

North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination

Hearing Statement of Croudace Homes Group

Matters 10 and 11: The housing allocations and the settlement boundaries

This statement follows on from the representations submitted to the Council under the following references:

- Respondent 14468: Croudace Homes Ltd (submitted by Portchester Planning)
- Respondent 16069: Croudace Homes (submitted by Savills)
- Respondent 193: Croudace Strategic Ltd (submitted directly by Croudace)

All these submissions are from parts of the Croudace Homes Group, which will be termed “Croudace” in this statement for simplicity.

Matters 10 and 11: The housing allocations and the settlement boundaries

Stevenage (Great Ashby): Site GA1

1. Croudace confirms that site GA1 is deliverable. The field is owned by Croudace, which is a well-established housing developer, currently delivering approximately 500 homes per year in the south-east. Croudace has the resources necessary to deliver projects of this scale, and a planning application (reference 16/01713/1) for 360 homes has been submitted to the Council. All technical matters have been addressed to the satisfaction of the Council's planning officers, with the only outstanding issue being the principle of development on this site, which is currently designated as green belt.
2. The planning application has demonstrated that proposed off-site works to adjoining streets (notably Haybluff Drive and Mendip Way) can provide the necessary vehicular and pedestrian access to serve the development without causing any severe impacts to the existing transport network. These off-site works have been agreed in principle with Hertfordshire County Council as highways authority.
3. The off-site works also allow for the diversion of an existing bus service to serve a new stop closer to the site, bringing the site within acceptable walking distance of public transport. The principles of this diversion have been discussed with the bus operator and appropriate funding (to be secured in the Section 106 agreement) has been agreed. The application would further involve the closure of a short stretch of existing highway (Weston Road) and the diversion of traffic from it along the site's spine road. The closed section of Weston Road is then proposed to become a shared footpath and cycleway, linking to the existing Stevenage cycle network and thus improving accessibility to this area.
4. The level of infrastructure required to serve the development has been discussed as part of the planning application, with a Section 106 agreement drafted which addresses all the identified issues. In particular, funding is included for the expansion of local primary and secondary schools so as to cater for the additional pupils likely to live in the development.
5. The site is subject to a ransom strip, owned jointly by Stevenage Borough Council and the Homes and Communities Agency. Croudace has been in discussions with both to agree a commercial payment for the strip. The Homes and Communities Agency's representations to the Local Plan confirm their willingness to sell this strip, with representation 1871 in particular saying (in part) "...HCA fully supports the allocation and continues to work with the landowner to facilitate development...".
6. Similarly, Appendix 1 is a letter from Stevenage Borough Council's estates department confirming their willingness to sell the ransom strip. The payment for this strip has been taken into account in considering the viability of the proposed scheme, and the scheme is still able to make its full planning obligations, including 40% affordable housing as per the Council's draft policy in the Local Plan now being examined.
7. Croudace believes that the allocation of GA1 is fully justified and appropriate. Whilst the land is currently green belt, in a context where development pressures are high and non-green belt options low, this is one of the better sites to be released. All proposed green belt development sites were reviewed in the Council's Green Belt Review (CG1). All sites were considered for their contribution to green belt purposes. All sites were classed overall as

either making a moderate or significant contribution to the green belt. This site was classed as making a moderate contribution overall. No site was considered to make less than a moderate contribution.

8. The Green Belt Review acknowledges that the site is between 2km and 5km from the next town, such that development here will not cause towns to merge. The site is identified as not affecting any historic towns or conservation areas. It is noted that the site already adjoins development on two sides (east and south) but has strong woodland boundaries to the north and west (page 110 of the Green Belt Review, CG1, where the site is listed under its old reference of NES3 rather than GA1). Therefore, whilst there would be some loss of countryside, it would be well contained within the established band of woodland, such that the wider countryside to the north and west of the site would continue to serve green belt purposes. The proposed green belt boundary along the northern and western edges of the site follows these established woodlands, which is therefore a good defensible boundary.
9. As noted in our Matter 6 statement, we believe GA1 should be allocated for 360 homes to match the planning application rather than the 330 homes indicated in the draft Local Plan.
10. Croudace therefore fully supports the allocation of GA1 for development and its removal from the green belt.

