

An AI(artificial intelligence) \* analysis of the transcript created at the session:  
Matter 5 Issue 3 – Land at North Farm, East Boldon (GA2) – 16 April 2025

### 1. Meeting details and attendance

- **Purpose:** Hearing session into the soundness and legal compliance of the proposed allocation GA2 (Land at North Farm, East Boldon) in Policy SP7 of the South Tyneside Local Plan.
- **Inspector / Chair:** David Spencer (appointed by the Secretary of State).
- **Date / Time:** Morning session, reconvened after mid-morning break; formal opening at 10:00 and resumption at 11:30.
- **Format:** Public hearing, recorded and livestreamed by the Council; contributions restricted to those with a right to be heard.

#### Attendees (speaking parties)

- South Tyneside Council:
  - Paul Sherev KC (for the Council)
  - Deborah Lamb – Operations Manager, Spatial Planning
  - Rachel Cooper – Senior Planning Policy Officer
  - Matt Clifford – Senior Planning Policy Officer
  - Trevor Mail – Service Lead for Strategic Transport
- Site promoters:
  - Frances Sampson (Deo... – on behalf of Church Commissioners for England)
  - Dominic Wolf / W... (Pegasus Group – on behalf of Bellway Homes)
- Community / other:
  - Joe Thompson – East Boldon Neighbourhood Forum
  - Kevin Butler – Secretary, Cleadon & East Boldon Labour Party

### 2. Key statements and actions (chronological)

#### 2.1 Opening and procedural matters

- The Inspector confirmed the scope: examination of the **soundness of site GA2 (North Farm, East Boldon)** only, not alternative or additional sites.
- Housekeeping, recording arrangements, and participation rules were explained.
- Inspector confirmed he had **visited the site**, walked the public right of way across it and the tarmac path/bridleway along the eastern boundary, and viewed wider environs and facilities in East Boldon.

#### 2.2 Green Belt harm and compensatory improvements (Agenda item 2; MIQs 5.29–5.30)

##### Council's position

- GA2 was assessed in the South Tyneside Green Belt Study as parcel B3 (including adjacent land).
- Harm ratings: **low** harm for Green Belt purposes 1, 2 and 4; **moderate** harm for purpose 3.
- Overall harm is treated as **moderate**, following the study methodology (highest harm rating prevails).
- Site has **strong relationship with the urban area** to the west and north; defensible boundaries and enhancement opportunities are identified.
- **Menu of compensatory measures** in Appendix C has been filtered into Policy SP7 key considerations for GA2, including:
  - Creation of defensible Green Belt boundaries
  - Enhanced public rights of way
  - Retention of existing trees/hedgerows
  - Exploration of re-naturalisation of the watercourse.
- Paragraph 5.17 of SP7 supporting text is said to provide a **wider framework for compensatory measures** across Green Belt sites.

##### Promoters (Church Commissioners / Bellway)

- Do **not dispute the Green Belt assessment** for GA2.
- Bellway's written evidence argues: if GA2 is assessed this way, **adjacent land to the east** (within the same wider parcel) should be considered similarly for potential release/mitigation opportunities.

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#### East Boldon Neighbourhood Forum (Thompson)

- States he is not a planning-law expert but stresses **local value of the Green Belt**.
- Forum has monitored the site for years; earlier background papers highlighted:
  - Need for a **northern buffer** to address Green Belt loss and wildlife corridor issues.
  - **Biodiversity importance**, link to **Tileshed Burn**, West Farm Meadows SSSI, and Tileshed Local Nature Reserve.
- Council's Wildlife Corridor Network Review shows the **northern two-thirds of GA2 lie within a wildlife corridor**.
- Earlier 2022 Green Belt exceptional circumstances work noted: biodiversity interest, **flooding at the bottom of the site**, and that "considerable Green Belt and infrastructure mitigation would be required", but concluded this would not undermine viability.
- Forum's **primary position**: **GA2 should not have come forward**; Council did not need to go into Green Belt given housing-number flexibility and national statements about Green Belt as an exceptional constraint.
- If the site is retained, Forum proposes:
  - Development **only in the southern parcel**;
  - **Northern third** (between the public right of way and New Road) to remain Green Belt as a **buffer/mitigation area** and open space;
  - Use of a **wetland SUDS basin** and high-quality landscaping to support habitat, open space, and screening from New Road.

