Matter 4: Spatial Strategy

Policy 9 – Green Belt

69) Does the wording of Policy 9 make it sufficiently clear that, even for proposed allocations, to be considered acceptable, waste development in the Green Belt would need to demonstrate very special circumstances exist? To be consistent with national planning policy, should the policy refer to the factors identified as those that may contribute to ‘other considerations’? To be justified, should the policy clarify that those factors are indicative, with each proposal considered on its merits?

Para 6 of the National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) states that waste management facilities, if located in the Green Belt, would be inappropriate development. Therefore very special circumstances must be demonstrated in order to justify the granting of consent. It is necessary for very special circumstances to be demonstrated for each and every proposed development within the Green Belt. The wording of Policy 9 is not explicit in stating this. The Borough Council believes that the wording should be clarified to make clear that the requirement for very special circumstances needs to be satisfied for each subsequent proposal associated with the waste management operations.

The Policy includes six factors that may contribute to very special circumstances case for development within the Green Belt. The Council acknowledges that these factors are listed to provide guidance as to what could be deemed as very special circumstance. The NPPF (2018) makes no reference to what may constitute very special circumstance and it is clear that each case must be judged on its merits. Therefore it is not considered appropriate to include such a list within the Policy itself. If the County Council are still minded to include these factors then the Borough Council consider that they should be included in the supporting text and referred to as indicative only. The onus must remain with an applicant to demonstrate the very special circumstances rather than being guided by a checklist set out in Policy.