

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 16 June 2010

Core Strategy Interim Sites

Report of the Planning Policy Advisor

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mark Edwards)

1. Executive Summary

It is recommended that Interim Sites for 300 dwellings each be agreed at Nerrols and Cades to contribute towards the shortfall in the 5 year supply of housing land in Taunton Deane.

2. Background

- 2.1 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) requires that Local Planning Authorities should identify and maintain a rolling five year supply of deliverable land for housing. The RSS identifies separate requirements for Taunton, due to its designation as a Strategically Significant City or Town (SSCT), and for the remainder of Taunton Deane.
- 2.2 The RSS Secretary of State Proposed Changes annual housing requirement for Taunton SSCT is 900 dwellings (or 18,000 dwellings over the period 2006-26) and for the rest of the Borough 190 dwellings (or 3,800 dwellings 2006-26). The RSS annual housing requirement for Taunton Deane is 1,090 dwellings (or 21,800 dwellings 2006-26).
- 2.3 The Taunton Deane Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was completed in July 2009. The SHLAA showed 3.12 years supply for Taunton SSCT and 6.84 years supply for the rest of the Borough. For Taunton Deane the SHLAA showed a 3.74 years supply.
- 2.4 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing in paragraph 69 states:
In general, in deciding planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should have regard to:
 - Achieving high quality housing.

- Ensuring developments achieve a good mix of housing reflecting the accommodation requirements of specific groups, in particular, families and older people.
- The suitability of a site for housing, including its environmental sustainability.
- Using land effectively and efficiently.
- Ensuring the proposed development is in line with planning for housing objectives, reflecting the need and demand for housing in, and the spatial vision for, the area and does not undermine wider policy objectives eg addressing housing market renewal issues.

Paragraph 71 states:

Where Local Planning Authorities cannot demonstrate an up-to-date five year supply of deliverable sites, for example, where Local Development Documents have not been reviewed to take account of this PPS or there is less than five years supply of deliverable sites, they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in this PPS including the considerations in paragraph 69.

- 2.5 The risk of failing to provide a five year supply of housing land is that planning appeals will be allowed on unplanned, less sustainable sites. Since the Core Strategy will not be adopted until September 2011 the Council considers it vital to have regard to these risks in the short term. Therefore in the Local Development Scheme (May 2009) provision was made for the release of 'Interim Sites' following public consultation in 2010 to contribute towards providing a five year supply of housing land for Taunton Deane. Elsewhere in the country Inspectors have allowed appeals where there has either not been a 5 year supply for the District as a whole. At Calne in Wiltshire an Inspector allowed an appeal despite the fact that there was a five year supply for the rural areas outside the SSCT (Chippenham) because there was not a five year supply for North Wiltshire.
- 2.6 The Minister has recently confirmed that the RSS will be abolished and although it will require legislation, we should no longer consider it to be a material consideration. The studies that informed the draft submitted RSS provide an evidence base for 14,000 new homes in Taunton and 17,300 for the Borough as a whole. The draft RSS assumed a lower rate of growth for the first half of the plan period to 2026, and this has been used to calculate the five year supply figures (see Appendix 1).
- 2.7 Assuming the future scale of growth for Taunton is reduced to the draft RSS figure of 14,000 the Nerrols Interim Site at Taunton would give a 5.07 years supply for Taunton SSCT. A failure to identify a five year supply of housing land for Taunton SSCT would involve a high risk of the current planning application at Maidenbrook or the site that was subject to pre-

application consultation at Broadlands in Staplehay being allowed on appeal.