#### Cleadon & East Boldon Labour Party (Butler)

- Disagrees with the Green Belt Study's **low or no harm** assessment for purposes 1 and 2; argues GA2's development would materially **reduce the gap** between East & West Boldon and South Shields where the Green Belt is already narrow.
- Notes open views from New Road and Boker Lane across the fields, as shown in a Stantec landscape diagram for the site.
- Cites NPPF paragraph 142/145 and PPG on Green Belt: **compensatory improvements must be to remaining Green Belt**, not just within the allocation.
- Argues that the **Statement of Common Ground (SoCG)** modification, which limits renaturalisation of the watercourse to within GA2's boundary, **waters down** the Green Belt Study's recommendation for wider, off-site enhancements (e.g. along Tileshed Burn, West Farm Meadows, land to the east).

#### Promoters (Sampson)

- Emphasises **ecology and SUDS are not strictly Green Belt matters** and will be dealt with later on the agenda.
- Reiterates that **need for Green Belt releases** to meet housing requirements was discussed extensively at an earlier session and remains relevant.
- Later states that Church Commissioners are **committed to looking at other local sites** for Green Belt and biodiversity enhancements.

#### Inspector's reaction and actions

- Confirms he will form a judgment on Green Belt harm based on the evidence and site visit.
- Raises NPPF 142 explicitly: compensatory improvements must relate to **remaining Green Belt land**.
- Notes that the **current GA2 key considerations focus mainly on on-site measures**, which are not Green Belt by definition once released.
- Questions why options from the Green Belt Study – such as biodiversity enhancement to land east of GA2 and improvements to West Farm Meadows – have **not been carried into the plan**.
- Council explains practical issues:
  - Land opposite GA2 is in **private ownership**, raising deliverability questions.
  - Ownership of West Farm Meadows requires confirmation with the Council's Natural Environment Manager.
- Inspector asks if there are **strategic green/blue infrastructure or walking & cycling strategies** that could help frame compensatory improvements at application stage.
- Council refers to the **South Tyneside Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy** and a **local walking and cycling strategy**, both of which identify potential projects that could form compensatory measures.

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- Inspector notes:
  - Many allocations are small/self-contained, suggesting a **strategic Green Belt compensation approach (via SP7)** is more appropriate than ad-hoc site-by-site wording.
  - It may be better to **strengthen SP7** with clearer compensatory wording, applicable across allocations, rather than relying solely on GA2's key considerations.

**Action 1 – Strategic Green Belt compensatory wording**

- **Responsible:** South Tyneside Council (planning policy & legal team).
- **Action:**
  - Explore ways to **modify SP7 (and/or GA2)** to bring more clarity and “teeth” to compensatory Green Belt improvements, including:
    - Links to identified projects in the Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy and LCWIP;
    - Scope for **off-site compensatory works** (e.g. Tileded Burn corridor, West Farm Meadows, other Church Commissioners’ Green Belt land).
  - Consider whether SoCG wording that limits watercourse renaturalisation to within GA2 needs to be **revised or superseded** in light of wider opportunities.
- **Follow-up:** Council to report back with suggested main modifications; Inspector indicated this will likely be dealt with through the **main modifications** process with a **formal opportunity for representations**.

**2.3 Accessibility, transport and public transport (MIQ 5.31; Agenda item 3)**

**Council’s position (Clifford / Mail)**

- GA2 is **well related to East Boldon’s services and facilities**:
  - Three retail/service clusters: Front Street, St Bede’s/Black’s Corner, Station Terrace/Langholm Road.
  - Front Street and St Bede’s are designated **neighbourhood hubs**, Station Terrace a **local centre**, following the retail study.
- Active travel: The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) Appendix 8 shows an **existing and a proposed active travel route** close to the site.
- Public transport:
  - Bus routes run on New Road and Boker Lane past/near the site.
  - GA2 is approximately **1 km from East Boldon Metro Station** (acknowledged as “as the crow flies”).
- Council has an **adopted Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)** (2021), prepared with communities, identifying routes in and around the site.
- There is a desire to create **synergy between the “Soland” area, Testo roundabout and wider Gateshead/Newcastle** via improved cycling routes, including route 184 through the villages (though clarification was later given that 184 itself is a strategic connection point, with improvements focused on Gordon Drive/South Lane).

