

# **LDF Project Management Board and Major Applications Group Combined Group Consideration of Core Strategy Responses**

## **Workshop 9; Yeovil Urban Extension Built Development Buffer Line Policy Justification**

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### **Introduction**

Policy YV2: Yeovil Urban Extension in the draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options) identifies a strategic location of growth to the South of Yeovil in the vicinity of Keyford, Barwick & East Coker for approximately 3,700 new homes, 23 ha of employment land and community facilities. The LDF Project Management Board should note that the proposed housing provision for the Urban Extension has subsequently been reduced down to 2,500 new dwellings to reflect changes in economic projections. This revision was agreed at LDF Project Management Board on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

This Southern direction for Yeovil's growth has evolved as a result of a comprehensive site search process including constraints mapping and Sustainability Appraisal. The combined exercises have both confirmed that there is broadly sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed level of growth in this location but that the landscape and historic environment is particularly sensitive. Equally there is a strong desire from local residents to protect the historic settlement pattern so as to prevent settlement coalescence and retain the distinctive edges and the sense of clear separation of settlements, many of which are in close geographical proximity to Yeovil's edge. This is a clear, common and legitimate planning concern to address.

The Council therefore recognises that although each individual historic asset is afforded its own statutory protection through its individual designation there is considered strong merit in formalising this boundary as a single entity for simplicity and transparency reasons.

### **Built Development Buffer Line Justification**

The purpose of the built development buffer line is to provide a defined boundary to Yeovil's built form to the South of the town to ensure the natural and historic assets surrounding Yeovil are not unduly impacted upon and prevent coalescence of nearby settlements.

The 'Built Development Buffer Line' will act as a definitive boundary to built development providing the community with reassurance that key landscape and historic features beyond this edge are protected and will not be compromised. The built development buffer line should not be considered as an inflexible boundary to all development as landscaping / green infrastructure proposals can benefit the natural environment and setting of nearby villages and should be encouraged where appropriate.

In addition to the Council's objective to protect the historic and natural environment the 'built development buffer line' also seeks to prevent the coalescence of the built form of Yeovil with nearby settlements specifically the villages of North Coker, East Coker and Barwick. The proposed 'built development buffer line' would therefore also perform the role of a strategic gap which is to:

- protect the setting and separate identity of these settlements, and to avoid coalescence;
- retain the existing settlement pattern by maintaining the openness of the land; and

- retain the physical and psychological benefits of having open land near to where people live.

In this regard the Council are justified in drawing the 'built development buffer line' in some instances wider than the historic or natural environment designation to ensure these objectives are achieved.

### **Historic and Environmental Constraints**

The impact of new housing and employment sites on Yeovil's historic periphery is of considerable importance to the Council. Fundamental to this approach is an emphasis on a thorough appraisal of the historic character and sensitivities of Yeovil's peripheral landscapes in the context of its rural-urban fringe position.

Proposals would be expected to respond to site-specific opportunities and constraints. These assets include; Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Village Conservation Areas and Scheduled Ancient Monuments and their settings, Flood Zones 2 and 3 and landscape settings.

As a starting point the Yeovil Historic Environmental Assessment (July 2010) and Yeovil Peripheral Landscape Study (September 2008) provide a robust evidence base that map historic sites, define their setting and record landscape sensitivity.

The specific historic features that require protection to the South of Yeovil are:

- The visibility setting & designation of Barwick Historic Park & Gardens.
- The visibility setting and designation of the villages of East Coker and North Coker Conservation Areas.
- The visibility setting and designation of the 'Chessels' Roman Villa, North of Dunnock's Lane a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The specific natural features include:

- Areas of Low to Moderate Low Landscape capacity to accommodate growth i.e. land of high landscape value
- Flood Zones 2 and 3.

In order to address the issue of setting for Listed Buildings within the sensitivity analysis of the Yeovil HEA, a buffer of 250m was added to each record. The Yeovil HEA however acknowledged that a more detailed analysis of the settings of all Listed Buildings, particularly Grades I and II\* should be undertaken at the stage of site allocation. It is considered however that the visibility setting and designation of the relevant listed buildings is crucial information if a 'built development buffer line' is to be established and as such the Council's Conservation Team has undertaken a more detailed site survey to establish their settings.

Further specific historic features requiring protection to the growth of Yeovil include:

- Naish Priory – Grade I
- Key Farm House, Dorchester Road, Lower Key – Grade II\*
- Barn, 50 metres North of Key Farm House – Grade II
- Keyford House, Dorchester Road, Keyford – Grade II
- North Lodge with attached South East boundary wall and gateway, Longloads Lane, North Coker Park – Grade II
- Former Stable building, 10 metres South of Naish Priory, Nash – Grade II
- Herne Cottage, Higher Burton (North East side), East Coker – Grade II
- The End House, Burton Lane (East Side), North Coker – Grade II

- North Coker House, North Coker – Grade II
- Outbuildings, 5 metres East of North Coker House, North Coker – Grade II
- North Coker Cottage – Grade II
- Pavyotts Farmhouse - Grade II\*
- Pavyotts Mill House, Pavyott's Lane, Lower Key – Grade II\*

The mapping of all these features effectively forms a continuous line of designations that act to form a natural limit to built development map of historic and environmental constraints attached.