- 2.8 Assuming the future scale of growth for Taunton Deane is reduced from the RSS Proposed Changes level of 21,800 to the draft RSS level of 17,300, the two Interim Sites recommended (Nerrols and Cades in Wellington) would provide a 5.67 years supply of housing land for Taunton Deane.
- 2.9 The number of vacant homes was raised at the Community Scrutiny meeting. There are 362 empty homes in Taunton Deane. This is not particularly high and is in line with national rates. Local Authorities have for some time been working to bring empty homes back into occupation and this is an ongoing part of our housing strategy. The calculation of housing figures takes the number of empty homes into account.
- 2.10 During January and February 2010 the Borough Council conducted public consultation on the Core Strategy and Small Sites for the Local Development Framework (LDF). That document refers to the clear need for urgent action to address the housing land supply situation and identifies four 'Interim Sites' where a first phase of development can contribute towards meeting the shortfall as follows:
- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Nerrols Farm | about 250 dwellings |
| 2. Killams | about 250 dwellings |
| 3. Ford Farm, Norton Fitzwarren | about 250 dwellings |
| 4. Bishops Hull | about 220 dwellings |

3. Interim Sites

Bishops Hull

- 3.1 A planning application for 220 dwellings at Bishops Hull has a Planning Committee resolution to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement. This site can therefore be regarded as a planning commitment which will contribute towards the five year supply. It therefore no longer needs to be considered as part of the release of Interim Sites.

Ford Farm Norton Fitzwarren

- 3.2 At Ford Farm, Norton Fitzwarren, the Taunton Deane Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA published in 2007) indicated that the completion of the Halse Water dam would take the site out of flood zone 3 and into flood zone 2. However, despite completion of the dam recent work has shown that much of Ford Farm is still in flood zone 3. Channel improvements

through the site will need to be implemented before Ford Farm can be reclassified as flood zone 2.

- 3.3 The Borough Council will not be in a position to allocate Ford Farm for development until the channel improvements have been carried out. Since the Core Strategy will be published in October 2010 it is therefore unlikely to include Ford Farm. If the channel works are completed it could be considered for allocation in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) which will follow the Core Strategy and is due to be adopted in December 2012.

Killams

- 3.4 The Community Scrutiny meeting on 26 May 2010 considered the inclusion of Killams as an Interim Site. A number of detailed issues were raised and members resolved that the site should not be included in the recommendation to Executive in June. Killams will be the subject of a detailed report for consideration at a later date.

Nerrols

- 3.5 The summary of the recent consultation including the Council response to the issues raised on Nerrols is set out in Appendix 2 to this report. Entec on behalf of the Crown estate have reached an advanced stage in their preparations to submit a planning application, having carried out transport and environmental assessments. They have recently attended meetings with local councillors and representatives of Parish Councils and are planning pre-application consultation locally. They have also met to discuss the design of the site with Urban Initiatives, the consultants we have appointed to prepare the urban extensions SPD.
- 3.6 The consultation response expressed concerns that development at Nerrols would impede views to/from Cheddon Fitzpaine Conservation Area and would have an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the area. There was also concern expressed over the loss of agricultural land. The setting of Cheddon Fitzpaine within the green wedge separating Priorswood from Monkton Heathfield will remain. Cheddon Fitzpaine lies in the valley of the Maidenbrook stream. From the church there are southerly views will be retained down the valley where meadows of species rich permanent pasture. Higher on the valley slopes it is proposed that an extensive belt of woodland planting would provide replacement habitat for the Hestercombe House lesser horseshoe bats, which currently forage on the northern part of the Nerrols site. A 20 metre wide structural landscaping belt of trees and shrubs is also proposed around the fringe of

