



**Steven Abbott Associates LLP**  
Chartered Town Planners

**WRITTEN STATEMENT IN RELATION TO ST  
HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN  
2020-2035 EXAMINATION**

Session 4 – 9.30 Tuesday 8 June 2021

Matter 4 Allocations, Safeguarded Land and Green Belt Boundaries  
Bold, Eccleston, Sutton Manor, Thatto Heath, and St Helens Core  
Area

Virtual Hearing

May 2021



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## **REPORT DETAILS**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Steven Abbott Associates LLP are instructed to act on behalf of Mr Nicholas Cliffe who is the landowner of Higher Barrowfield Farm, Houghtons Lane, Eccleston.
- 1.2. This site is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt boundary as part of the new Local Plan and is identified as GBP\_098 within the Green Belt Review (December 2018) document.
- 1.3. We fully support the proposed removal of this site from the Green Belt.

## 2. ISSUE 5: OTHER GREEN BELT BOUNDARIES

- 2.1. In the context of this site, Issue 5: *Other Green Belt Boundaries* is relevant. When considering this Issue, it is fundamental that an assessment is made regarding the actual contribution of the site to the Green Belt.
- 2.2. The site currently makes no contribution to the Green Belt. It is surrounded on 3 sides by the existing urban area. Most recently, the former Convent site to the south has been redeveloped with a residential development of 11 new houses (St. Berthold Gate). The site itself is also partially developed with the existing residential property and associated buildings and it is not in a countryside use.
- 2.3. The release of this site from the Green Belt would create a more rational Green Belt boundary in this location. The proposed new boundary would follow the existing access road and would be a continuation of the existing Green Belt boundary line that runs from the south towards Houghtons Lane.
- 2.4. There are already a number of urbanising features present on the site that clearly distinguish it from the adjacent open agricultural fields to the west. It contains several buildings, an electricity substation, and a tarmac access road. These have a major bearing on the openness of the site and its contribution to Green Belt, when compared with the adjacent agricultural land.
- 2.5. It is important to note that as the site falls within the residential curtilage of Higher Barrowfield Farm, outbuildings and hard standing areas could be developed on large parts of the site under permitted development rights (without the need for planning permission). This consideration further diminishes the Green Belt value of the site.

### 3. PURPOSES OF THE GREEN BELT

3.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out five purposes of including land in the Green Belt. It is considered that this site does not contribute to these purposes, as summarised below:

- a. **To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas** – The release of this site would not lead to further sprawl of the built-up area nor the weakening of the Green Belt boundary in this location. The adjacent land to the west has a distinctly separate character being entirely undeveloped and in active agricultural use.
- b. **To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another** – The release of this site would not bring the urban area any closer to a neighbouring settlement and in effect represents a logical squaring off of the settlement of Eccleston.
- c. **To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment** – The site is currently not in a countryside use. The site also contains a number of urbanising features (including several buildings) and functions as residential curtilage. Therefore, encroachment will not occur as a result of releasing this site from the Green Belt.
- d. **To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns** – The site is not in a historic part of St Helens and it does not contribute to any historic setting. According to the Council’s online ‘conservation map’, there are no listed buildings or Conservation Areas within 500m of the site.

- e. **To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land** - The site is in a part of the Borough (Eccleston) with comparatively few brownfield housing sites. It is also in a separate housing market area from the central areas of St Helens where brownfield sites are more prevalent.

Consideration will need to be given to maintaining an annual 5-year supply of 'deliverable' housing sites, as required by the NPPF. This has implications for the number and type of sites that are identified for release from Green Belt. For example, the identification of only large Green Belt sites would not necessarily ensure that a 5-year supply is maintained. Larger sites may only deliver housing at a rate of 30 dwellings per annum per site which would leave the Council substantially short of a 5-year supply.

The release of this site from the Green Belt will allow the development of a smaller site and will assist in ensuring a continuous 5-year supply for the Borough. In this context, the removal of the site from the Green Belt would help to contribute to maintaining the Council's 5-year supply, being available in the short term and located in a strong residential market area.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1. It is evident that the site serves no Green Belt function whatsoever. The residential use of the site and its location immediately adjacent to the built-up area clearly identifies it as being more akin with the surrounding urban area and it is completely distinct from the agricultural land to the west.
- 4.2. The importance of the land's function in meeting Green Belt purposes has been greatly diminished because of the surrounding development. This should carry significant weight when the Inspectors assess the merits of releasing this site from the Green Belt to create the new Green Belt boundary in this location.
- 4.3. Its removal from the Green Belt is logical and will not set a precedent.