

Wiltshire Site Housing Site Allocations Plan EIP

Matter 3 Housing Site Allocations

Statement on Behalf of Castlewood Property
Ventures Ltd (Respondent No: 1130975)

March 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement is submitted on behalf of Castlewood Property Ventures Ltd. This particular Statement addresses Matter 3 'Housing Site Allocations' as set out in the 'Inspector's Initial Matters, Issues and Questions to the Council', dated 8 February 2019.
- 1.2 We have prepared this Statement in respect of our client's land interest at Land off the A363 at White Horse Business Park Trowbridge, which is proposed allocation H2.2 in the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP) [doc ref WHSAP/01/01].
- 1.3 By way of introduction, the Proposed Allocation site H2.2 comprises 18.96ha and extends from Bradley Road at the north to Westbury Road at the south (hereafter referred to 'The Proposed Allocation'). There are several land interests relating to Proposed Allocation H2.2. Castlewood's interests relate to a 8.37ha parcel at the northern end of the allocation site, closest to the Trowbridge settlement. This northern parcel of land (hereafter referred to 'The Site') is identified below. The Site fronts onto the A363 to the north where the proposed access to the residential development is to be secured.



- 1.4 This Statement should also be read in combination with those from parties who also have an interest in the H2.2 site, on land to the south of Castlewood's parcel.
- 1.5 Castlewood are committed to engaging with the development plan process and have submitted representations to the WHSAP consultations, including:

- Pre-Submission consultation (September 2017)
 - Focussed consultation on the Schedule of Proposed Changes (October 2018)
- 1.6 These representations included a suite of technical documents which demonstrate that there are no significant constraints to delivery of residential development in the site. These documents also demonstrated the capability of the Proposed Allocation to deliver at least 300 dwellings, of which around 140 dwellings can be provided on the Site.
- 1.7 The following technical documents accompanied these representations:
- Baseline Landscape and Visual Appraisal (referred to hereafter as LVA);
 - LVIA Constraints and Opportunities Plan
 - Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage Technical Note;
 - Highways and Transport Technical Note;
 - Heritage Technical Note;
 - Ecology Technical Note;
 - Heritage Technical Note;
 - Vision Document;
 - Indicative Masterplan;
- 1.8 We do not seek to extensively repeat the analysis set out previously, but will draw out the relevant sections of our previous representations in relation to the ‘Inspector’s Initial Matters, Issues and Questions to the Council’, where appropriate.
- 1.9 Castlewood welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Matter 3 hearing sessions, on the dates as set out in the Inspectors Programme.

2. Comments on Inspector’s Initial Matters, Issues and Questions to the Council

Issue 5: Are the proposed sites justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

2.1 Issue 5 is divided into a number of questions, and we respond accordingly below.

5.1 Does the plan provide sufficient detail on form, scale, access and quantity of development for each site?

2.2 Proposed Allocation H2.2 is a sustainable site located within reasonable walking distance of a wide range of facilities, services and transport hubs within Trowbridge. The development of the site should be an opportunity to deliver as many new homes as is reasonable and makes best use of the available land.

2.3 The masterplan described in the Vision Document for Land off the A363, White House Business Park, Trowbridge, (submitted with our representations in October 2018) describes how the Proposed Allocation could be brought forward for around 300 dwellings, and for approximately 140 within the Site, in a way that responds to the aspirations and criteria set out within Draft Policy H2.2.

2.4 This proposed masterplan locates the development at the gateway to Trowbridge, when approached via the A363 and further contains the existing settlement of North Bradley through enhanced planting providing a significant green corridor along the south eastern boundary, spanning from 30m at its narrowest point and more than 100m away from the adjacent buildings within North Bradley, in some instances.

2.5 This masterplanning principle would characterise the proposed development as part of Trowbridge – to be seen in relation to existing allocations and other development to the northeast of the site and provide a significant landscape buffer and green corridor to the southwestern boundary to create distinct separation between Trowbridge and North Bradley.