- the development site. This will ensure that the setting of Cheddon Fitzpaine and biodiversity of the area is preserved and enhanced. National planning policy advises that the loss of good quality agricultural land can be justified in the interests of sustainable development.
- 3.7 The Green Infrastructure Strategy (2009) proposed a new country park in the core part of the green wedge between Maidenbrook and Allen's brook. There is currently a lack of public open space in this part of north Taunton. Developer contributions from the Nerrols and Monkton Heathfield urban extensions on either side would be sought to provide this important informal recreational facility. There are also opportunities to incorporate surface water attenuation and sustainable drainage systems in the valleys of these two streams. This will create a semi-wetland habitat which, together with the woodland planting in the country park and the woodland belts to mitigate the loss of habitat for the bats, will enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the green wedge. These will also provide opportunities for longer distance recreation routes for walking and cycling within the wedge, including a link from Halcon to the Quantocks. Since the woodland planting will take ten years to be sufficiently mature to be of value for bat foraging, it is proposed that planting be a requirement for the first phase of development.
- 3.8 Concern was also expressed about the capacity of utility services to cater for the proposed development. Transport issues included traffic congestion, pollution and the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. There are no known utility service or transport constraints to the Nerrols development. A new distributor road is proposed to connect Nerrols Drive to Cheddon Road. Enhanced pedestrian and cycle links would also be provided.
- 3.9 The Education Authority has identified capacity issues at Lyngford primary school. It is unlikely that a new primary school can be provided at Nerrols as part of a first phase of development due to viability considerations. However, a serviced site for the school could be provided in the first phase, enabling the buildings to follow early in the second phase of development. A new local centre is proposed as part of the first phase adjoining the existing roundabout at the southern end of Nerrols Drive to provide the community with a range of services and local employment opportunities.
- 3.10 There are no major constraints to development at Nerrols. A first phase of development could provide about 300 dwellings within the next five years, contributing towards the shortfall in housing land supply. The developers would be in a position to submit a planning application in July. All the above matters and the provision of affordable housing would be the subject of a Section 106 agreement. Nerrols is therefore considered to be

a sustainable and deliverable site which should be included as one of the Interim Sites.

Cades, Wellington

- 3.11 Taunton Deane local Plan allocated a site for about 250 dwellings at Cades Farm, Wellington. Cades is being developed by Persimmon, Barratt and Charles Church, who together have completed 87 dwellings out of the 164 that have been granted planning permission. There is a new application for a further 110 dwellings submitted.
- 3.12 The summary of consultation to the Core Strategy proposals for Wellington is set out in Appendix 3 to this report. There was general support for the strategic sites identified in Wellington.
- 3.13 The response on Cades Farm suggested surface water attenuation to reduce flood risk, allotments or community orchards, high standards of design and sustainability and cycle/pedestrian links with the town centre should be as direct as possible. Also a primary school should be provided at Cades Farm to maximise opportunities for 'non-car' travel modes.
- 3.14 These comments are supported. Our strategy to reduce flood risk is to incorporate major surface water attenuation into green infrastructure that centres on existing watercourses, rather than the piecemeal approach of small surface water attenuation within residential areas where they are difficult to maintain and erroneously argued by the developer to be part of the public open space. The Green Infrastructure Strategy concluded that the eastern part of Wellington is currently deficient in accessible green space, and suggested that a new green space should be created to serve this side of the town. This could incorporate surface water attenuation, allotments, community orchard and both formal and informal recreation opportunities, providing a new green wedge between the residential areas of the town and Westpark industrial estate beyond. A larger scale of development in this area would be required to justify the provision of a new primary school.
- 3.15 There are no major constraints to development at Cades. A first phase of development could provide about 300 dwellings within the next five years, contributing towards the shortfall in housing land supply. The developers would be in a position to submit a planning application later this year. All the above matters and the provision of affordable housing would be the subject of a Section 106 agreement. Cades is therefore considered to be a sustainable and deliverable site which should be included as one of the Interim Sites.

4. Links to Corporate Aims

- 4.1 The Core Strategy has identified a number of strategic sites that will provide sustainable mixed use development and community facilities. The Interim Sites identified are initial phases of those strategic sites that can meet the shortfall in the 5 year supply of housing. This relates to the Corporate aims of regeneration, affordable housing and climate change.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 If the Council fails to identify a five year supply of deliverable housing sites there is a risk of successful planning appeals on unplanned sites. If the Interim Sites identified are not released there is also a risk that the developers will still submit planning applications. Bearing in mind these Interim Sites have been found to be sustainable and subject to public consultation, the Council would find it difficult to justify refusal of planning permission and could be liable for costs in the event of a successful appeal.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Executive agrees Interim Sites for 300 dwellings each be released at Nerrols and Cades to contribute towards the shortfall in the 5 years supply of housing land in Taunton Deane.

