

# Written Statement

12/19

## **St Albans City & District Local Plan Examination** Matter 7

On behalf of Alban Developments Ltd and Adrian Irving (Trustee)



**jb planning associates**

Chells Manor, Chells Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 7AA

e-mail [info@jbplanning.com](mailto:info@jbplanning.com) url [www.jbplanning.com](http://www.jbplanning.com)

tel 01438 312130 fax 01438 312131



## **Introduction**

- 1 This Written Statement has been produced on behalf of CALA Homes in conjunction with Redington Capital in order to supplement their earlier representations.
- 2 ADL and Adrian Irving (Trustee) are the respective freehold owners of the land identified for development within the West of Chiswell Green Broad Location. CALA Homes are the chosen developer partner of ADL and Redington Capital have an interest in land owned by Adrian Irving (Trustee).
- 3 Since 2014, JB Planning Associates have, on behalf of ADL and CALA Homes, worked with Barton Willmore LLP on behalf of Adrian Irving (Trustee) and Redington Capital, on the joint promotion of Green Belt land that lies to the west of Chiswell Green, Hertfordshire ("the Site") as a Broad Location for Development.
- 4 The main issue identified by the Inspector to be examined in relation to Matter 7 is: Whether the detailed policy for each broad location for development is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. In relation to the West of Chiswell Green Broad Location, 7 specific questions are posed, responses to which, are provided below.

### **West of Chiswell Green S6 (x) (An urban extension of Chiswell Green)**

#### **Questions:**

#### **Q.1 Is the site suitable for housing and are there any specific constraints or requirements associated with it, or the need for mitigation measures?**

- 5 The promoters strongly support St Albans District Council (SACDC)'s development strategy, and reiterate their commitment to seeing the site developed as early as possible during the Plan period. Our Regulation 19 representations highlighted that delivery could commence as early as 2020/21 and be completed in 2024/25. The promoters have already entered into discussions with the Council over the preparation of a masterplan, and look forward to developing the masterplan for the site in collaboration with SACDC, the local community and other stakeholders.

- 6 In relation to the site's suitability for housing, we would highlight the findings of the 'Green Belt Review Sites & Boundaries Study' (February 2014) prepared by Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) on behalf of SACDC (Examination Document: GB 001). It provided a detailed and robust assessment of eight strategic sub-areas in the District that were considered to contribute the least towards the five Green Belt purposes.
- 7 It concluded that Sub-Area S8 is the most suitable site for Green Belt release; being ranked 1<sup>st</sup> out of the 8 sites assessed. In reaching this conclusion, the review establishes in para 10.5.4 that:

**'This area of land does not significantly contribute towards any of the five Green Belt purposes. It makes a partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting and maintaining the existing settlement pattern.'**

- 8 It confirmed that the site is well enclosed by surrounding land form and vegetation. Furthermore, it noted that there are no landscape, ecological or cultural heritage designations, and visual impacts would be localised.
- 9 A comprehensive suite of technical documents have been prepared by an expert consultant team in order to demonstrate that West of Chiswell Green Broad Location is free from constraint and is available, suitable and deliverable. Key findings of these detailed assessments are highlighted below, together with their relevant appendix numbers within our Regulation 19 representations.

### Transport

- 10 The Transport Assessment (TA) and Addendum produced by Glanville Consultants (Appendices 5 and 6) describes how the road layout shown on the Illustrative Design Concept (Appendix 4) seeks to distribute traffic as evenly as possible between four access points onto the surrounding highway network. Glanville has considered the capacity of all of the junction points with Watford Road in the Transport Assessment and determined that all have significant spare capacity apart from the Watford Road / Chiswell Green Lane double mini-

roundabout, where there are existing capacity issues. In this regard, the development of the Site presents an opportunity to secure improvements to this junction to mitigate the effects of the development and deliver improvements that will also benefit the wider community.

### **Flood Risk**

- 11 The Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 7) identifies that the site is located within Flood Zone 1. It proposes a surface water drainage strategy that utilises sustainable surface water drainage strategy techniques, including the use of porous paving to facilitate the discharge of surface water by infiltration to the underlying soil strata and attenuation features providing storage for the 1 in 100 + 30% climate change storm event. As such, discharge volumes from the Site will not increase as a result of the proposed development for all storm durations up to and including this event. This evidence was used to inform the Illustrative Design Concept (Appendix 4) and the updated Chiswell Green Concept Plan (see the Annex to this Written Statement).