### **Built Development Buffer Line Delineation**

The 'Built development buffer line' is made up of a series of seven distinct sectors that can be individually justified as follows:

1. The first sector of the 'built development buffer line' has been drawn along the built edge of Yeovil from Nash Farm to Nash Lane in order to protect the visual setting of Naish Priory an important Grade I list property and prevent coalescence of North Coker.
2. In the second sector the 'built development buffer line' has been drawn around a series of small paddocks owned by Greg's Riding School between Nash Lane and Placket Lane. It is considered these paddocks are of particular local importance due to their high landscape and biodiversity potential and have therefore been excluded from the built development buffer line.
3. In the third sector the 'built development buffer line' is drawn from Gregs Riding School down to Redlands Farm by following a parallel course to Gunville Lane. This line has been extended beyond Gunville Lane so as to respect the setting of North Coker Conservation Area and ensure settlement coalescence in this location is avoided.
4. The field adjacent the Redlands Farm complex has been excluded from sector 4 to ensure this property retains its separate identity and prevents coalescence and take account of the landscape designation in this area.
5. The 'built development buffer line' then stretches east from Redlands Farm to Key Farm so as to avoid the line of the flood zone, East Coker visual envelope and the defined settings of Keyford Farm and Pavyotts Mill House.
6. Land to the East of the A37 and South of Church Lane is included within the 'built development buffer' despite being located within the visual envelope of Barwick Park and Gardens. This reflects the area's lower landscape value and the nature of Barwick village which is of a less historic and generic nature than other settlements to the South. The Boundary has been drawn away from the drainage ditch to avoid the associated flood zone in this location. The 'built development buffer line' does come close to the 'top end' of Barwick at Church Lane but this is not considered significant given the steep topography in this location that would effectively screen any new development.
7. Finally in sector 7 the 'built development buffer line' follows the course of the A37 Keyford Road from the Redhouse roundabout up to the entrance of Aldon House and has been drawn to respect the setting of Barwick Country House and Gardens.

As a guide for strategic development in the South a preferred 'built development buffer line' is presented in Appendix 2 for consultation purposes.

The above buffer line will define an edge to urban development, in relation to the proposed urban extension, and highlight an area that will embrace the composite settings of the historic assets that lay around the southern edge of Yeovil: Land with a low capacity to accommodate development is also excluded beyond the 'Built

Development Buffer Line', as are natural landscape features that act as a constraint on development, such as floodplain.

### **Built Development Buffer Line and Associated Policy**

The buffer line requires a policy and supporting text in the Core Strategy to explain it and articulate how it will apply to development proposals forth coming.

In this policy, land beyond the 'Yeovil Urban Extension - Built Development Buffer Line' is to be understood as land from which new built development and its associated built elements is precluded; and the emphasis is placed upon the retention of open countryside, and the conservation of historic assets, and natural landscape features.

The limit to a spread of urban development, have been informed by the findings of the Yeovil Historic Environment Assessment (2010), the Yeovil Peripheral landscape study (2008) and the principle of settlement coalescence. Specifically land protected from built development, will include the settings of Naish Priory: Coker House and the North Coker conservation area; the East Coker Conservation Area; Pavyotts Mill and Lower Key House; Keyford House, and Barwick historic park and garden. Whilst the limit of the Yeovil urban extension may overlap the 'Built Development Buffer Line' area, such areas that might lie within the urban extension but beyond the Built Development Buffer Line will be dedicated as green space and strategic landscape areas.

#### ***Yeovil Urban Extension - Built Development Buffer Line***

'A 'Built Development Buffer Line' is identified to the Yeovil Urban Extension, beyond which (to the south and west) built development that results in coalescence with the settlements of North Coker, West Coker and Barwick and / or adversely affect the setting of historic assets is precluded. Development, not representing built form, beyond the Built Development Buffer Line may be acceptable as long as the coalescence of settlements is not caused as a result nor the setting of historic assets adversely affected.

The policy's area of cover applies to the South and West of Yeovil within the vicinity of the historic settlements of North Coker, East Coker and Barwick. The land beyond the built development buffer line is described, as open countryside for which there is a policy presumption of no development unless proposed within the context of Policy SS2 of the Core Strategy.

#### **Officer Recommendation**

That the LDF Project Management Board endorse:-

- (1) The Yeovil Urban Extension 'built development buffer line' and consequent amendment to Yeovil's proposals map as shown in Appendix 2.
- (2) The Policy 'Yeovil Urban Extension - Built Development Buffer Line' and supporting text.