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APPENDIX 1

The figures included in this Appendix are provided for illustrative purposes only and do not comprise a full and comprehensive update of the housing land supply calculation.

The Council is in the process of reviewing and updating its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the involvement of the SHLAA Panel of representative housebuilders will be essential to calculation of the deliverable supply of housing sites. Moreover, the supply element of the calculations represents the picture as at late 2009 insofar as it is reflective of extant planning consents large and small at this time and the deliverable SHLAA sites identified in the Taunton Deane SHLAA 2009.

The SHLAA Review will provide a more up-to-date calculation of supply based upon the most recent information available, by implication this may mean that further sites are included or may in some cases be excluded dependent upon an assessment of deliverability.

As such, this Appendix is provided solely to provide an indication as to how land supply may be affected by the recognition of the interim sites at Nerrols and Cades.

Proposed Changes (21,800)

Requirements:	2006 – 2026	Annual Req	Reqm 2006 – 2010	Completions 2006 – 2010	Shortfall 2006 – 2010	5yr reqm inc. shortfall
SSCT	18,000	900	3,600	1,212	2,388	5,246
Rest of Borough	3,800	190	760	609	151	997
TDB	21,800	1,090	4,360	1,821	3,629	6,243

Draft RSS (17,300)

Requirements:	2006 – 2026	Annual Req (2006 – 2016)	Reqm 2006 – 2010	Completions 2006 – 2010	Shortfall 2006 – 2010	5yr reqm inc. shortfall
SSCT	14,000	667	2,668	1,212	14,56	3,996
Rest of Borough	3,300	158	632	609	23	841
TDB	17,300	825	3,300	1,821	1,479	4,837

Supply:	SHLAA Sites	Large Sites with PP	Small Sites with PP	Interim Sites	Total Deliverable Supply ¹
SSCT	1,287	2,023	226	600	4,146
Rest of Borough	238	626	262	300	1,356
TDB	1,525	2,649	488	900	5,502

¹ Figure has had 60 subtracted to reflect additional completions (+10 for SSCT, -70 for RoB) over and above projections shown in Housing Trajectory Dec 2010.

RSS Proposed Changes

Taunton SSCT (Including Interim Site)

5 year housing requirement: 5,246
5 year supply of deliverable sites: 3,846

5 year deliverable housing supply: $\frac{3,846}{5,246} \times 5 = 3.66$ years supply

Taunton Deane Borough-wide (Including both Interim Sites)

5 year housing requirement: 6,243
5 year supply of deliverable sites: 5,202

5 year deliverable housing supply: $\frac{5,202}{6,243} \times 5 = 4.17$ years supply

Draft RSS

Taunton SSCT (Including Interim Site)

5 year housing requirement: 3,790
5 year supply of deliverable sites: 3,846

5 year deliverable housing supply: $\frac{3,846}{3,790} \times 5 = 5.07$ years supply

Taunton SSCT (Without Interim Site)

5 year housing requirement: 3,790
5 year supply of deliverable sites: 3,546

5 year deliverable housing supply: $\frac{3,546}{3,790} \times 5 = 4.68$ years supply

Borough-wide (Including Interim Sites)

5 year housing requirement: 4,590
5 year supply of deliverable sites: 5,202

5 year deliverable housing supply: $\frac{5,202}{4,590} \times 5 = 5.67$ years supply

Borough-wide (Without Interim Sites)

5 year housing requirement: 4,590
5 year supply of deliverable sites: 4,602

5 year deliverable housing supply: $\frac{4,602}{4,590} \times 5 = 5.01$ years supply

Nerrols Summary of Representations and Responses

Eight feedback forms were received in response to the consultation event at Cheddon Fitzpaine, held at the Memorial Hall in the afternoon and evening on 1st February 2010. In addition, a consultation event was held at Priorswood Resource Centre in the afternoon and evening on 18th January 2010. A total of seventeen feedback forms were received from these two events.