**Neighbourhood Forum (Thompson)**

- Challenges the practical accessibility:
  - While 1 km “as the crow flies” may be correct, **actual pedestrian routes** from the north of GA2 to the main shopping area near the Metro are significantly longer and indirect, via lit footpaths and Front Street/Whitburn Road.
  - The footway from the north end of the site to Tile Shed crossing is **narrow (approx. 0.8 m)** and widely perceived as dangerous, particularly for cyclists.
  - The cycle/footpath alongside the Metro line from Tile Shed crossing to the Metro station is in **deplorable and dangerous condition** and requires upgrading.
- A cycle route along the A184 is described as **“fanciful”** due to limited space and heavy traffic.
- Metro station car park is **over capacity**, causing overspill parking into residential streets and Cleadon Lane industrial estate; Council intervention has not solved this.
- IDP identifies a **Metro car park extension** as a desirable priority (approx. £1m, with feasibility study and indicative phasing around 2035), but Forum questions its feasibility and land availability.

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- Bus service criticism:
  - Although stops are well located, the **frequency and reliability are poor**; key services are hourly, falling to two-hourly, leading most residents to drive.

**Labour Party (Butler)**

- Confirms the number 30 bus service frequency has been **reduced from half-hourly to hourly**, affecting access to South Shields and local centres.
- Emphasises long-standing failure to resolve Metro car park capacity despite lobbying of Nexus and local Labour councillors.
- Describes previous discussions with Nexus on a **demand-responsive minibus service** linking Cleadon Library, Front Street and the Metro station; suggests modern app-based services could be viable and should be explored as mitigation if GA2 proceeds.

**Council (Mail) – response and wider context**

- Notes the **North East Mayoral Combined Authority** aspiration to move to a **regulated bus system**, which would allow the Council to specify services (including demand-responsive transport), which is difficult under current deregulation.
- Any GA2 planning application would require a **Transport Assessment**, within which improved bus services and other measures could be negotiated.
- Clarifies East Boldon Metro car park is a **Network Rail asset**; expansion has been constrained by adjacent private land ownership despite long-standing efforts. It appears in the IDP but is **not a council asset**.

**Promoters (Clifford)**

- Reiterates there are **local facilities (shops, library, pub)** very close to GA2 that can meet day-to-day needs, which he says will be evident on site visits.

**Inspector's reaction**

- Acknowledges the **competing narratives**: Council emphasising proximity; local parties emphasising safety and capacity constraints.
- Confirms he will **revisit the quality of connections** in light of the oral evidence when assessing MIQ 5.31.

**2.4 Achieving a well-designed place and role of the East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan (Agenda item 4; MIQ 5.32 & 5.39)**

**Neighbourhood Plan & Design Guide**

- East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan was **made in 2021** and forms part of the adopted development plan.
- A separate **East Boldon Design Code/Guide** exists.

**Council**

- States the Local Plan already clearly requires development in neighbourhood plan areas to be **informed by relevant neighbourhood plans**, via:
  - Paragraph 110 of the Local Plan;
  - Policy SP1 criterion 3;
  - Explicit reference in GA2 key considerations (“having regard to the East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan and Design Code”).
- No modifications proposed; Council is **confident this cross-reference is sufficient** and detailed design issues do not need to be repeated in SP7.

**Promoters (Church Commissioners)**

- **Welcome** the inclusion of the Neighbourhood Plan and Design Guide in GA2 and do **not seek additional design detail** in SP7 for soundness.

**Neighbourhood Forum (Thompson) & Labour Party (Butler)**

- Strongly support explicit reference to the **Neighbourhood Plan and Design Code as site requirements**, citing positive experience at the Cleadon Lane scheme where the Design Code was used to improve layout and design.
- Express concern that the Council's **persistent Housing Delivery Test failure** and associated presumption in favour of sustainable development are used by developers to **dilute or bypass neighbourhood and local plan policies**.

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- Emphasise that GA2’s impacts **cannot be considered in isolation**: 263 dwellings here, plus Cleadon Lane and other developments, will profoundly affect village character, traffic, and services.