North Stevenage: Site NS1

11. Croudace confirms that site NS1 is deliverable. Croudace has an option agreement with the landowners and thereby controls the whole of the proposed allocation NS1. Croudace has the resources available to lead the delivery of a site of this scale, having previously delivered much of the Great Ashby area in Stevenage and currently being involved in the delivery of similarly large sites at Didcot and Basingstoke.
12. The site adjoins land in Stevenage Borough which is also proposed for allocation as site HO3 in the draft Stevenage Local Plan. This plan has been examined and the Inspector's Report into that plan has found that it is sound. Therefore, whilst that plan has yet to be adopted at the time of writing (pending a decision by the Secretary of State as to whether he wishes to call the plan in for his own consideration), it seems highly likely that the land to the south will be allocated in due course.
13. Separately, a planning application was submitted in December 2017 by Miller Homes and Bellway Homes to Stevenage Borough Council (reference 17/00862/OPM) for the development of site HO3 with 800 homes. This planning application has been prepared with the allocation of NS1 in North Hertfordshire in mind, and has followed overall masterplanning between the developers of HO3 and Croudace. In particular, the neighbourhood centre and school site within the scheme are positioned such that they can be initially delivered solely within HO3 in Stevenage, but can be extended across the border into NS1 in North Hertfordshire when necessary. The overall masterplan prepared by Savills Urban Design covering both HO3 and NS1 has previously been submitted with our representations but is included again as Appendix 2 for reference. Appendix 3 is the masterplan submitted by Miller and Bellway for their application, also prepared by Savills Urban Design, and it can be seen that the submitted application broadly follows that overall masterplan.
14. Croudace's representations to the Proposed Submission Local Plan were accompanied by studies assessing transport matters, flood risk and drainage, and landscape and visual impact.

These studies have demonstrated that there are no fundamental issues affecting the delivery of NS1.

15. The site has been assessed by the Council in a number of documents, including particularly the Green Belt Review (CG1), and a Heritage Assessment (NHE7), as well as more generally in the Sustainability Appraisal and elsewhere. The Council has therefore considered a wide range of matters prior to its decision to propose allocating this site.
16. The Green Belt Review considered that the site makes overall a moderate contribution to green belt purposes. The site is not considered to affect the setting of a historic town. Whilst the gap between Stevenage and the village of Graveley would be reduced, there would still be no coalescence of towns caused by development here. The site was assessed in two parts, referenced NS and 353 (on page 109 of CG1), with NS being the draft allocation as proposed as Preferred Options stage, and 353 being the extension to that area to cover the currently proposed allocation.
17. The Green Belt Review notes that some of the boundaries to the north of the allocation are currently weakly defined, although the inclusion of area 353 improves the situation from the original proposal. In part, the weaker boundaries in this area are due to the nature of the area, with a small number of very large arable fields extending northwards towards Graveley. The proposed allocation does not allocate the whole of these fields but provides a set-back, particularly along Church Lane near Crow End and Graveley Bury. Croudace's illustrative masterplan envisages a belt of structural planting along the northern edge of this site, reinforcing the existing hedgerow boundary to the north-west and creating a new boundary to the north-east, which will ensure a degree of separation is maintained between Graveley and NS1.
18. The North Stevenage Heritage Assessment (NHE7) considered the impact that development here may have on the Graveley Conservation Area and associated listed buildings. It identified that the eastern part of the allocation (east of the existing public footpath) has the potential to have a greater impact on the listed buildings and conservation area than the western part of the allocation.
19. However, the Heritage Assessment did not rule out development on the eastern part of the site, instead noting that "...development in this area should follow on from development within the initial site [the area to the west of the footpath]. Any proposals for the wider strategic allocation site should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment to present impacts of any suggested development scheme and enable it to be fully considered." (page 12, NHE7).
20. It is important to note that NHE7 is dated June 2016, whereas the Local Plan was not submitted until June 2017. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the Council had full regard to NHE7 before taking its decision to submit the plan, and therefore that it was satisfied that it would be possible to mitigate the impact of development on the whole site, including the eastern section.
21. Croudace agrees, and maintains that the Landscape Character and Visual Impact Appraisal submitted with our representations does indeed demonstrate that development in this area can be considered acceptable with appropriate structural planting being introduced.
22. We believe the Council's response to this evidence is sound, and has reached an appropriate balance in considering the need for new housing and the impacts such development may