Summary of key issues raised and Council response:

Environmental Issues:

1. Of these feedback forms, eight respondents expressed concern that any new development at the site would have the effect of 'urbanising' the rural nature of the village and surrounding area. In particular, respondents were concerned that any development would impede views to/from Cheddon Fitzpaine and would have an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the area. There was also concern expressed over the loss of agricultural land in the vicinity.

The Council acknowledges the landscape setting of Priorswood and Cheddon Fitzpaine and the importance of safeguarding its natural qualities. Any development would be accompanied by rigorous measures which would mitigate any effect on the landscape setting. It would also actively seek to enhance the habitat for protected species. Development would be accompanied by habitat creation, including woodland buffers and new areas of planting to preserve and enhance the biodiversity and natural vistas in the locale. An area of pasture along the Maidenbrook stream would ensure that vistas along the valley are protected. This will ensure that the setting of the two settlements is preserved and enhanced.

In line with national planning policy, any loss of agricultural land should be considered alongside other sustainability objectives such as accessibility to infrastructure, workforce and economic growth as well as protecting the quality of the environment. Any pressure to accommodate economic growth in Taunton should be a material consideration in allocating sustainable urban extensions at greenfield sites.

2. A number of respondents were concerned over the adverse that any new development might have on the setting of the conservation area at Cheddon Fitzpaine. In particular, residents were keen to see that any new development should respect the existing character of the settlement should mitigate any adverse effects on the landscape.

The Council acknowledges the importance of protecting and enhancing the historic environment. Any development would be accompanied by woodland planting and structural landscaping which would preserve and enhance the setting of Cheddon Fitzpaine. In addition, the creation of a species-rich pasture

along the Maidenbrook valley would ensure that views to/from the village are not compromised by any new development.

Transport and Infrastructure Issues:

3. A number of respondents were concerned about the ability of physical infrastructure (water, gas, electricity) in coping with increased demand from any proposed development. A significant number of respondents identified current traffic level as an issue and were concerned that development would exacerbate congestion and pollution in the village and surrounding area. There was also concern expressed over the impact on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists from increased traffic movements.

Any development should be accompanied by appropriate transport infrastructure. The last phase of development would extend the Nerrols Drive distributor road up to Cheddon Road. This would be part of a Northern Outer Distributor Road which would reduce the need for through traffic to enter the inner urban area of Taunton. This should include enhanced pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

Social and Economic Issues:

4. Four respondents were keen to ensure that the Fun Farm at Priorswood was protected as a local amenity, as part of any development.

The Council acknowledges the role that the Fun Farm plays in the local community. The Council will continue to work with the facility in order to ensure that its role is not diminished.

Wellington Summary of Representations and Responses

A public exhibition was held all day in Wellington United Reform Church on 3rd February 2010. Over the consultation period there were 36 individual responses made to the Core Strategy proposals. The key issues are outlined below:

Summary of Key Issues Raised and Council Response:

1. Responses to the Core Strategy consultation indicate that the principles of site allocations in Wellington were broadly accepted. There was a positive response to the implementation of the Northern Relief Road as and the potential for freeing-up land for housing within the town centre, as well as the proposal for a Country Park to the west of the town.

Officers note the positive responses to potential site allocations in Wellington.

Transport Issues:

2. Respondents welcomed the implementation of the Northern Relief Road at an early stage in order that it could facilitate development to the north of the town and reduce traffic congestion in the town centre. As part of this scheme, respondents also welcomed a comprehensive scheme of cycle and pedestrian routes to/from the town in order to enable sustainable transport modes.