### **Utilities and Drainage**

- 12 The Utilities and Foul Water Drainage Assessment (Appendix 8) established that existing gas, electricity, potable water, telecommunications and foul water infrastructure all exist in the vicinity of the Site. Given the size and prevalence of existing infrastructure in the vicinity of the Site, it is anticipated that there will be no problems with provision of new supplies to the Site.

### **Ecology**

- 13 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Appendix 9) prepared in January 2016 (and updated in October 2018). It identifies little of ecological note. There is some potential for bats to be present and a low likelihood of reptiles using the Site. Mitigation for bats, reptiles and nesting birds (if present) is possible, and could include the erection of bird and bat boxes and the provision of informal open space, kept rough. Updated ecological assessments will be carried out ahead of any formal planning application.

## Healthcare

- 14 The Healthcare Assessment (Appendix 10) identifies that there is surplus capacity to accommodate an additional 2,918 patients at the Midway Surgery, which is more than sufficient to absorb new residents from the proposed allocation. Assuming an average household size of 2.5 people per household applied to the circa 370 units proposed, the development could give rise to an additional 925 patients. However, not all of the residents will be new to the area, and many will continue to utilise their existing GP services.
- 15 The Healthcare Assessment found that the area is well provided with dental treatment facilities and a telephone survey, conducted in October 2018, established that all dental practices identified are accepting new patients on a private basis (a number of whom are also accepting new fee exempt (NHS) patients). Noting the above findings, we refer to the overarching representations prepared by Barton Willmore LLP and specifically the representation on Policy L17 (Infrastructure). This questions the soundness of the requirement of the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule (IDS) for the site to deliver 87sqm of health floorspace on the site. Aside from such a sized facility being impractically small to accommodate a typical GP surgery, the Healthcare Assessment demonstrates that such provision is not necessary in view of existing healthcare capacity in the area.

## Landscape

- 16 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (Appendix 11) (LVA) identifies that that views of the Site from the surrounding area are largely restricted due to the presence of adjoining residential development to the east and south-east, and Butterfly World to the west, with rising landform to the west, north and north east which, along with surrounding woodlands and hedgerows, assist in enclosing the land.
- 17 The LVA supports the assessment of the 'Green Belt Review'<sup>8</sup> that the site makes limited or no contribution to the five purposes of Green Belt, largely as a result of its urban fringe location between the settlement edge of Chiswell Green and Butterfly World. It concludes that residential development would assimilate well into the existing western edge of Chiswell Green, and new woodland and hedgerow planting would help integrate the built structures within the local

landscape character. In addition, a new rational, robust and defensible Green Belt boundary would be created along the western edge of Chiswell Green.

### **Contamination**

- 18** The Geo-Environmental Desk Study Report (Appendix 12) produced relates to the northern part of the Site, and concludes that the study site is considered overall at being at low risk from contamination. This corresponds with the conclusion reached by SACDC, in its own evaluation, that no contaminated land has been identified across the whole Site.

### **Trees**

- 19** The Arboricultural Constraints Summary (Appendix 13) Constraints Summary comprises of a survey of the existing trees on the northern part of the Site. The Tree Constraints identifies the quality of existing trees, whether they should be retained or removed and also conveys the root protection areas. In addition the assessment identifies 3 separate groups of Tree Preservation Orders which are located along the western boundary of the study site. These are also acknowledged by SACDC in its own evaluation of the whole Site, which confirms that trees do not represent a constraint to development, since they can be retained and enhanced as features in the development area.

### **Archaeology**

- 20** The Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Appendix 14) also relates to the northern part of the Site and establishes that there are no designated archaeological heritage assets within or in close proximity to the study site. This reflects the conclusion reached by SACDC, in its own evaluation of the whole Site, that there will be no adverse effects on heritage assets and the Site has no archaeological potential. The Site does not contain any listed buildings and is not subject to a conservation area designation.
- 21** Consequently, the proposed West of Chiswell Green allocation is located in a highly suitable and unconstrained location on the edge of a very sustainable large village settlement and its development will not result in any significant harm to the Green Belt.