**Site capacity (263 dwellings)**

- Council explains the capacity:
  - Derived from SHLAA methodology: **75% net developable area** and **35 dwellings per hectare** for this location.
  - Supported by site promoters’ **visualisation work/site frameworks** showing key constraints (hedgerows, watercourse) can be accommodated while delivering that capacity and reflecting surrounding density.
- Forum and Labour Party argue:
  - Given wildlife corridor and village impacts, **site capacity should be reduced**; ideally GA2 should be deleted, but if retained, only the **southern parcel** should be developed.
  - Northern third should be safeguarded as **open space / wildlife corridor mitigation**.
  - Density could be maintained or partly recovered through **different built forms** (e.g. three-storey housing for older people), reducing land take but maintaining housing numbers where appropriate.

**Inspector’s reaction**

- Notes that GA2 entered the SHLAA as **one combined site**, not two parcels.
- Indicates that if he were to remove the northern parcel for soundness reasons, the **263-home capacity would likely have to reduce**, as evidence does not suggest those numbers could be accommodated on the remaining land.
- Reiterates he will consider both:
  - Whether GA2 should remain at all;
  - If so, whether **capacity and development envelope** require modification for soundness.

**2.5 Social infrastructure: education and community facilities (Agenda item 5; MIQ 5.34)**

**Council / Promoters (Clifford)**

- Acknowledge **social infrastructure implications** of GA2.
- Approach is to manage these through **development management and S106**, supported by plan policies:
  - SP25 (Infrastructure)
  - Policy 59 (Delivering infrastructure)
  - Policy 60 (Developer contributions)
  - Policy 50 (Social and community infrastructure).
- Education (based on IDP evidence, including updated IDP25):
  - **Primary**: West Boldon Primary School and Whitburn Primary School have **potential to be extended** to accommodate cumulative growth in the “villages” area (area 6).
  - **Secondary**: Boldon School is identified as able to absorb additional pupil numbers from new developments.
- IDP does not list a detailed scheme but **does list the need and identifies schools** where capacity could be provided.

**Neighbourhood Forum (Thompson)**

- Questions reliance on Whitburn Primary:
  - Whitburn Primary is approximately **three miles from GA2**, and splitting siblings between East Boldon junior and Whitburn would be impractical.
- Notes local situation:
  - East Boldon infant school is **at capacity**, in a Victorian building with **no expansion space**.
  - Nursery, infant and junior schools in East Boldon are **highly valued and rated**, a major reason households choose the village.
- Points out that between Regulation 19 and the updated IDP25, the **assessed need for primary places in the Boldon area almost doubled**, reflecting cumulative growth (including GA2, Cleadon Lane, G4 etc.).
- Argues the plan does **not provide sufficient clarity** about:
  - Feasibility of West Boldon expansion (no published feasibility study).
  - How a significant re-organisation of provision would affect families and the community.

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#### Labour Party (Butler)

- Shares “grave concerns” about primary school pressure and community impact.
- Notes combined allocations (GA2, Cleadon Lane, small Brownfield sites, G4) could amount to **733 new homes** in the area, reinforcing that IDP25 shows a **doubling of required primary places** vs IDP23.
- Emphasises that the community sees **school capacity** as one of the **major concerns** linked to additional housing.
- Indicates desire for further discussion with **local education authority and ward councillors** about practical options.

#### Inspector’s reaction

- Confirms South Tyneside, as a unitary authority, is the **local education authority** and has pupil forecasting capacity.
- Acknowledges the seriousness of concerns and will consider whether **further evidence or policy clarity** is required to ensure the plan is effective in this regard.

#### Action 2 – Education capacity clarification

- **Responsible:** South Tyneside Council (Education / Planning).
- **Action:** Provide additional clarity (if requested by Inspector) on:
  - **Feasibility and intended scale** of expansions at West Boldon and Whitburn primaries;
  - How cumulative primary place needs in “villages” area will be **phased and funded**;
  - How this will be secured through **S106 and/or other mechanisms** for GA2 and other relevant allocations.