2.6 This approach is in direct accordance with policy H2.2 where *“an objective of detailed design and layout will be to retain visual separation of the Town’s urban area from North Bradley village. To achieve this, development proposals would need to be focussed within the north-east of the site, screened with new planting”*.

5.2 Is the amount of development proposed for each site justified having regard to any constraints and the provision of necessary infrastructure?

2.7 The amount of development proposed for allocation H2.2 is not justified, in that it does not make most effective use of the site.

2.8 As has been demonstrated by submitted Representations, there are no technical constraints which preclude a greater quantum of development than the 175 dwellings

currently proposed at H2.2. Indeed, the Council have previously identified the potential of this allocation to accommodate c.300 dwellings, and the reduction to the proposed 175 is not justified by an updated evidence base. The technical work undertaken, and submitted to the Council during the WHSAP process demonstrate that the Proposed Allocation is capable of accommodating at least 300 dwellings alongside the incorporation of necessary mitigation measures and the provision of necessary infrastructure.

5.3 What is the likely impact of the proposed development on the following factors and do any of these indicate that the site should not be allocated:

• biodiversity, in particular but not restricted to European protected habitats and species;

2.9 In respect of biodiversity, we note the Inspector's question at para 5.10 relating to sites in Trowbridge and the effectiveness of the plan in ensuring adequate protection for bat habitats and the status of the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy.

Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD

2.10 The Draft Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD was published for consultation on 21st February 2019. This document is in draft form and is currently subject to a public consultation which runs until 21st March 2019.

2.11 Given this document is in draft form and remains the subject of an outstanding consultation; it is considered limited weight should be afforded to this document.

2.12 Our client has instructed their technical team to undertake a detailed review of the draft SPD, including a critique of the methodology and assumptions adopted and the conclusions in relation to mitigation requirements. Due to the delays in publication of the draft SPD, just 2 weeks before the deadline for Examination documents, it is not possible at this time to provide full details of this review within this statement.

2.13 Representations will be submitted to Draft Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD consultation, which is running until 21st March 2019 and will provide the Inspector with a copy of our Representations for information in due course. We also reserve the right to provide further verbal comment at the Examination.

2.14 The site, H2.2 has been identified within the Draft Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD, as being within areas of Medium Risk, in respect of Bat Habitat Sensitivity Zones and Bat Recreational Sensitive Zones. As such the proposed development will be required to undergo a due process in respect of assessment, consultation with Officers, appropriate mitigation on site as well as any monetary contributions towards offsite measures, procured through CIL, in accordance with the arrangement that will be established through the Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD, once adopted.

2.15 Castlewood are fully engaged with the local authority in respect of pre-application consultation and will seek to continue to do so.

- 2.16 Sensitive habitat features, particularly those adjacent to the White Horse Business Park and the grounds of Willow Grove are identified as being retained and enhanced within the masterplan proposals included within our the Site's Vision Document.
- 2.17 The Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy Draft SPD proposes that Proposed Allocation H2.2 should deliver 13.13ha of mitigation green space, against 5.83ha of development land. There is no specific methodology referred to as to how this figure has been generated. As well as this, the figures in Table 4 relating to the other H2 Proposed Allocation sites don't seem to be proportional (e.g. conversely H2.1 designates 8.33ha for development and 9.45ha of mitigation green space, which is proportionally less than that specified for H2.2).
- 2.18 It is also worth noting that speculative applications within the same Sensitivity Zones would be required to undertake the process identified within the Flow Chart on page 3 of the Draft Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD, but this may be far less than those areas that this document requires from the allocated sites.
- 2.19 From initial analysis, there does not seem to be any justification for this identified area, rather than an arbitrary application of the proposed 175 units allocation at density of 30 dwellings per hectare and the remainder being designated as mitigation space. Given the 175 capacity figure is not based upon any technical assessment and is a reduction from the capacity identified by Planning Officers, it does not form a robust basis on which to calculate the necessary land to be set aside for bat mitigation. We consider a more appropriate calculation of the required onsite mitigation should be derived from the site specific ecological assessments and the characteristics of the individual site and development proposal.
- 2.20 We recognise that it is not within the remit of the WHSAP EiP to examine the Draft Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD. Given it remains the subject of an ongoing consultation, it is not currently at a point where it is capable of being adopted. As such, the weight attached to the bat mitigation strategy and any implications on development potential should be limited.

