

Questions for County Council: Tuesday 28th January.

Public Question(s)

The following Public Question(s) have been received for the meeting:

1. **Coalescence of Settlements Across Flintshire.**

Does Flintshire Council support further coalescence of settlements, particularly in the Deeside area? Examples already exist such as between:

- Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay
- Ewloe, Hawarden, Mancot and Sandycroft
- Drury, Buckley and Mynydd Isa – plus potentially New Brighton

Can the council provide examples and application quantities from recent history where development sites which further coalesce settlements have been approved and compare this to how many have been rejected. What is the council's view on development which significantly merges settlements which may just be touching but where there is clear distinction in the character and geography of the existing settlements and communities?

Response

The Council has prepared and adopted a LDP where our approach to green wedges and the allocation of land for development has been found to be sound and **where it will not result in planning harm in terms of coalescence of settlements**. This therefore meets Welsh Government's requirement for the protection of the open countryside where there would otherwise be a pressure for development and a risk of coalescence of settlements.

Our approach to the prevention of coalescence is driven by national and local policy relating to the purpose and designation of Green Wedges in Wales.

LDP Preparation and Examination

As part of preparing the LDP a review of green wedges was undertaken where each green wedge (and proposed green wedge submitted as candidate site submissions) were reviewed against the five purposes of a green wedge. One of those purposes is defined specifically as the prevention of the coalescence of settlements. The majority of green wedges reviewed by the Council were retained.

The issue of green wedges was an important part of the Examination process being the subject of a day-long hearing session led by the LDP Inspectors.

Overall, the Inspector considered the approach to be sound and commented:

'We are confident that the review of the green barrier is consistent with national policy, robust and appropriate.'

Determination of Planning Applications in a Green Wedge

Any development proposed within a green wedge designated in the adopted LDP is determined against Policy EN11 and the guidance in paras 3.64 to 3.78 of PPW. This provides certainty over the protection of green wedges and their aim to prevent coalescence, over the lifetime of the adopted LDP.

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Annual Monitoring of Green Wedges

The Council is required to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report and the first AMR or 2023/24, has been submitted to Welsh Government.

- Monitoring Indicator MI19 has a target of '*No loss of green wedges unless considered to be in line with national policy*'
- The commentary for MI19 is that '*The Council is not aware of any cases of development being permitted within a green wedge which is unjustified in terms of policy EN11 and the guidance in PPW12. The policy has been and will continue to be robustly and consistently applied*'.
- The commentary is accompanied by a table which provides a summary of the range of planning permissions granted within each of the green wedges. None of these are considered to further coalesce settlements as they represent appropriate development within a green wedge in accordance with policy. [see extract appended at end of this response]

The AMR is publicly available to view on the Council's website, but, to assist, I have enclosed an excerpt of the AMR in relation to Green Wedges as **Appendix 1**.

Appendix 2 lists details of some relevant applications determined pre and post LDP adoption where applications have been refused because they represented inappropriate development in an area of Open Countryside or Green Wedge. It would appear that fewer inappropriate applications are coming forward following the adoption of the LDP.

The concluding part of your question presents a hypothetical situation, without specific contextual details of an actual case and it is not possible to comment further.