#### 2.6 Highways, junctions, level crossings and wider traffic impacts (Agenda item 5 – transport strand)

##### Local evidence (Thompson & Butler)

- Existing road network and junctions (Front Street/A184, Boker Lane, “Tesco” and other key junctions) are described as **already at or over capacity** in AM and PM peaks.
- Traffic is regularly affected by **three level crossings** (one fully gated, two partially gated) and long queues, including traffic heading to Sunderland AFC and Sunderland Greyhound Stadium.
- Some network signal optimisation has occurred on the A184, but **queues and gridlock remain common**.
- Concern that traffic assessments for GA2, Cleadon Lane and G4 may underplay cumulative effects and the **unique constraints** of multiple level crossings.
- Network Rail’s intention to upgrade Tile Shed and Benton Lane crossings to **full barrier control for safety** is noted; there is concern that **longer closure times** will worsen congestion and air quality.
- IDP refers to **future junction improvements** with indicative dates around 2030; parties are unclear on:
  - Exact scope of these schemes;
  - Funding security;
  - How they relate to GA2’s specific impacts.

##### Council / Promoters

- Consider GA2’s impacts **capable of mitigation** via standard highways measures and S106 obligations, to be defined at planning application stage through a **Transport Assessment**.
- Council highlights existing **smart signalling** changes and inclusion of key junction improvements in the IDP, although they are longer-term.

##### Inspector’s key points and question

- Accepts the **seriousness** of the local highway issues being described.
- Asks Mr Thompson explicitly whether:
  - The issue is that the plan **lacks sufficient evidence and clarity** on necessary transport/highway improvements, or
  - The issue is that even with proposed improvements the plan would **not be effective**, or
  - Both.

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- Mr Thompson replies: both:
  - The proposed measures will **not be effective** in practice;
  - The lack of clear, committed interventions means the community **cannot understand what is required or how it will work**, undermining effectiveness.

### Action 3 – Transport and junction improvements

- **Responsible:** South Tyneside Council (Strategic Transport & Planning).
- **Action:**
  - Review whether the plan/IDP need **more explicit detail or commitments** regarding:
    - Key junction improvement schemes and timescales;
    - How level crossing changes are factored into modelling;
    - The expected role of GA2 and other allocations in **funding or triggering** such schemes.
  - Consider whether additional wording is required in SP7/GA2 to make transport mitigation “**effective and transparent**” for decision makers and the community.

### 2.7 Ecology, wildlife corridor, natural environment and SUDS

#### Baseline and Council position

- The **Wildlife Corridor Network Review** (South Tyneside, Sunderland, Gateshead) identifies the **northern two-thirds of GA2 as part of a wildlife corridor** linked to Tiledshed Burn, West Farm Meadows SSSI, and surrounding habitats including the railway embankment and East Field.
- Council relies on **Policy 34** (wildlife corridors) and GA2’s key considerations (retaining trees/hedgerows, landscaping, exploring watercourse renaturalisation) as a **robust framework** to protect and enhance the natural environment at application stage.
- Council initially emphasised the SoCG wording limiting renaturalisation measures to within GA2’s boundary, reflecting **land ownership and deliverability**.

#### Neighbourhood Forum & Labour Party

- Argue that the corridor’s significance is **underplayed**; GA2 development would cause **substantial ecological harm** unless:
  - **Northern third** of the site is kept free of built development and actively managed as habitat and open space;
  - SUDS basin is designed as a **permanent wetland** rather than dry attenuation, to maximise habitat value and screening;
  - Off-site measures along Tiledshed Burn and East Field are pursued.
- Stress that if two-thirds of GA2 is within the corridor, **off-site compensation cannot fully replace on-site ecological function**.

#### Promoters

- Church Commissioners state they are **open to exploring biodiversity net gain and Green Belt improvement opportunities on other land** they own in the locality, including along Tiledshed Burn.
- Labour Party notes Church Commissioners are **one of the largest landowners across the Green Belt** in the area, reinforcing the potential for off-site compensatory projects.

#### Flood risk and SUDS

- Council states the **whole developable GA2 site is in Flood Zone 1**, but acknowledges a **floodplain immediately adjacent to Tiledshed Burn** (Zones 2/3) that will be kept free of development as a constraint.
- Site frameworks mapping shows this floodplain and **surface water ponding areas** in the north-west and north-east corners; these are treated as **constraints**.
- Council states the drainage strategy will be **SUDS-based**, and nothing “abnormal” or prohibitive has been identified in evidence.
- Labour Party raises wider local experience: complex surface water solutions, pumping, and tanks required on other sites (e.g. Cleadon Lane, Mayfair Glass) and ongoing issues with sewer capacity; requests clarity over **foul water catchment and treatment** for GA2.
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- Inspector notes he has already received a high-level answer identifying the likely **treatment works (Hendon or Howden)** for foul flows and will decide if further detail is needed.

