

REPRESENTATIONS 24G, 35A, 69C, 96J, 100B, 105B, 110D, 129W -
Paragraph 6.43, Policy CO7

Background

6.86 The County Development Plan of 1968 left an area of 'white land' between Leckhampton and the inner boundary of the green belt. That plan said that this land, about 60 hectares of smallholdings, nurseries, market gardens and pasture, might later be allocated for development, or that it might be included in the green belt, if it appeared that it should remain open in the longer term. The deposit CELP proposed the latter course; however, the inspector recommended that the land should remain as 'white land'. Policy CO7 perpetuates this state of affairs, whilst the reasoned justification says that: (i) the land is not required to meet housing needs in the plan period; (ii) some of the land is of good quality for horticulture; (iii) development would cause traffic problems on Bath Road and Church Road; (iii) development would overburden the drainage infrastructure; (iv) nothing in the plan should be taken to imply that the land will be released for development after 2001.

Gist of the representations

6.87 The land is not green belt, and therefore there should not be a presumption against development (24G, 96J, 100B, 110D). The policy should say that development will only be allowed when there is insufficient land elsewhere to meet strategic requirements (100B).

6.88 The inspector who considered the CELP concluded that it was not necessary to include the land in the green belt to prevent the coalescence of Cheltenham and Gloucester; or to prevent urban sprawl; or to protect the special character of Cheltenham. He described the townscape on this edge of the settlement as 'pleasant enough' but 'not particularly distinguished'. He acknowledged that the extension of the green belt would protect good agricultural land from development, but said that that was not one of the primary purposes of green belt policy. There has been no material change in circumstances since 1984 (100B).

6.89 The CELP inspector was not asked to consider the land at Swindon Farm (see representation 69B above). However, if the reasoning which he applied to Leckhampton is also applied to Swindon Farm, then it must be concluded that the latter is inappropriately included in the green belt, and should instead be covered by Policy CO7 (69C).

6.90 The land at Leckhampton is virtually surrounded by existing residential development, some allowed recently. Before the end of the plan period, the land will be required for development, which should be planned on a comprehensive basis (110D).

6.91 The land is not of particularly good agricultural quality, being a mixture of Grades 2, 3a and 3b, and agriculture in the area is in decline. The capacity of Bath Road and Church Road could be increased by minor improvements, and traffic is likely to be drawn away from the town by new bypasses and road improvements to the south of Cheltenham. Recently completed sewerage works included capacity for significant residential development at Leckhampton. Surface water could be accommodated by existing watercourses and a balancing pond (105B, 110D).