**Q.2 What evidence is there to demonstrate that the broad location is capable of delivering 365 dwellings?**

- 22** Our Regulation 19 representations contained an Illustrative Design Brochure (Appendix 4) which was prepared for the Site to illustrate the capability of the emerging development proposals to deliver circa 365 dwellings; a 2 form entry primary school which is capable of accommodating a flexibly designed dual-use community facility; recreation and open space provision. The Illustrative Design Brochure demonstrates that a minimum of 365 dwellings can be delivered at an average net density in excess of 40dph. This has been further supplemented by a revised Concept Plan that has very recently been prepared (see Annex), which demonstrates that the range of policy requirements sought in respect of the proposed allocation are fully capable of being accommodated on the site.
- 23** The site layout has been produced to fully accord with the various policy requirements set out in the emerging Local Plan.

**Q.3 Should the specific location for the primary school within the site be identified?**

- 24** Preliminary studies have been undertaken to demonstrate that a 2FE primary school can be successfully accommodated on the site and linked into existing infrastructure.
- 25** Whilst a 2-hectare serviced site for a 2FE primary school, including early years provision and associated playing field, has been identified towards the northeast corner of the site, further consideration will need to be given to the appropriate siting of the school through the masterplan process. We consider that it would be both unwise and overly restrictive to specify a specific site for the school now, which might subsequently prove to be neither the most suitable nor appropriate location to meet future education needs in the area given that educational requirements are often subject to significant change and need to be able to adapt to changing circumstances (including new educational demand and provision arising in the wider locality of the local area). We reaffirm the site promoter's commitment to the masterplanning process and working with the District Council and County Council to ensure that a suitable location for the school is identified.



- 26 In providing a serviced site for the school any financial contributions provided would be proportionate to that need served by the development and account for the cost of providing the land for the school site. Additional education related financial contributions to deliver the school will be sought from other developments in the local area.

**Q.4 .What further infrastructure work needs to be undertaken, and is this appropriate to be left to the masterplanning stage?**

- 27 Given that the infrastructure work associated with the proposed allocation is considered to be of a relatively small-scale only, it is indeed considered appropriate for this particular aspect to be addressed at the masterplanning stage.
- 28 Our response to Q.1 highlights that a range of technical studies have been undertaken to demonstrate that local infrastructure has the capacity to accommodate the development and a sound basis to allocate the site. These studies will be updated, refined and developed through the masterplanning process and into a planning application. Accordingly, the main infrastructure issues relevant to the site have been already tested and have informed the Council's choice in selecting this site as a broad location.

**Q.5 Should the policy refer specifically to the provision of sports facilities?**

- 29 The Illustrative Design proposals make provision of land to accommodate a flexibly designed community facility, it is intended that further discussions over potential uses will take place as part of the collaborative masterplanning exercise with the local community and other stakeholders. This would include delivering a range of recreational facilities to encourage play and physical activity that will support the healthy towns and cities agenda. By setting aside 40% of the site area as non-developable land<sup>1</sup>, this will ensure there is adequate opportunity for a variety of forms of recreational facilities, including sports facilities to be included. There is clearly an opportunity to explore the dual use of the school playing fields for sports purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Comprises public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping*

- 30** Recreation space and public open space will be delivered and sustainably managed in accordance with Policy L28 of the Local Plan Publication Draft. Table 1 of this Policy requires approximately 3.4 hectares of open space to be provided, and this can be achieved. The precise use of recreation space will be discussed further through the collaborative masterplanning exercise. We note that the priority provision for West of Chiswell Green (as set out in Policy L28) is strategic play, teenage areas, and children's play areas. It is also recognised that the new school playing fields will be treated as designated Local Green Space (Policy L21).
- 31** Whilst we have no objection to the policy making a general reference to the provision of sports facilities, we would be concerned if it was over-specific. We consider that the masterplan route is the appropriate means to establish the most appropriate location and mix of recreational and sporting provision facilities.