have. Croudace therefore fully supports the allocation of NS1 for development of approximately 900 homes and its removal from the green belt.

Appendix 1: Letter from Stevenage Borough Council's Corporate Development Manager

Finance and Estates

Assistant Director of Finance and Estates: Clare Fletcher



Daneshill House, Danestreté, Stevenage, Herts SG1 1HN. Tel: 01438 242242 Textphone: 01438 242330 stevenage.gov.uk

R. Kelly Esq.
Croudace Homes Limited
The Spirella Building
Bridge Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 4ET

RECEIVED
29 NOV 2017

Your Ref: Roundwood NES3
Our Ref: PS
Contact: Peter Stanley
Direct: 01438 242374
Line:
E-mail: peter.stanley@stevenage.gov.uk
Date: 27 November 2017

Dear Mr Kelly

Re: Roundwood NES3, Great Ashby, Stevenage – Access Land

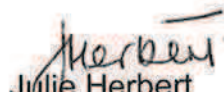
I refer to the above property and the proposed residential development by Croudace Homes Limited.

Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) own jointly with the Homes & Community Agency access strips over which access is required to enable development of this land. As such, SBC is part landowner of the above proposed residential development site.

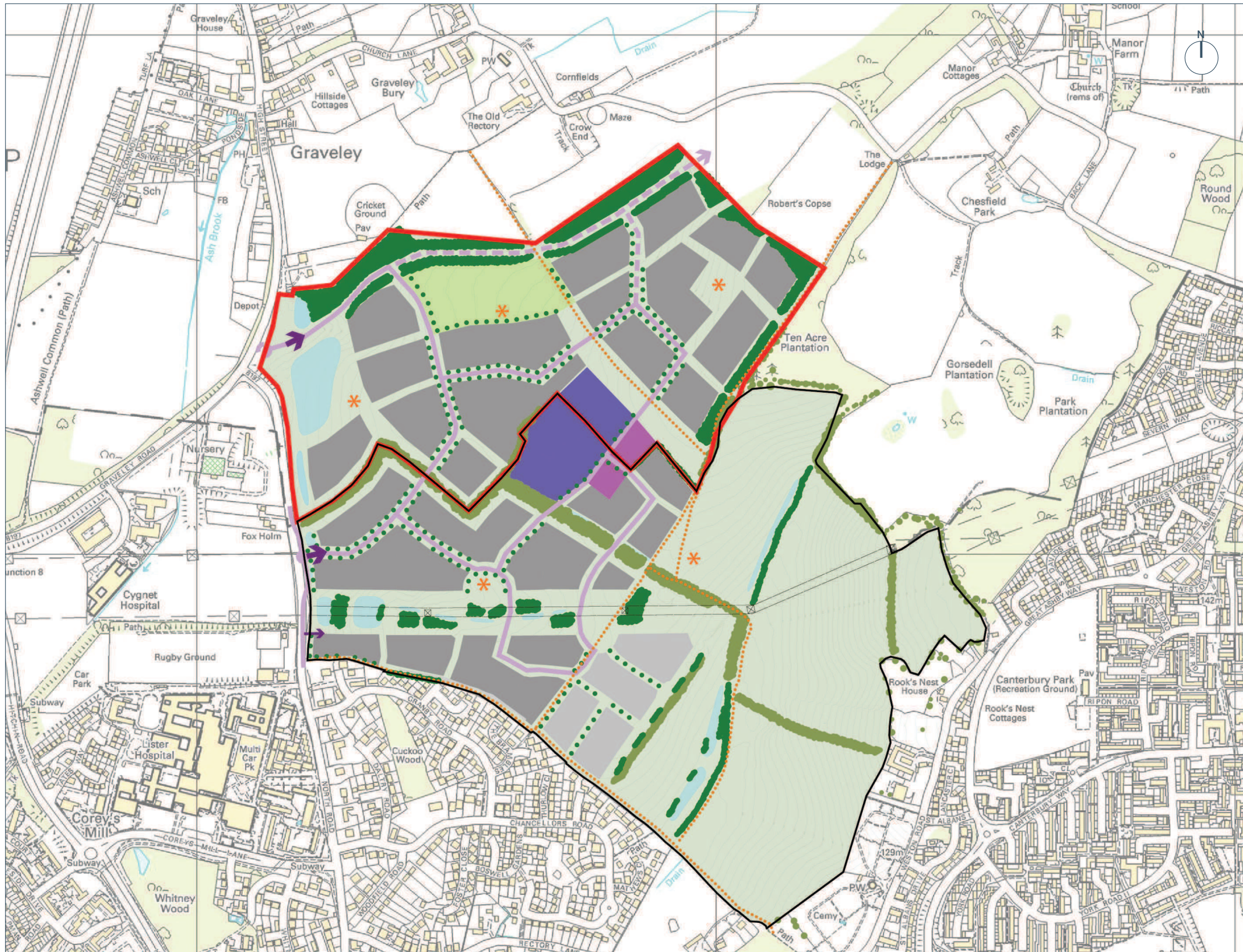
I am writing to confirm that SBC (as joint landowner) is willing to work with Croudace Homes to deliver the site for residential development as we have been discussing in connection with Croudace's planning applications on this site.

