

Yorkshire Land Ltd.,  
PO Box 785,  
Harrogate,  
HG19RT

9<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

Dear Mr Green,

**Land at Hunningley Lane, Barnsley.**

I have examined the landscape statement we prepared in May 2014 for your site at Hunningley Lane, Barnsley, in the context of the Barnsley Green Belt Review (Green Belt: Urban Barnsley and Royston) prepared for the Council by Arup. Arup identify a parcel of land as General Area UB12 which abuts areas of Green Belt to the south and east identified as WOM1 & 3 and which together provide a separation between Barnsley and Wombwell.

UB12 has been recorded as an irregular area of 187 Ha to the east of Barnsley Urban Area and south of Ardsley and within the north western part of which is your site at Hunningley Lane.

The assessment records the existing Green Belt boundary as "relatively weak" and records in more detail with respect to the area where your Hunningley Lane site is proposed "To the west the Green Belt boundary is weakly defined by built form around White Cross Lane which has sprawled beyond the B6100 Ardsley Road", Ardsley Road being known as Hunningley Lane north of White Cross Lane. Our report of last May was produced without the benefit of the Green Belt Study, however we were able to refer to the Barnsley Borough Council Landscape Assessment of 2002 which within the section on Area D3 (West Dearne Settled Arable Slopes) noted the following "It is considered that this edge has some potential to benefit from a limited amount development that could tidy and unify the urban edge". It would appear that these documents concur with our own appreciation of this area, namely that the current Green Belt boundary in this area is weak and poorly defined.

The Green Belt Review helpfully goes on to say that "An operational railway line which traverses the General Area from north to south could constitute a strong durable boundary should the area be considered for sub-division". The railway in this area is contained within a deep cutting and is within a well wooded corridor, with fairly extensive woodland on the eastern side of the railway. The suitability of railway lines to form durable landscape and potential Green belt boundaries either to, or within, the Green Belt, especially where associated with large engineering structures such as embankments and cuttings, and often further delineated by established woodland with forest scale trees, is also acknowledged in the Arup Green Belt

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Review in respect of other sites you are promoting for inclusion within the local plan. When considering the Oxspring Fields site the report states..."The Transpennine Trail within a dismantled railway could represent a strong internal boundary, should the Green Belt Area be considered for sub-division." This recognition of the role these strong physical features can play in the landscape is also referenced in the consideration of your Well House Lane site in Penistone where the Green Belt report records for the adjacent Pen 1 area".....the Barnsley to Huddersfield rail line to the east and west, presents a defined and defensible Green Belt boundary."

As I have previously noted Arup recorded the Green Belt boundary on the Barnsley edge as 'weakly defined' and then say "On the whole, the existing Green belt boundary is considered to be relatively weak". I think it is unhelpful that they don't explore further their assertion that the operational railway line could constitute a strong durable boundary. It would have been productive to have examined your Hunningley Lane site as a separate area of the Green Belt, instead of as part of the much larger UB 12 area. If we were to exclude your site from UB12 then I would expect the Arup assessment to be modified in respect of the remaining part of UB12 as follows.

*Purpose; to check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.* Within this section the revised UB12 would gain a well-defined and durable boundary to a large part of the north western edge of the Green Belt. Some open land is invariably lost if developed, however the strategic gap between Barnsley and Wombwell is not significantly changed were your site to be removed from the Green Belt. The view below shows an arc taken from the closest edge of Wombwell to the residential development on White Cross Lane (adjacent to your site); as can be seen the extent of the gap between the two settlements is maintained.



The Arup assessment in the section addressing 'Level of Containment' also considers the level of containment within the existing development patterns and states that where areas are highly contained within the urban form (50% and above) development in such areas would represent a natural rounding of the built form. In their assessment of this aspect of the Green Belt their



qualitative summary notes: "A small-scale of natural consolidation exists to the south of the Lockeafash Cemetery, on the land bounded by the operational railway and to the south by Dob Sike." This is a helpful recognition of the logic of developing the northern part of your site. Where I believe this is insufficient is in not including the land to the south of Dob Sike which is itself contained to the south by the White Cross Lane residential development, which forms a well-defined edge to the area and allow the urban pattern to be consolidated in a natural rounding of the built form.

A reassessment of UB12, with your site removed from the Green Belt, should in my view improve the overall score in considering this purpose of the Green Belt, whilst not diminishing the recorded scores in respect of the other purposes considered. In these circumstances a revised Green Belt evaluation for UB12, based upon the criteria adopted for the Green Belt Review, could achieve a much more favourable score than at present and demonstrate an improvement in the function of the Green Belt in this area.

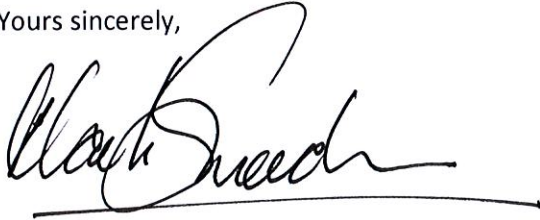
The Unitary Development Plan Policy BA9 notes at 4.9 that the primary purpose of the Green Belt in the Barnsley Community Area is to prevent the built up areas merging with surrounding settlements, of which one of those listed is Wombwell. Where Green Belt acts to prevent coalescence of settlements there are a number of ways in which this may be effective, firstly and most obviously through physical distance, and secondly through the perception of openness creating an alternative landscape to built-up areas on either side of the Green Belt. This second quality of Green Belt can be achieved in a Green Belt of varying width and is usually dependant on the capacity of the intervening landscape to provide a distinct landscape clearly identifiable as an area of landscape character which is distinct from adjoining areas. This in turn acts to allow the perception of those adjoining areas as themselves having a distinct and separate landscape character. This perception is most often associated with inter visibility between settlements to either side of the Green Belt, and with the views from the routes connecting settlements across the Green Belt.

Wombwell Lane connects Barnsley with Wombwell through the Green Belt in this area although the perception of the extent of the Green Belt is much reduced by residential and commercial development along the roadside. Where views are available across the landscape towards Wombwell the settlement can be seen on rising ground, with built form veiled by hedgerow trees, garden vegetation and belts of trees along a network of disused railway lines. Views towards Barnsley do not encompass the built form of the town as rising ground and woodlands prevent views of both the settlement and the proposed area for residential development at Hunningley Lane. In this context I do not believe that for travellers between Wombwell and Barnsley there would be any perception of the Green Belt separating the two settlements being diminished by the development for housing of your Hunningley Lane site.

The physical extent of the Green belt between the settlements would not in my opinion be diminished were your site to be developed, as the effect would be largely to connect the other adjacent developments east of the B6100; these being the school, cemetery and housing at Lockeafash Crescent to the north, and the housing area at White Cross Lane to the south. In this context I do not believe that for the residents of either Barnsley or Wombwell there would not be any perception that the settlements were any less distinct in their separation than before.

My reappraisal of our initial report and landscape assessment and reading of the more recent Green Belt Review confirms my earlier view that in terms of the landscape related purposes of the Green Belt a development such as you are promoting at Hunningley Lane could not harm the existing effectiveness of the Green Belt. By utilising the railway as a new edge to the Green Belt in this area would be possible to satisfy the National Planning Policy Framework requirement expressed in paragraph 85 to ".....define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent".

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Smeeden', written over a horizontal line.

Mark Smeeden  
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Chartered landscape Architect.