#### Action 4 – Ecology, Tileded Burn and SUDS wording

- **Responsible:** South Tyneside Council (Planning Policy / Natural Environment).
- **Action:**
  - Re-examine whether GA2/SP7 need **additional, specific wording** to:
    - Safeguard the functional wildlife corridor;
    - Secure a **buffer and floodplain protection** along Tileded Burn;
    - Encourage high-value habitat solutions (e.g. permanent wetland SUDS) where feasible.
  - Clarify ownership and scope for ecological enhancements at **West Farm Meadows LWS/SSSI and land along Tileded Burn**, including where Church Commissioners' land could be used.

### 3. Topics of disagreement or conflict

#### 3.1 Need for Green Belt release at GA2

- **Council / Promoters:** GA2 is needed to help meet housing requirement; Green Belt harm is **moderate** and mitigable; previous sessions established **exceptional circumstances** for Green Belt releases.
- **Forum / Labour Party:**
  - Argue national policy allows under-delivery where Green Belt is a constraint; Council could have avoided Green Belt release altogether.
  - Contend harm has been **underestimated**, especially gap-narrowing and countryside encroachment; GA2 should **not be allocated**.

#### 3.2 Scale and form of development (263 dwellings, full site vs southern parcel only)

- **Council / Promoters:**
  - Evidence-based capacity of **263 dwellings** assumes development across the whole allocation.
  - Density and form are appropriate to the area; constraints can be respected.
- **Forum / Labour Party:**
  - Seek deletion of GA2. If site proceeds, only **southern parcel** should be developed, with the **northern third retained as Green Belt/mitigation**.
  - Consider 263 units excessive in light of **village character, wildlife corridor and infrastructure limits**.

#### 3.3 Green Belt harm assessment and compensatory improvements

- **Council:** Accepts moderate harm; mitigation/compensation mainly framed **within GA2** plus more general references to Green & Blue Infrastructure projects and SP7 support text.
- **Forum / Labour Party:**
  - Disagree with harm ratings (particularly purposes 1 & 2).
  - Strongly object that compensatory improvements **do not extend sufficiently to remaining Green Belt**, contrary to NPPF 142; SoCG wording is seen as a **retrograde step**.

#### 3.4 Transport and accessibility

- **Council / Promoters:** GA2 is **well-related to services**, served by buses, near the Metro, with active travel opportunities and strategic LCWIP routes; mitigation can be secured via TA and S106.
- **Forum / Labour Party:**
  - Argue actual walking/cycling conditions are **unsafe or substandard**, bus services are **infrequent**, Metro parking is **overloaded**, and key junctions are **already at capacity**.
  - Consider proposed and potential highway schemes **inadequately defined and too distant in time** to effectively mitigate GA2 and cumulative growth.

#### 3.5 Social infrastructure (schools)

- **Council:** Evidence indicates **scope for expansion** at West Boldon and Whitburn primaries, and Boldon secondary, with need addressed via S106 and plan policies.

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- **Forum / Labour Party:**
  - Deep concern that there is **no clear, worked-through strategy** for accommodating the near-doubling of primary places for the villages.
  - Practicality of sending children to Whitburn questioned; fear of **fragmented family schooling and loss of valued village school character**.

**3.6 Ecology, wildlife corridor and SUDS**

- **Council / Promoters:** Believe existing policies (esp. Policy 34) plus GA2 key considerations offer adequate protection, and SUDS is achievable without unusual constraints.
- **Forum / Labour Party:**
  - Stress that two-thirds of GA2 is within a wildlife corridor and that **on-site and substantial mitigation** (including a non-developed northern third and high-quality wetland SUDS) is essential; off-site compensation alone is inadequate.

