

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENT
TO
BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER CONSULTATION
(ending 10 November 2017)**

INTRODUCTION:

1. This document has been prepared by Brown Not Green Chesham Ltd and is being submitted in parallel with this organisations' responses and comments to the aforementioned Brownfield Land Register Consultation.
2. Brown Not Green (BNG) strongly believe that in an area such as Chesham, which is surrounded by areas subject to land use development constraint policies (notably Green Belt & AONB) that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) MUST look to development or the redevelopment of brown field sites BEFORE attempting to develop green field options especially Green Belt. As such the subject brownfield consultation is welcomed.
3. However, BNG have a number of concerns over the subject brownfield consultation. In the absence of appropriate space within the consultation response form, we hereby submit this supplementary document for consideration to both highlight concerns about the content and scope of the subject consultation and to attempt to offer some positive recommendations that may assist the LPA in its deliberations in respect of the emerging Joint Local Plan for Chiltern & South Bucks Districts.

TIMING:

4. It is noted that the subject consultation for Draft Part 1 of the Brownfield Register, only opened on 29th September 2017 and is due to conclude on 10th November 2017.
5. However, the LPA's Initial (Regulation 18) Consultation incorporating an 'Issues and Options' Consultation (Regulation 18) was published on 19th January 2016 and subsequently a Green Belt Preferred Options Consultation opened on 31st 2016.
6. Accordingly, the subject Brownfield Consultation by Chiltern District Council follows at least 18 months after the Regulation 18 initial consultation published by Chiltern & South Bucks District Councils and we respectfully submit this tardy.

7. It is clear that at least two previous public consultations have now been undertaken by the LPA and an extensive Evidence Base has been developed prior to this subject consultation. Therefore Green Belt/ green field options are being identified by the LPA before brownfield options have even begun to be thoughtfully appraised. We respectfully submit this is wrong and contrary to National Guidance.
8. Para 111 NPPF states; *“Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land.”*
9. The NPPF was first published in 2012 but at the time of writing this submission, no other appraisal of brownfield options appears in the Evidence Base for the emerging new Local Plan. As such, the subject consultation appears to be the first attempt to identify the use of brownfield sites.
10. It is disappointing therefore that Chiltern District Council has not sought to appraise or consult on brownfield options before now yet it seems has been looking at Green Belt / green field locations with premature and inappropriate haste.
11. This is surprising as the principle of “brownfield first” has been long advocated and promoted not just by Central Government but by other prominent organisations such as Campaign for Protection of Rural England (CPRE) who in 2014 published information suggesting that nearly 1 million homes could be developed on brownfield sites nationally. See <http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-planning/housing/brownfield-first>
12. Whilst it is acknowledged that Chiltern District Council was not one of the 73 councils across England chosen to pilot the new brownfield registers, that were launched in March 2016, this initiative did give Chiltern “indication of travel” as to what they would eventually need to do to and as that announcement coincided with the LPA’s Issues & Options Consultation, it is surprising they did not run the Brownfield Consultation either contemporaneously with the Issues & Options Consultation or at the earlier “Call for Sites” exercise they conducted..
13. Additionally, there was consultation before The Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 were implemented Local authorities already collect and review information on housing land as part of the well established Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment process and the requirements for preparing registers are aligned to this process as far as possible and so it seems strange that Chiltern District Council have been so late to compile & publish any Brownfield Register yet have been apparently eager to explore development options in the Green Belt.

SCOPE

14. The Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017, place a number of requirements upon a Local Authority.

15. Part 1 of any brownfield land register will consists of all brownfield sites that a local planning authority has assessed as appropriate for residential development, having carried out any procedures such as consultation which they consider appropriate. This will include sites with extant full planning permission, outline planning permission and permission in principle as well as sites without planning permission.
16. Guidance states that Brownfield registers should include all brownfield sites that are suitable for housing development irrespective of their planning status.
17. The subject consultation merely seeks comments on individual sites “suitability”, “availability” or “achievability”. There is little scope for commenting on anything else.
18. We respectfully submit that in areas of development constraint (such as Chiltern District) this guidance may be too prescriptive to exploit the full potential of such an exercise. It would be prudent for a LPA to go beyond the minimum requirements of the Brownfield Land Regulations and actively attempt to undertake an urban edge study and/or a land use appraisal exercise of all brownfield land to establish if it is underused, capable of intensification or adaption to mixed uses (including residential) and to seek to identify areas that are derelict, degraded or damaged.
19. There are a numbers of areas in Chesham that do not appear to be mentioned in the Brownfield Consultation. We appreciate that one of the purposes of such a consultation exercise is for others to suggest sites the LPA have missed but the sheer number of employment sites that have clearly not been mentioned in the Chilterns draft brownfield register suggests opportunities for creative solutions to the housing problem are being overlooked by merely complying with the minimum Brownfield Land Regulations.
20. Our submissions to the subject consultation have identified a few sites in Chesham which could either be redeveloped, regenerated or accommodate additional development possibly involving mixed uses which not only would add to the urgently needed housing provision but which would retain the employment uses within the area necessary to sustain the local economy.
21. Accordingly, we respectfully submit that a more thoughtful appraisal of the whole District undertaken by the LPA that goes beyond the scope of the minimum requirements of the Brownfield Land Regulations would reveal many other opportunities for mixed use. It may also reveal opportunities for “marriage” with any neighbouring underperforming green field sites too.
22. Given that BNG is a voluntary organisation with limited resources, it can only focus on Chesham which is a small part of Chiltern District. Even then, we cannot claim to be able to undertake an exhaustive appraisal!
23. We are aware that a more thoughtful exercise IS being conducted within Chesham Town by Chesham Renaissance CIC and BNG recommend that the LPA review this laudable exercise which may serve to guide other communities within the District. – see <http://www.cheshammasterplan.org/masterplan/>