The Council will continue to work with Somerset County Council to ensure that the proposed Northern Relief Road would be part of a phased development which would allow for the relief road to access the boundary of the current employment area, enabling HGVs and other traffic to avoid the town centre. The Council will seek to ensure that cycling/pedestrian access to/from Wellington is implemented as part of a strategic transport policy which encourages access by a range of transport modes.

Environmental Issues:

3. There was a positive response to the provision of allotments and a country park to the west of the town. In addition, respondents were keen to see an emphasis on open spaces both within new developments and on the urban fringe areas of the town and the implementation of an integrated plan for all green spaces. There was a wider concern that new development should be adequately screened by trees and natural landscaping (notably at Longforth Farm) and that any development south of the 'natural barrier' of the A38 Wellington relief road would impinge views of the Blackdown Hills.

The Council will seek to ensure that any new development seeks to preserve and enhance the unique built and natural environment of the borough and the wider area. New development will encourage access as well as formal green spaces and recreation facilities. Where appropriate, mitigation will be implemented to offset any negative effects of development and to ensure that any proposals are constructed to a high design standards. Structural landscaping belts are proposed as part of the Longforth Farm development. There are no proposals to develop beyond the natural barrier of the A38 Wellington relief road.

Infrastructure Issues:

4. A significant proportion of respondents identified that all infrastructure should have the capacity to cope with any new development. Respondents identified that all appropriate physical infrastructure should be in place before development could take place.

The Council is in the process of undertaking an Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This includes an assessment of likely infrastructure requirements arising from development on certain sites. The Council will continue to work with infrastructure providers and developers to ensure that sufficient capacity exists in to sustain employment and residential development.

5. Respondents were keen to ensure that social and community infrastructure should be an integral part of any new development. In particular, respondents were keen to see increased capacity in schools as a response to new development. In addition, community facilities such as doctor's surgeries and community centres should be an integral part of any new development.

Taunton Deane Borough Council will seek to support the provision of community and social facilities in sustainable locations and areas of enhanced growth. The Council will continue to work closely with service providers, to ensure that integral elements such as community halls and allotments can be delivered. Where provision of community facilities cannot be accommodated as an integral part of a new development, contributions for such facilities will be sought through planning obligations from developers.