Proposed Bat Mitigation

- 2.21 Notwithstanding the above, detailed consideration has been given to potential bat mitigation, and the protection of biodiversity, from the outset of the design process.
- 2.22 In respect of proposed allocation H2.2, the Submission WHSAP [doc ref WHSAP/01/01] states the following at paragraphs 5.54 and 5.55:

5.54 The site is in an area likely to be used by Bechstein's bats associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. Sensitive habitat features on / adjacent to the site include: woodland belts associated with the White Horse Business Park; a network of mature hedgerows/hedgerow trees; and the grounds of Willow Grove.

5.55 These features should be retained and / or buffered from development (including residential gardens) by wide (10-16m), dark (<1 lux), continuous corridors of native landscaping which will allow for their long-term protection and favourable management in order to secure continued or future use by Bechstein's bats.

Development will be required to contribute towards the delivery of the Trowbridge Recreation Management Mitigation Strategy.

- 2.23 The indicative Masterplan provided within our previous representations incorporates. The sensitive habitat features identified within paras 5.54 and 5.55 of the WHSAP have been retained and / or buffered.
- 2.24 The proposed masterplan seeks to retain and enhance, where possible, the distinctive pattern of mature and semi-mature hedgerows and trees that form a feature in the landscape. These existing trees and hedgerows form green corridors that provide a network of biodiversity and ecological corridors and will provide space for green amenity as well as systems to manage surface water run off associated with the site and the proposed development.
- 2.25 Sufficient offsets have been provided to these corridors to enable the delivery of “dark corridors” to allow for bats to use these spaces, should it be necessary as part of the mitigation measures required to protect bats and other species, as appropriate.
- 2.26 We have therefore demonstrated through previous Representations how we meet the WHSAP H2.2 policy tests.

Summary

- 2.27 In summary, we consider that this constraint would not preclude the delivery of at least 300 dwellings on the Proposed Allocation. It is accepted and supported that appropriate bat mitigation is required, and this has been incorporated into the indicative Masterplan from the outset. The degree and nature of mitigation required remains a matter of debate and would be fully assessed as part of any planning application for the Site and wider allocation.
- 2.28 We consider it is entirely appropriate for Proposed Allocation H2.2. to be identified with an indicative capacity of at least 300 homes, subject to appropriate bat mitigation in accordance with the principles of an adopted robust and justified Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD, or any site specific bat mitigation assessments. It is considered the proposed masterplan implements a considered layout response to the existing trees hedgerow networks, providing offsets to these that allow for lower lighting levels to be achieved where necessary.

• green infrastructure and agricultural land;

- 2.29 As demonstrated in the Vision Document, submitted as part of previous Representations, the site is currently formed of fields in agricultural use with established trees and hedges to their boundaries, including a number of TPO trees. These existing trees and hedgerows will be retained and enhanced as part of the wider landscape strategy. Green infrastructure along the western boundary will be produced to prevent coalescence with North Bradley and buffer planting surrounding White Horse Business Park will be reinforced to produce a woodland feature. The land is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land.
- 2.30 As such, there are no green infrastructure or agricultural land factors which preclude the delivery of at least 300 dwellings on the Proposed Allocation.

- **landscape quality and character;**

2.31 As demonstrated in the Vision Document, submitted as part of previous Representations, development on the site would be sensitively designed with the incorporation of new or strengthened landscape buffers and careful siting of built form to protect visual separation between Trowbridge and North Bradley. Utilising the approach set out in the Vision Document, the Site could accommodate c. 140 units, as part of a wider allocation of at least 300 units.