BROWNFIELD, URBAN EDGE & GREEN BELT:

24. BNG recognize that some brownfield sites are located within land designated as Green Belt and these must be examined closely as perversely Green Belt designation of such sites prevents them becoming developed and a spiral of visual decay on such sites is created and a vital resource remains unused or underused.
25. We also accept that some Green Belt areas do not perform well and where those areas have predated the introduction of Green Belt policy (circa 1947 or later), the historic uses means that some Green Belt is damaged or degraded.
26. Para 81 NPPF states *“Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.”*
27. Accordingly the sort of appraisal suggested in the previous section could include neighboring sites that are subject to Green Belt designation, subject to being able to maintain an effective defensible boundary.
28. Only 13% of the entirety of the Metropolitan Green Belt is publically accessible as such its ability to offer opportunities for informal outdoor recreations are very limited and may be appropriate to consider particularly when located near brownfield areas of poor landscape quality.
29. However, locations in the Green Belt that currently provide good quality agricultural land (which the NPPF recognizes as a valuable resource to conserve) or which satisfy the prime functions of Green Belt designation such as preventing urban sprawl, coalescence of communities or preserving openness should NOT be considered. It is disappointing that some such sites have prematurely been earmarked in the non statutory Green Belt Consultation undertaken last October therefore.
30. We appreciate there may well be a case for a mix of Brownfield and Green Belt development in the administrative area of Chiltern & South Bucks although given the topography of Chesham and the many concerns relating to Lye Green, Chesham, we feel any Green Belt proposals may need to be somewhere else and that the mix should strive to be mostly brownfield).

SUGGESTIONS:

31. This document also hopes to inspire alternative ways of developing brown field sites. The following is offered as a constructive suggestion to the Local Planning Authority in the hope that more creative Design Briefs and Supplementary Planning Guidance may be developed on various brownfield opportunities both within Chesham and the wider Chiltern & South Bucks Districts.
32. In order to maximize provision of housing in sustainable locations together with both the preservation & creation of places of employment mixed use residential & commercial schemes should be considered. Where close to the town centre they offer opportunities for minimizing car journeys and may assist in regenerating towns or creating night time economic activity in the town.

33. The concept of living over the shop is not new. However with more technological careers “live/work” developments where a home incorporates at workshop, practice room, design studio etc within the fabric of the home are possible. Given the constraints of the Use Classes Order, it may require some Supplementary Planning Guidance from the LPA or a detailed design brief to grant consent for Residential with ancillary B1/B2 uses or restriction on or conditions of non A1 uses.

34. Another alternative is “Co-Living”. This has the laudable benefit of potentially creating much more affordable homes built to a higher density but where interaction with the residents with nearby shops, restaurants or leisure facilities such as gyms is designed into the project. It is eminently suitable for locations within the town and the follow extract from a typical co-living proposal offers a novel creative solution albeit we accept it does not work everywhere but such thoughtful solutions are an effective way to increase density & affordability.

EXAMPLE:

The Concept of Co-Living unlocks social amenity value through principles of openness, sharing & collaboration. The more people who share an amenity, the bigger and better it can be. Ideal for young professions, first time buyers, and affordable housing solutions, it seeks to develop basic small living spaces where essential private functions of sleeping, dressing & showering/bathing are still undertaken but in a smaller than conventional flat.

Other functions such as cooking/dining, laundry recreation, (gym/cinema/tv etc) are undertaken in shared areas or interact with adjacent business in the high street. Similarly some work space (meeting rooms/offices/studios) are available for use by the day/hour at extra cost to the resident.

The concept also helps to establish strong and sustainable communities.

Ideal for brownfield location in or close to town centers.