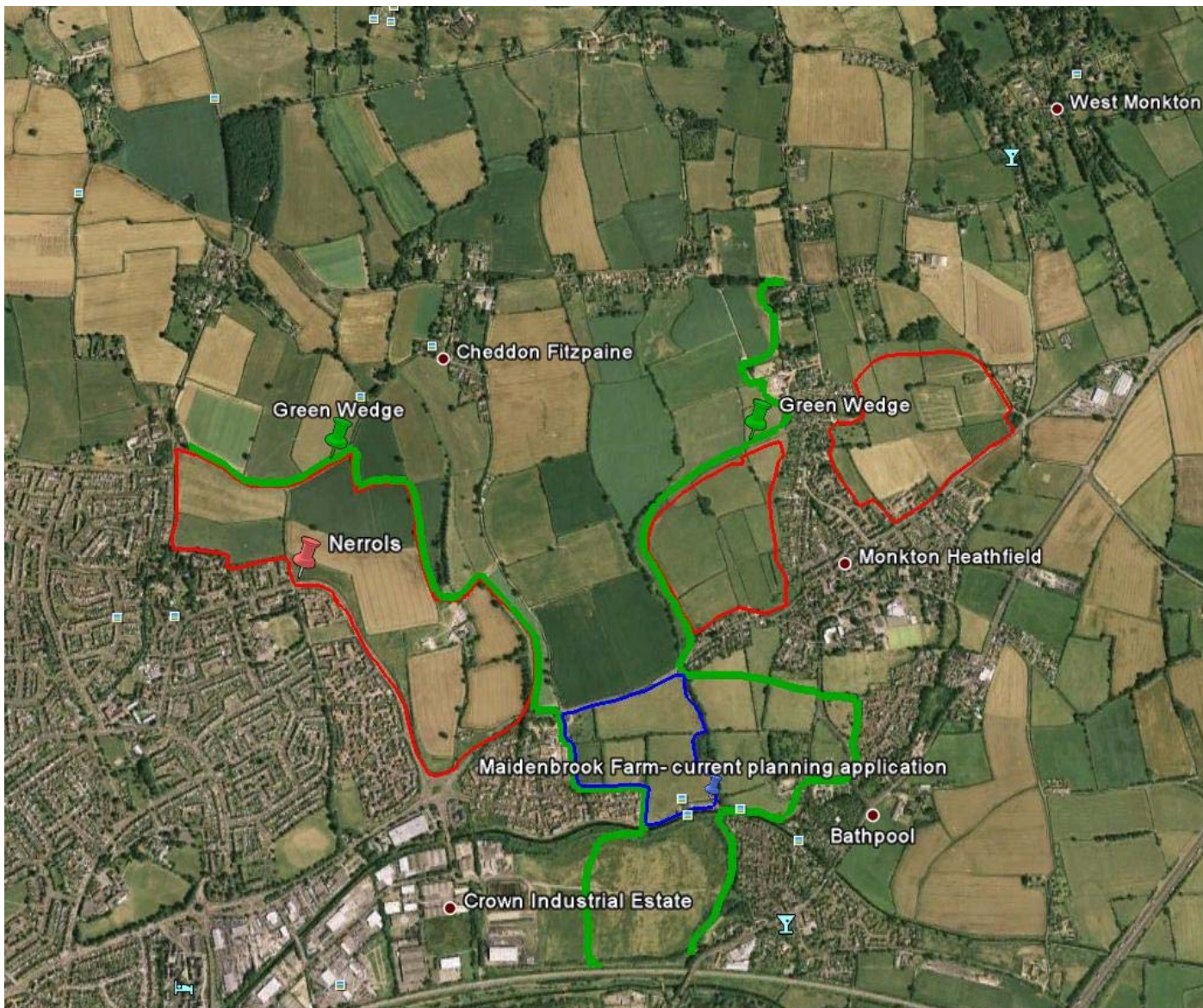
6. There was broad support for the re-opening of the mainline station at Wellington and the relocation of the factory at this site to an appropriate location in the town. Respondents were particularly keen to see that a new station was well-linked with the town by means of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

The Council welcomes the support for the reopening of the railway line at Wellington and will continue to work with key stakeholders and current occupiers of the site to pursue this objective. Any proposal for a new station should include measures for sustainable transport to-from the site.

Cades Farm comments:

7. Cades Farm plans should include a body of water to relieve flood risk issues. The plan does not contain any proposed allotments or community orchards. High standards of design and sustainability should be mandatory. Cycle/pedestrian links with the town centre should be as direct as possible. Primary school should be provided at Cades Farm to maximise opportunities for 'non-car' travel modes.

The Council supports these comments. Our strategy to reduce flood risk is to incorporate major surface water attenuation into green infrastructure that centres on existing watercourses, rather than the piecemeal approach of small surface water attenuation within residential areas where they are difficult to maintain and erroneously argued by the developer to be part of the public open space. The Green Infrastructure Strategy concluded that the eastern part of Wellington is currently deficient in accessible green space, and suggested that a new green space should be created to serve this side of the town. This could incorporate surface water attenuation, allotments, community orchard and both formal and informal recreation opportunities, providing a new green wedge between the residential areas of the town and Westpark industrial estate beyond. A larger scale of development in this area would be required to justify the provision of a new primary school.



