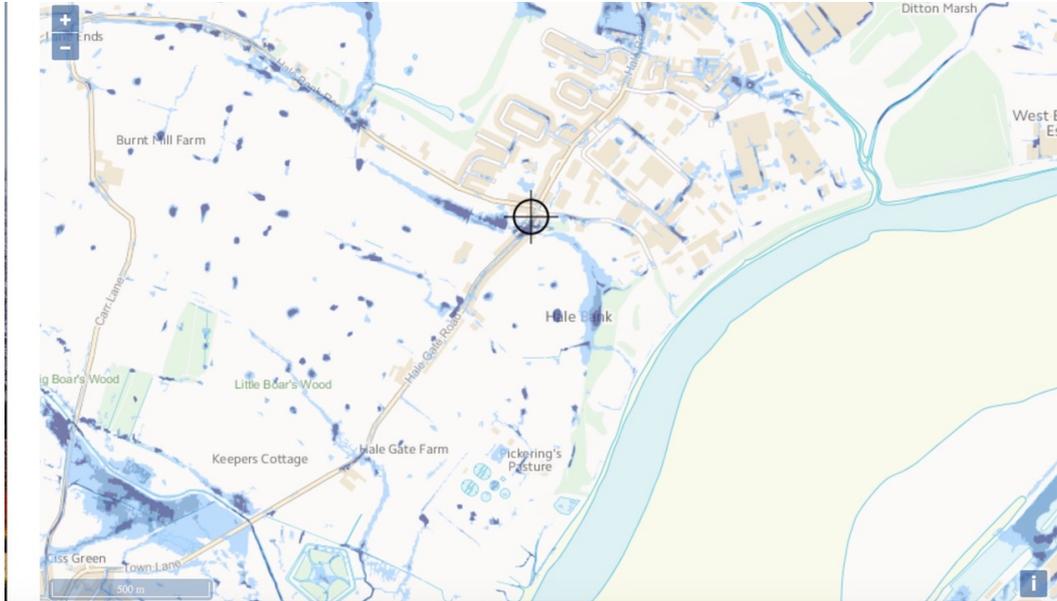


Figure 2 – Surface Water High Risk Areas (Source: Gov.uk)

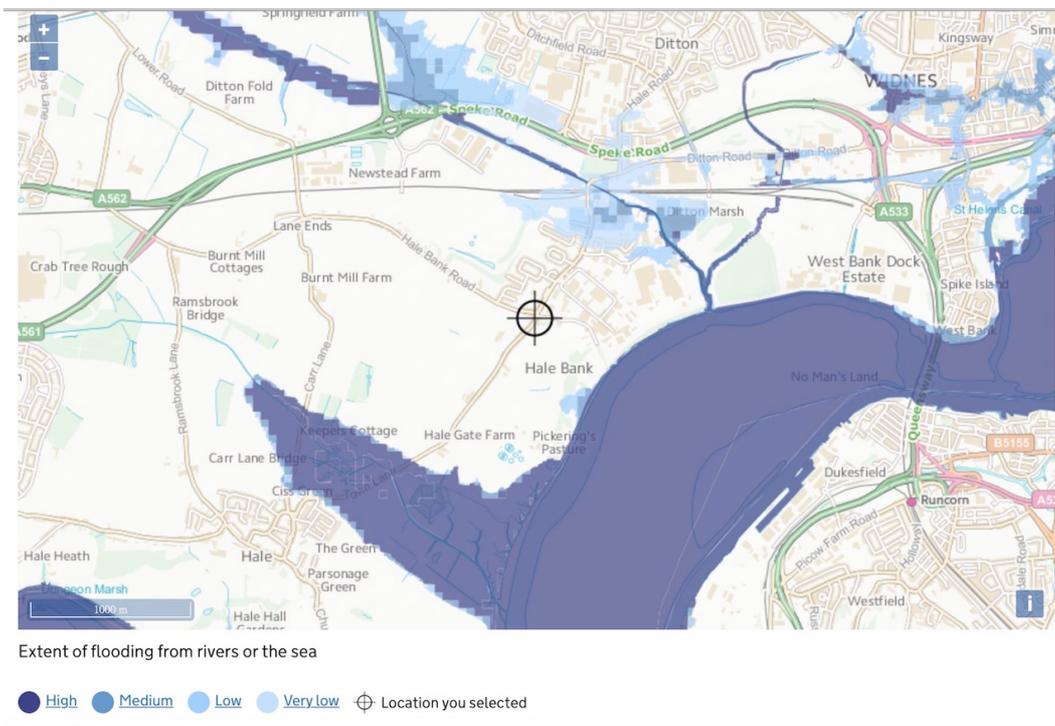


Figure 3 – Flood Risk Map (Source: Gov.uk)





Figures 4-9: Site W24 from Halebank Road/Potters Lane (20-29 January 2021)