**Q.6 Has consideration been given to air quality and any mitigation measures?**

- 32** The proposed development is not anticipated to give rise to any specific concerns about air quality. Of the three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) located within St Albans District, the nearest, AQMA No. 7 is located 2.5 km away at Frogmore and Colney Street in the vicinity of the M25.
- 33** It should also be noted that four potential access points have been identified from Chiswell Green Lane to the north and the residential estate roads (Forge End and Long Fallow) to the east. All of these roads lead to the main arterial route through Chiswell Green, the Watford Road (B4630).
- 34** The TA identifies that the Site is accessible by a range of transport modes and is in a sustainable location with good access to a wide range of local facilities, amenities and employment opportunities. The effect of the development can be further reduced through the adoption of an effective Travel Plan.
- 35** The TA Addendum (Appendix 6) presents the findings of a recent review of the Transport Assessment to establish whether there are any material changes which have taken place since it was prepared in 2016 that would alter its conclusions. It finds that there have not been any material changes, and the conclusions of the original TA remain valid. Further consideration is also given in the note to the

accessibility of local railway stations from the site, and it is demonstrated that Part Street, How Wood and St Albans City Station are all within a reasonable walking and cycling distance. Potential improvements to these routes are identified.

- 36 Consequently, suitable regard has been had to air quality, and measures identified that will insure that impacts from the development of the proposed allocation site are minimised and dispersed. Should Air Quality need to be addressed further, this should be done at the planning application stage, but there is no current evidence to suggest that the allocation should not go forwards from an air quality point of view.

**Q.7 How have heritage assets been considered and is a Heritage Impact Assessment required?**

- 37 The CgMs Archaeological Desk Based Assessment submitted with our Regulation 19 representations (Appendix 14) established that there are no designated archaeological heritage assets within or in close proximity to the study site, and for those in the wider area that their setting or significance will not be impacted by the development of the site. Accordingly, a general Heritage Impact Assessment was not prepared that considered the wider impacts of the proposed allocation, principally as there are limited heritage assets in the locality so any impacts, if any, would be limited and would be likely to create no harm.
- 38 The Archaeological Assessment established that a theoretical potential exists for Roman activity within the study site along with a localised potential for Post-Medieval associated with Chiswell Green Farm. It concluded that on balance, should archaeological deposits be present, they are anticipated to be of local significance. These potential undesigned heritage assets are not considered to be of sufficient significance to preclude development.
- 39 The assessment found that to better understand the potential impact of the proposals and significance of any archaeology at the site, it was anticipated that the Local Authority Archaeological Advisor will require additional archaeological investigation to test the presence/absence of archaeological remains and to inform on any planning application submitted. Once the concept of development at the site had been established it is considered that any impacts of the proposed development can be successfully mitigated against. The mitigation is likely to take the form of preservation in-situ, within areas of open space or undeveloped land,



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or preservation by record, where detailed archaeological excavation and reporting is undertaken prior to development taking place.

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**PC/1298**

**12 December 2019**



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# **Annex**

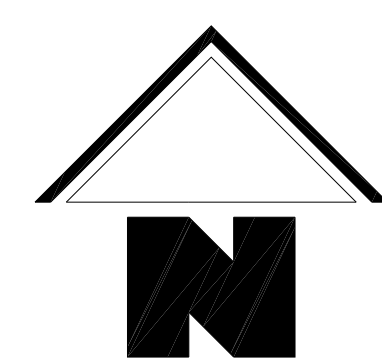






Legend

- North Parcel
- South Parcel
- School Parcel
- Infrastructure
- Active Frontage
- Rear Gardens
- Public Open Space
- Parking Court
- Vehicular / Pedestrian Access
- Possible Future Access
- Existing Trees
- Proposed Structural Tree Planting
- Landmark Building
- Key Vista Stops
- "The Square"
- LEAP
- Strategic Green Space
- Pedestrian / Cycle Link

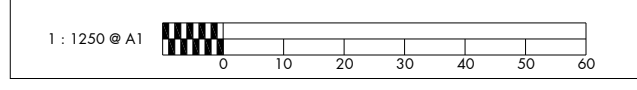


REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION

CALA GROUP LIMITED  
Riverside House, Holspur Lane, Woodburn Green  
High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 2DZ  
Tel: 01628 536200 Fax: 01628 536201  
DK: 123410 Woodburn Green Email: info@cala.co.uk

Chiswell Green, St.Albans

Concept Plan



Scale	1:1250@A1	Dwg No.	Concept - 02
Date	10.04.19	Rev	A
Drawn	MJ		











**planning associates**

Chells Manor, Chells Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 7AA  
e-mail [info@jbplanning.com](mailto:info@jbplanning.com) url [www.jbplanning.com](http://www.jbplanning.com)  
tel 01438 312130 fax 01438 312131