



Craven Local Plan Examination

Matter 20

Statement by Craven District Council

Matter 20 – Land and Air Quality (Policy ENV7)

Hearing Day 9–Wednesday 24th October 2018 (Week 3)

September 2018

Issue 1 – Land and Air Quality – Policy ENV7

Q1. Is Policy ENV7 consistent with paragraph 112 of the Framework which states that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality?

Council's Response

1. The plan area does not contain any grade 1 or 2 agricultural land and the extent of grade 3 land is limited and available evidence from the Natural England Map for Yorkshire and the Humber on the Likelihood of the 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) Agricultural Land 2017 indicates that there is low likelihood of BMV land across the plan area. Sustainability Appraisal (SA004) directed allocation sites away from grade 3 land where possible (See response to Q9, Issue 1- Methodology in the Council's Hearing Statement for Matter 5 – Residential Allocations). As such Policy ENV7 is generally consistent with paragraph 112 of the Framework as it aims to avoid development on the plan area's best agricultural land (grade 3) (criterion a). However it is agreed that the policy could be better aligned with paragraph 112 of the Framework by including the word 'Significant' before 'development in criterion (a) to ensure that the criterion is only applied to development proposals where there is the potential for significant amounts of grade 3 land to be lost.

Proposed Modification
Page 144 of the Submission Draft Local Plan: Policy ENV7, amendment to criterion (a) to include the word "Significant" before "development": "a) <u>Significant</u> D -development will avoid the plan area's best agricultural land (grade 3) wherever possible, unless the need for and benefit of development justifies the scale and nature of the loss."

Q2. Is Policy ENV7 consistent with paragraph 120 of the Framework which states that to prevent unacceptable risks from pollution and land instability, planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location?

Council's Response

1. Yes, Policy ENV7 is consistent with paragraph 120 of the Framework as it advocates the remediation of contaminated and unstable land where this is

necessary, possible, safe and viable (criterion c). As such the policy requires developers, where possible, to carry out investigative work and remediate contaminated and unstable land to ensure development is appropriate for its location.

Q3. Is it clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities what is expected of proposals for new development under Policy ENV7 a) – c)?

Council's Response

1. Yes it is clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities what is expected of proposals for new development under Policy ENV7 a) – c). Policy ENV7 is clear in its aim to direct development towards previously developed (brownfield) land of low environmental value, and, where possible, away from better graded agricultural land and land that is contaminated or unstable (unless it is necessary or possible to remediate this land safely and viably).

Q4. How has the preparation of the Plan, including the identification of sites for new development, taken into account cumulative air quality effects?

Council's Response

1. Under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 local authorities are required to regularly review and assess the air quality in its area to determine whether the Government's air quality objectives will be met. The Council is required to designate as an air quality management area (AQMA) in any area which does not meet or is not likely to meet one or more of the objectives. To date no air quality management areas have been designated within Craven.
2. The Council monitors Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels at various monitoring sites across the district, specifically in Skipton, Settle, Bentham and Cross Hills (the former three settlements being the locations where the majority of growth is planned for the local plan period). The most recent assessment of air quality was in 2018 (See Appendix 1 for 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report.) Monitoring results across the district have consistently returned both monthly and annual running mean values below the government's air quality objective of 40µg/m³. Indeed, monitoring over the past 10 years has pointed to results remaining below the national objective with an overall downward trend of NO₂ levels right across the district.
3. As part of Sustainability Appraisal (SA004) potential local plan site allocations were judged favourably in terms of their proximity to the centre of the settlement, with the rationale that people would have less need to use their cars, thus reducing vehicle emissions. The plan, through its residential site selection

process (SA005) mitigates climate change effects as the sequential approach has looked at sites in the town centres in the first instance (including higher density areas) which places new homes within walking/cycling distance of many services. Whilst it is inevitable that vehicle usage and resulting vehicle emissions will increase as new development comes forward over the plan period, it is not expected that the level of planned growth is of a scale that would result in NO₂ air quality objectives being exceeded, particularly as there has been an overall downward trend in already low NO₂ levels over the past 10 years.

4. On a strategic level, the Sustainability Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy Options (SA002) looked at the best balance of concentrated growth aligned with the continuing sustainability of smaller rural settlements. Concentrating 50% of growth in the principle town service centre of Skipton and 10.9% of growth in both Settle and Bentham, which are key service centres for the mid and north sub areas, is a reasonable response to sufficiently reducing impacts on air quality.
5. In terms of cumulative impacts on the Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation, the Habitats Regulation Assessment has assisted to guide development into the most appropriate settlements. The HRA, utilising traffic modelling carried out for Skipton (as Skipton is the principal town in the district and is accommodating 50% of the district's housing allocations), showed that, along with the effects from the proposals set out in Harrogate's local plan, the threshold for air quality has not been breached in terms of private vehicle usage.

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If you would like to have this information in a way that's better for you, please telephone **01756 700600**.

