Brimington / Tapton Strategic Gap – Landscape Comments

Background

Chesterfield Borough Council commissioned ARUP to carry out a review of Green Wedges and Strategic Gaps within Chesterfield (Aug 2006). This reviewed National Planning Guidance, Good Practice Guidelines, Recent Case Law and Appeals to arrive at the following methodology for assessing the purpose of Strategic Gaps:

**Purpose 1**- aims to maintain open land between neighbouring settlements to prevent merging and protect the setting and separate identity of settlements.

**Purpose 2**- supports the appreciation and wider perceptual benefits of open countryside.

**Purpose 3**- maintains existing or influence form and direction of settlements.

The conclusions by ARUP arrived at a revised boundary which uses Tinker Sick at the northern boundary of the section of the part of the Tapton/Brimington Strategic Gap that is referred to as Section B (to the south of the A619). These comments only refer to the Section B part of the Tapton/Brimington Strategic Gap.

ARUP Proposed Boundary Map
Proposed Boundaries

Whilst Tinker Sick and its associated trees and hedgerows is a strong natural boundary I do not consider it to be a logical boundary for Brimington settlement edge in terms of how development sits in the wider landscape and the relationship with existing landscape features. Using Tinker Sick as a boundary would result in one side of the valley being open countryside and the other side being development. This would result in the dilution of the valley form and be of detriment to the relevance of the wider landscape. By containing the settlement edge to higher ground to the north of Tinker Sick the settlement edge would sit much more naturally in the landscape along contours of the hill to the south of Brimington. This would preserve the valley bottom and reduce impacts to the valley. In order to support this proposal for the Strategic Gap to include land to the north of Tinker Sick I have researched old field boundaries and carried out several site visits to establish any signs of these boundaries on the ground. Although evidence of the old field patterns can be distinguished on aerial photographs, evidence is sparse on the ground in some cases. I consider that the ideal North Eastern boundary to the Strategic Gap would contour around the hill at the level of Ivy House Farm, with no development from Brimington further down the slope. However, in order to establish a defensible future boundary it may be necessary to fall back to a stronger boundary. This results in a proposed boundary following Tinker Sick to the North East and picking up old field boundaries following remnants that are distinguishable on the ground to the North West.

Historic Map showing Field Boundaries
Assessment of proposed new northern boundary using criteria and assessment devised by ARUP

Purpose 1 - aims to maintain open land between neighbouring settlements to prevent merging and protect the setting and separate identity of settlements.

In their assessment ARUP highlight the need for the Strategic Gap as follows: ‘…..it is therefore considered that land in the west of Section B supports an essential gap which helps to prevent the visual and physical merging of Brimington and Tapton. ‘

Specifically I consider that the proposed new boundary to the North West would reinforce this and prevent visual merging of any future development in Brimington with existing development on Balmoak Lane in Tapton. Does the Strategic Gap perform Purpose 1? Yes

Purpose 2 - supports the appreciation and wider perceptual benefits of open countryside.

I consider that the ARUP assessment remains relevant for this proposal ‘Sections B provides clear views of open and undulating countryside, and therefore the land within the Strategic Gap is considered to support perceptual benefits of open countryside for the neighbouring large residential areas. The Strategic Gap also provides physical access to the countryside through a range of public rights of way in the south. This area provides opportunities for
appreciation of the open countryside and creates visual breaks between the settlements of Tapton, Brimington and Brimington Common.

In addition I consider that the proposed new boundary will enhance this purpose by preserving the line of old field boundaries and protecting the valley form of Tinker Sick as a feature in the landscape.

**Does the Strategic Gap perform Purpose 2? Yes**

**Purpose 3 - maintains existing or influence form and direction of settlements.**

The proposed new boundary would influence the settlement edge of Brimington in a positive way following along the contours of higher ground and with sit more logically in the landscape than development spilling over and further down the slope into the valley.

ARUP stated that ‘South of the Chesterfield Crematorium, though, the Strategic Gap boundary deviates from Tinker Sick and follows the tree line and agricultural field edge. It is recommended that the boundary is revised to include land up to the Tinker Sick even adjacent to the Crematorium.’ I agree that this is necessary and propose additional land is included following old field boundaries to reinforce this.

I also agree with the following ARUP assessments and would not proposed to change these boundaries:

‘The western boundary of Section B follows an indented and angular area of residential built form at Tapton and the B6543. Whilst this boundary is stepped and angular, the designation prevents this boundary from becoming any more erratic. This western boundary supports the essential land gap between Tapton and Brimington, and therefore it is crucial that these boundaries are retained to guide development to elsewhere within Chesterfield.’

‘The southern boundary follows existing infrastructure including West Moor Road, Dark Lane, Wheathill Lane, and Pettyclose Lane. These boundaries are strong and defensible. The eastern boundary of Section B follows residential development of Brimington Common, which is generally a defensible and recognisable boundary’

‘Overall, the Strategic Gap achieves Purpose 3 by providing a strong perception of separation between Tapton and Brimington, and Tapton and Brimington Common. The Strategic Gap between Tapton and Brimington is essential to maintaining this sense of separation’...

**Does the Strategic Gap perform Purpose 3? Yes**
Tinker Sick Buffer

Whilst the proposed boundary would protect much of Tinker Sick I am concerned about development up to Tinker Sick at its north east end and the potential detrimental effects on biodiversity. To mitigate this I suggest that a buffer zone should be included which is outside the Strategic Gap Boundary. This buffer zone could be proposed as a Community Woodland as a way of protecting it from future development and would act as a wildlife corridor.

Proposed Tinker Sick Buffer Plan (proposed woodland shown in green)