

Neighbouring Local Authority Consultation: Our Ref NLA/0215

Planning Application WDS/DC/23/68822

LAND ADJACENT TO Q3 ACADEMY, WILDERNESS LANE, GREAT BARR, WEST MIDLANDS

Planning Policy Comments

Our comments are limited to those that affect Walsall's interests. We recognise however that the proposal raises concerns about other matters, including the status of the site as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

This site lies on the border between Walsall and Sandwell. Both the site and the adjoining land in Walsall are in the Green Belt. As such, the area provides a major contribution to purpose b) in NPPF paragraph 138 in that it prevents the neighbouring areas of Walsall and Sandwell from merging into one another. This is particularly helped because of the topography of the site, with Birmingham Road lying at the highest point. It is unfortunate therefore that the proposed layout shows the entire Birmingham Road frontage to be developed. This will close the gap up to the boundary with Walsall.

It is accepted that Sandwell and the wider area of Birmingham and the Black Country have a very large housing supply shortfall, and Sandwell has under-delivered in recent years. NPPF (September 2023) paragraph 11 d), with footnotes 7 and 8, makes it clear however that a lack of housing supply does not make development plan policies out of date for the purpose of decision-making where a housing proposal would be contrary to NPPF policies. The current proposal therefore represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt and no very special circumstances have been demonstrated in relation to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The site lies close to the Great Barr Hall Registered Park, and the Great Barr Conservation Area. The latter includes Merions Wood. As such, the proposal could impact on the setting of these heritage assets.

If the proposal was otherwise acceptable, contributions are likely to be required to fund increased capacity in schools and primary health care. The proximity of the site to the borough boundary means that some of these facilities could be in Walsall.