



York Civic Trust

Inquiry into York's draft Local Plan: Phase 4

Written Statement in connection with Matter 1 – Green Belt Boundaries

Final Version

30th August 2022

This statement in relation to Matter 1: Green Belt Boundaries is submitted by York Civic Trust. The Civic Trust is a membership organisation representing some 1300 individuals. Our vision is 'promoting heritage, shaping tomorrow'. Our Mission is to: protect and contemporise York's unique heritage; champion our environment and its sustainability; encourage the city's economic development in line with its character and engage with all sectors of the community.

This statement has been prepared by Andrew Morrison, Chief Executive and York Civic Trust and other colleagues.

York Civic Trust is committed to helping to secure a Local Plan, based broadly on the current draft. We are concerned, however, that there are weaknesses in the way in which the Plan has been formulated, and aspects of its resulting content which render it unsound. We have endeavoured throughout the process to work with City of York Council to secure improvements which overcome these deficiencies. In June 2022 we prepared a Statement of Common Ground with the Council, which we understood had the Council's support, and which we expected to be signed and submitted in time for consideration in Phase 3. Two months later, and within two working days of the deadline for submitting statements for Phase 4, we finally received a suggested redraft, with no explanation. Regrettably, therefore, we have had to submit our draft of June 2022, as evidence of our good intent. We focus here on the areas which we suggest in that draft Statement still need to be resolved.

The Inspectors ask us to:

- Explain which part of the Plan is unsound;
- Explain why it is unsound, having regard to the Framework;
- Explain how the plan can be made sound; and
- Explain the precise/change/wording that is being sought.

We have endeavoured to do this, though where we have concerns over the process of plan making, we are clearly unable to answer the last of these.

Matter 1

We have restricted our comments to question 1.1. which asks ‘Are the inner Green Belt boundaries (Topic Paper 1 Addendum Annex 3 – Sections 1 –4 reasonably derived?’ We have not offered any comments on questions 1.2 (which should strictly have included section 8), 1.3 and 1.4 concerning the ‘other densely Developed Areas’ and the Outer Green Belt Boundaries.

York Civic Trust supports the overall principles of the City of York Council’s approach to defining the Green Belt as set out in EX-CYC-50 plus addenda. York Civic Trust considers the green belt that surrounds the city and extends into it through the recognised Green Wedges utilising the continuing presence of the historic strays a key component in the overall character of the city.

Question 1.1 Are the inner Green Belt Boundaries (Topic Paper 1 Addendum 3 – sections 1-4) reasonably derived?

York Civic Trust’s answers are based on careful exploration of the Inner Green Belt boundaries as set out in EX/CYC/59c (January 2021) renumbered Topic Paper 1 Addendum 3 – sections 1 –4.

York Civic Trust supports the City of York Council’s proposals for the inner Green Belt Boundaries with some specific exceptions outlined below.

Section 2 - Boundary 10 - Boroughbridge Road/A1237

We do not accept the proposed boundary line which ‘follows the recognisable feature of Boroughbridge Road and the A1237’ nor the alternative boundary utilising ‘the built edge of the properties along Westview Close, followed by Millfield Lane and the school boundary thereby including the properties on Cinder Lane and the fields adjacent to Boroughbridge Road and the outer ring road’ (as set out on A3:146-147 of EX/CYC/59C). Whilst accepting this these variations provide a recognisable boundary they do not allow for the inclusion of the land that forms the playing fields of Manor School which are prominently visible approaching the York from the West along A59 and along Boroughbridge Road. Their retention as green space delivering a countryside function, in our opinion, fulfils the requirements of Purpose 4 – It is necessary to keep land permanently open to preserve the setting of the historic city. The City of York Council have incorporated school playing fields within the inner Green Belt boundaries in order to fulfil Purposes 1, 3 and 4 elsewhere as at St Barnabas Primary School in Section 3 – Boundary 5 – Forth Street to rear of St Barnabas Primary School and in other locations less prominent than those of Manor School

York Civic Trust would suggest the following boundary definition:

‘The boundary follows the built edge of the properties along Westview Close, followed by Millfield Lane and the built footprint of Manor School thereby including the properties on Cinder Lane and the fields adjacent to Boroughbridge Road and the outer ring road and the playing fields of Manor School.’

Section 4 – Boundary 12 – Railway Line

York Civic Trust does not accept the inner Green Belt boundary as proposed. The proposed boundary would permanent dissect Bootham Stray and amputate the narrow part of the historic strayland that continues further south along Wigginton Road towards the city centre. Whilst accepting that this long parcel of land has in part been urbanised at its edges it still provides an open feel to the land and meets the definition as set out in Para 138, Purpose 4 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

As noted by the City of York Council, the strays and strayland are one of the 'principal characteristics of the historic environment that help define the special qualities of York (and that set the City apart from other similar cities in England) [and] are established by the Heritage Topic Paper: 'the city's landscape and setting within its rural hinterland and the open green strays and river corridors and lngs, which penetrate into the heart of the urban area, breaking up the city's built form.' (EX/CYC/50 5.20 p33).

The City of York Council's proposed boundary therefore is unsound as it removes a key section of Bootham Stray which 'penetrates into the heart of the urban area, breaking up the city's built form'.

York Civic Trust supports the alternative definition of Section 4 – Boundary 12 – Railway Line as offered by City of York Council.

'The boundary follows Wigginton road to the south, incorporating the grass verges which are identified as remnants of the original historic stray (Annex 1, evidence 11b) stretching as far as Clarence Gardens opposite the hospital and connecting back up with the Nestle site in the north,' despite the fact that 'this land has become eroded and patchhy [sic] and urbanised.'