

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Examination in Public

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

As agreed between

North Hertfordshire District Council and

Messrs. Cobbold, Neave, Titmuss and Watts and Vastint UK
BV and Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes

Concerning Proposed Safeguarded Land West of
Stevenage

January 2018

1. This is an agreed statement of common ground in relation to the identification of land to the west of Stevenage as proposed safeguarded land within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (the Plan) at Policy SP8. The purpose of this statement is to provide the Inspector with a summary of the areas of agreement for the matters to be examined during the hearing sessions scheduled for January and February 2018.
2. This statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and is submitted jointly with Bidwells (on behalf of Messrs Neave and Titmuss and Vastint UK BV), Henry Lytton Cobbold on behalf of Knebworth Estates and Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd and Persimmon Homes (who have an interest in a large part of the site allocated in the emerging Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) Local Plan and the Watts landholding in NHDC) (the landowners).
3. Collectively, the landowners own the majority of the site included in Stevenage Borough Council's housing allocation and the NHDC safeguarded land as shown edged red in the map attached at Appendix 1. This SOCG is the result of collaboration between the landowners and NHDC.

Policy SP8: Land to the west of Stevenage

4. The parties agree that on the basis of the Council's assessment of housing need and provision in the plan, the removal of land from the Green Belt at the west of Stevenage and safeguarding it for potential future development, as shown on the policies map, is the most appropriate status for this land at the present time.
5. As per paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the land is not proposed to be allocated for development by the submitted Plan. The Council considers that planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land will only be granted following a future Local Plan review which proposes the development as part of the most appropriate long-term planning solution for that plan period.
6. This site has a long history of being identified through the statutory plan-making process as a suitable location for future development. This includes the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 (1998) and the East of England Plan 2001-2021 (2008).
7. Planning Permission was granted by the Secretary of State for 3,600 houses in 2009. This included land within Stevenage Borough. The permission was the subject of a Judicial Review and remitted back to the Secretary of State on 2 technical issues; firstly, the wording of the Section 106 agreement and secondly, the absence of a planning condition in order to comply with the East of England Plan. Due to changes in planning from the date of the planning application the proposals would have required substantial amendments; to have complied with new advice current at a new hearing. In addition developer/landowner agreements had expired and this together with the

financial crash meant the matter was not pursued further and the plans were withdrawn in 2013.

8. The site is located in relative proximity to Stevenage's town centre, railway station and main employment area. On a pure 'suitability' analysis (i.e. excluding any consideration of availability and achievability), this site would perform at least comparably with the other major urban extensions in the plan.
9. In this context, the assessment of key potential planning constraints and the potential 'suitability' of the site for development, as shown in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is considered accurate (NHDC Document reference HO9).
10. It would not be appropriate to develop the land that is proposed to be identified in the NHDC Plan as safeguarded without the prior or concurrent development of adjoining land within Stevenage Borough (SBC).
11. The land within SBC is allocated for development in their 2004 District Plan Second Review and proposed for development in their emerging Local Plan for the period to 2031. The allocation within SBC has been found 'sound' by the Inspector examining the emerging SBC Local Plan (NHDC Document reference ED16).
12. The emerging SBC plan includes policy requirements to ensure that any development to the west of the A1(M) within their Borough demonstrates that it can be expanded beyond the administrative boundary into NHDC in the future (NHDC Document Reference ORD6, Policy HO2).
13. Development of the proposed safeguarded land within NHDC will require provision of at least one new access point across the A1(M) motorway utilising land within Stevenage Borough which is owned by Stevenage Borough Council. This is required in order to deliver sufficient highway capacity and to realise a logical, coherent and well-planned development that integrates well with the existing town.
14. Previous investigative works and planning applications show that a route from Gunnels Wood Road across the Meadway Playing Fields within SBC and owned by SBC, is likely to represent the preferred means of achieving this access. Policy IT2 of the emerging SBC plan safeguards an access corridor in this vicinity (OR6, Policy IT2).
15. Due to the nature of the access required including the need to tunnel beneath (or bridge across) the motorway, its provision will be a major cost to any future development of the land within North Hertfordshire.
16. Progress has been made regarding the development of the allocated site within Stevenage Borough [policy HO2 of the SBC LP 2011-2031] with an agreement in principle between all the interested parties comprising developers, Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon and the Landowners which includes SBC and Home Communities Agency (HCA). A road map has been agreed and the evidence base is currently being gathered for submission of a planning application in late 2018.

17. The expectation is that during the course of building out the scheme within SBC the expansion into North Herts would now be feasible within 5-10 years timeframe.
18. The Landowners through the legal agreements and SBC by it's Site Specific Policy will ensure there are no fetters to the expansion of development into North Herts.
19. The landowners that are party to this agreement continue to make the site available for development in the future and remain committed to this position, including early release if required.
20. Removal of this land from the Green Belt and safeguarding it for potential future development provides (insofar as is possible) a level of commitment and certainty that will allow the parties to this agreement to jointly work with Stevenage Borough Council, infrastructure providers, landowners and other relevant bodies to work together to ensure deliverability of housing at the appropriate time.
21. An acceptable access solution was demonstrated at the time of the previous planning appeal (this was not a reason for the Judicial Review). But in addition, it is recognised that any future scheme on this land will need to have regard to a wide range of infrastructure and environmental constraints. All parties will similarly seek to work with relevant providers and organisations to deliver an acceptable scheme.
22. Highways for England has already started baseline evidence gathering in respect of the A1(M) improvements between Junction 6-8.
23. The approach set out above will enable further consideration of this site as appropriate.
24. In the event that the examination of the NHDC plan identifies an unmet housing need or housing shortfall necessitating the identification of additional land for allocation, the landowners reserve the right to make further representations regarding the status of this land.

Declaration

The content of this document is agreed for the purposes of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination.

Signed on behalf of landowner

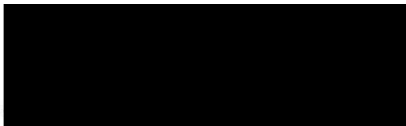


Bidwells
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Position: *Partner*

Date: *22nd January 2018*

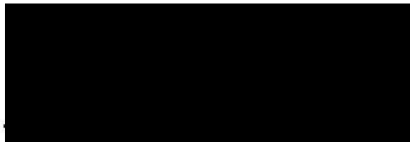
Signed on behalf of landowner



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Position: *on behalf of Knebworth Estates*

Date: *22nd January 2018*

Signed on behalf of Taylor Wimpey



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Position: *STRATEGIC PROJECT MANAGER*

Date: *23 January 2018*

Signed on behalf of Persimmon Homes



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Position: *HEAD OF PLANNING*

Date: *23 January 2018*

Signed on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council



Position: Executive Member for Planning and Enterprise

Date: 22 January 2018

Appendix 1: Extent of SBC allocation and proposed safeguarded land in NHDC controlled by the landowners