2.32 The Landscape & Visual Technical Report previously provided concludes that visually the Site is relatively well contained on account of the existing hedgerow structure, generally flat topography, the surrounding mature tree belts and surrounding development and therefore has a low visual prominence. Therefore the landscape quality and character of the site does not preclude the delivery of at least 300 dwellings on the Proposed Allocation.

- **heritage assets;**

2.33 A number of heritage assets have been identified in the WHSAP (Proposed Change 61) which could be sensitive to change to their setting as a result of development on the allocation. The Masterplan, submitted as part of previous Representations, identifies that appropriate provision can be made for the setting of listed buildings in the vicinity whilst providing c.140 units on the Site, with c.300 units to be provided on the Proposed Allocation as a whole. A Heritage Technical Report has confirmed that the presence of heritage assets do not preclude the delivery of at least 300 dwellings on the Proposed Allocation.

- **strategic and local infrastructure including transport;**

2.34 Infrastructure is covered in our response to question 5.5. There are no issues which would preclude delivery of at least 300 dwellings for the Proposed Allocation.

- **the efficient operation of the transport network, highway safety;**

2.35 A Highways Technical Note, submitted as part of previous Representations, has confirmed that the Proposed Allocation would not severely impact on the efficient operation of the transport network, or create severe highway safety impacts. Appropriate vehicular access to the site can be provided from the A363 which forms the northern boundary of the site.

- **air and water quality, noise pollution, odours, land stability, groundwater and flood risk;**

2.36 A Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage Technical Note, submitted as part of previous Representations, confirms that the Site lies entirely within Flood Zone 1, and there are no other issues, such as air and water quality which would preclude delivery of at least 300 dwellings on the Proposed Allocation.

- **open space, recreational facilities and public rights of way.**

- 2.37 The site is relatively free from physical constraints, and the provision of approximately 140 dwellings with associated open space and infrastructure is deliverable, both in development quantum and creating a successful place for people to live, work and play. The residential development will be set within a series of pocket parks, containing children's play space. A public right of way running to the south of the site is proposed to be retained. The opportunity to achieve a comprehensive design as part of a scheme for at least 300 dwellings on the Proposed Allocation will provide significant opportunities for meaningful green infrastructure provision, landscaping and open space.
- 2.38 Public Open Space will be provided across the site, include informal spaces along the site periphery and along green corridors, as well as the potential to deliver formal equipped play within the northwest corner of the site.

5.4 In relation to the above, does the plan contain effective safeguards or mitigation measures necessary to achieve an acceptable form of development?

- 2.39 In respect of Site Allocation H2.2 it is considered the plan contains effective safeguards on the basis that the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD, as currently drafted, is not relied upon. This strategy is in draft form, and is not considered to provide a robust or evidence based strategy to bat mitigation in relation to site H2.2.
- 2.40 Castlewood is committed to engaging in more detailed pre-application discussions with Officers to understand the appropriate mitigation measures that would be required to protect species, utilising site specific assessments and a robust methodological approach to mitigation requirements. Notwithstanding that, the current masterplan implements principles such as protecting existing green landscape assets, proving areas to manage surface water attenuation, as well as connected green corridors for both amenity and ecological benefits. Within this structure a development masterplan has been generated through implementing development blocks that are outward facing, providing appropriate plot depths and implementing a movement structure and hierarchy that will allow for service and emergency access vehicles through the site.

5.5 What infrastructure is critical to the delivery of each site? Where contributions are specified, are they necessary and justified by the evidence base? Is the plan sufficiently clear on how and when infrastructure provision will be required?

- 2.41 One of the key advantages of Proposed Allocation H2.2 is that it is not reliant on off-site infrastructure. In terms of delivery this ensures that this allocation is not dependent on external factors, which could otherwise delay delivery.

5.8 Is the development proposed for each site deliverable in the timescales envisaged?

- 2.42 Castlewood are local developers who can provide greater certainty of delivery, and have a strong track record in delivering development in Wiltshire. The Site has no land ownership constraints and no infrastructure constraints, and so we anticipate that the Proposed Allocation, including the Site, can start making a contribution to the Councils 5 year housing land supply in the short to medium term.