**4. Key actions and responsibilities**

Action	Description	Responsible party	Status (from hearing)
1	Review and strengthen <b>Green Belt compensatory improvement</b> wording, likely via SP7, with scope for <b>off-site projects</b> (Tileded Burn, West Farm Meadows, Church Commissioners’ land) and alignment with G&BI Strategy and LCWIP.	South Tyneside Council (Planning Policy & Legal)	Agreed in principle; to be brought forward as suggested main modification.
2	Clarify <b>education capacity and delivery</b> for the “villages” area (area 6): feasibility of expansions at West Boldon and Whitburn primaries; phasing and funding; mechanism to secure contributions from GA2 and other allocations.	South Tyneside Council (Education & Planning)	Recognised need; Inspector to decide if further evidence or policy change is required.
3	Review whether plan/IDP need <b>additional explicit commitments</b> on key <b>junction and highway improvements</b> , factoring in level crossing upgrades, and clarify GA2’s role in delivering/funding them.	South Tyneside Council (Strategic Transport & Planning)	Council invited to consider and, if necessary, propose modifications / further detail.
4	Re-examine whether GA2/SP7 should include <b>more specific ecological and SUDS wording</b> (wildlife corridor safeguarding, Tileded Burn buffer, potential wetland SUDS, off-site improvements). Clarify opportunity for enhancements on Church Commissioners’ land.	South Tyneside Council (Planning Policy & Natural Environment); discussion with Church Commissioners	Council agreed to “explore” and report back via suggested modifications.
5	Consider whether SoCG wording limiting <b>renaturalisation of the watercourse to within GA2</b> remains appropriate, or whether broader off-site opportunities should be recognised in policy.	South Tyneside Council & Church Commissioners	Inspector explicitly asked for this to be reviewed; outcome to be reflected in any modification.

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## 5. Risks, concerns and blockers raised

### 5.1 Green Belt and landscape risks

- **Risk of permanent loss of valued open countryside** with long-enjoyed views, particularly from New Road and Boker Lane.
- **Narrowing of the Green Belt gap** between East/West Boldon and South Shields; potential coalescence risk.
- Concern that harm has been **under-assessed**, undermining compliance with Green Belt policy and public confidence.
- Perception that compensatory measures **focused only within GA2** fail to meet NPPF 142 and could be legally/policy vulnerable.

### 5.2 Ecological and biodiversity risks

- GA2's **northern two-thirds within a wildlife corridor**; risk that development will fragment habitats linked to Tiledshed Burn and West Farm Meadows SSSI.
- Concern that **off-site compensation cannot fully replicate on-site ecological function**, especially if the northern part is developed.
- Risk that SUDS is delivered as a **dry basin** with limited ecological value rather than a high-value wetland feature.

### 5.3 Flood risk and drainage risks

- Presence of **floodplain (Zones 2/3)** adjacent to Tiledshed Burn; surface water ponding already visible in NW and NE corners of fields.
- Experience on other sites shows **complex, expensive surface water solutions** may be required; risk that costs or technical constraints reduce viability or increase impacts elsewhere.
- Uncertainty regarding **foul water routing and capacity** (Howden vs Hendon); risk of downstream sewer or WWTW constraints.

### 5.4 Transport, highways and level crossing risks

- **Existing congestion and delay** at key junctions and three level crossings; risk that GA2, Cleadon Lane and G4 will cumulatively push the network beyond capacity.
- Risk of **longer closure times** if Network Rail upgrades Tile Shed and Benton Lane crossings to full barriers, exacerbating congestion and air quality issues.
- **Lack of clearly defined, committed mitigation schemes** (design, phasing, funding) undermines confidence that impacts can be acceptably mitigated.

### 5.5 Public transport and active travel risks

- Poor **bus frequencies** and service reliability risk undermining sustainable travel ambitions, leading to higher car dependency from GA2.
- **Metro station car park at capacity**, with no clear delivery route for expansion, risks more overspill parking in residential/industrial streets.
- **Substandard walking and cycling infrastructure** (narrow footways, poor-condition cycle track along the Metro) risks discouraging active travel and increasing safety concerns.

### 5.6 Social infrastructure and community cohesion risks

- **Primary education capacity** is a major concern: near-doubling of required places in the villages, limited ability to expand East Boldon infant/junior schools, and uncertain reliance on West Boldon and Whitburn.
- Risk of **family splitting across multiple schools** and loss of the tight-knit village school ethos that residents value.
- Wider risk that cumulative housing growth (up to ~733 homes including GA2 and other sites) will **overstretch health services, parking, and local centres**, changing village character and liveability.

\* AI Usage Disclosure: This document was created with assistance from AI tools. Whilst the content has its origins from the recorded transcript it has been reviewed and edited by a human to correct spelling. Non the less, there may be error so please verify any critical information.