West Monkton

Cheddon Fitzpaine

Green Wedge

Green Wedge

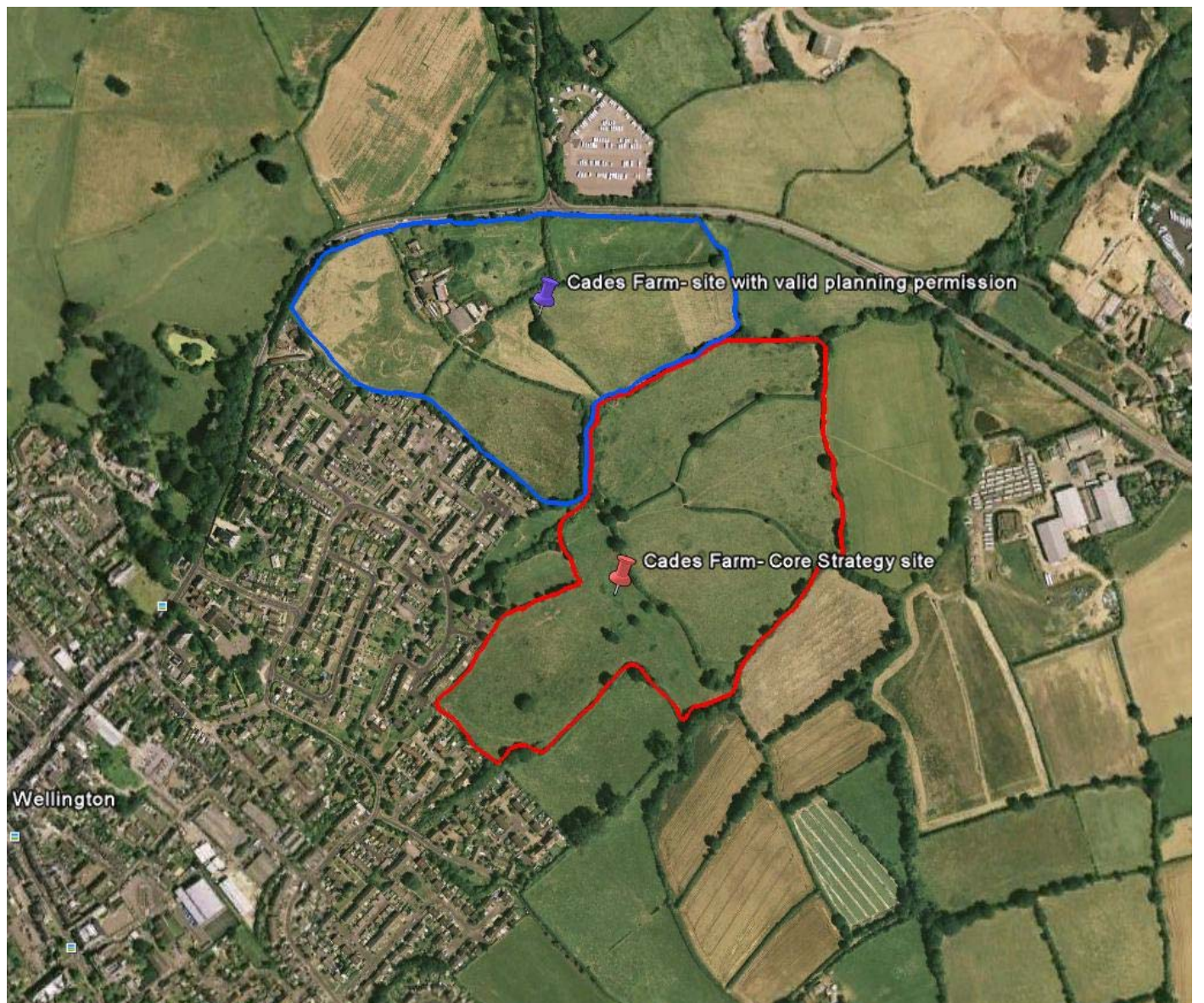
Nerrols

Monkton Heathfield

Maidenbrook Farm-current planning application

Bathpool

Crown Industrial Estate



Cades Farm-site with valid planning permission

Cades Farm-Core Strategy site

Wellington