This statement is made by SBC as joint landowner. SBC as planning authority may have a different view in terms of strategic planning and infrastructure delivery.

Yours sincerely


Julie Herbert
Corporate Development Manager

Appendix 2: Overall masterplan for HO3 (in Stevenage Borough) and NS1 (in North Hertfordshire)



KEY

- Proposed North Herts site allocation
- Draft Stevenage Borough North Stevenage allocation
- Existing Public Right of Way
- Existing hedgerow
- Public open space/ Country Park
- Formal sports
- Proposed trees/ vegetation
- Proposed higher density residential development (35-40dph)
- Proposed lower density residential development (22.5dph)
- 3 FE Primary School (3.2ha.)
- Local centre (1ha.)
- Primary vehicle access
- Secondary/ emergency access
- Primary residential streets
- Potential surface water attenuation
- Location of play area/ MUGA
- Potential roads links

Graveley, North of Stevenage

on behalf of Croudace Homes Ltd

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drawing no. SK01
 rev A
 scale NTS
 drawn by NT
 checked by AR

drawing Development framework
 with potential road links
 job no. OXUD357328
 date 25 November 2015



**Appendix 3: Masterplan attached to application 17/00862/OPM
submitted to Stevenage Borough Council by Miller Homes and Bellway
Homes**



- Site boundary
- North Hertfordshire boundary
- North Hertfordshire proposed allocation
- Public open space
- St. Nicholas' Meadows
- Proposed development blocks
- Proposed shared space/footpath
- Proposed carriageway
- Proposed high-density residential development
- Proposed medium-density residential development
- Proposed low-density residential development
- Proposed primary school
- Proposed local centre
- MUGA/Equipped play area
- Existing public right of way
- Proposed footpath
- Proposed pedestrian route
- Proposed pedestrian site access
- Proposed vehicular site access
- Existing vegetation (hedgerows/trees)
- Proposed vegetation (copse/hedgerow)
- Proposed trees
- Attenuation features
- Existing 400kV Pylons
- Existing 132kV Pylons

Land north of Stevenage

on behalf of Bellway Homes and Miller Homes

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drawing no.	SK21	drawing	Illustrative masterplan
revision	1	drawn by	MB
scale	1:5000	checked by	NT
		job no.	OXUD320426
		date	30 November 2017

