



NORTH HEMEL HEMPSTEAD BROAD LOCATION: STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO INSPECTOR'S MATTERS, ISSUES & QUESTIONS

MATTER 7 (S6 (IV))

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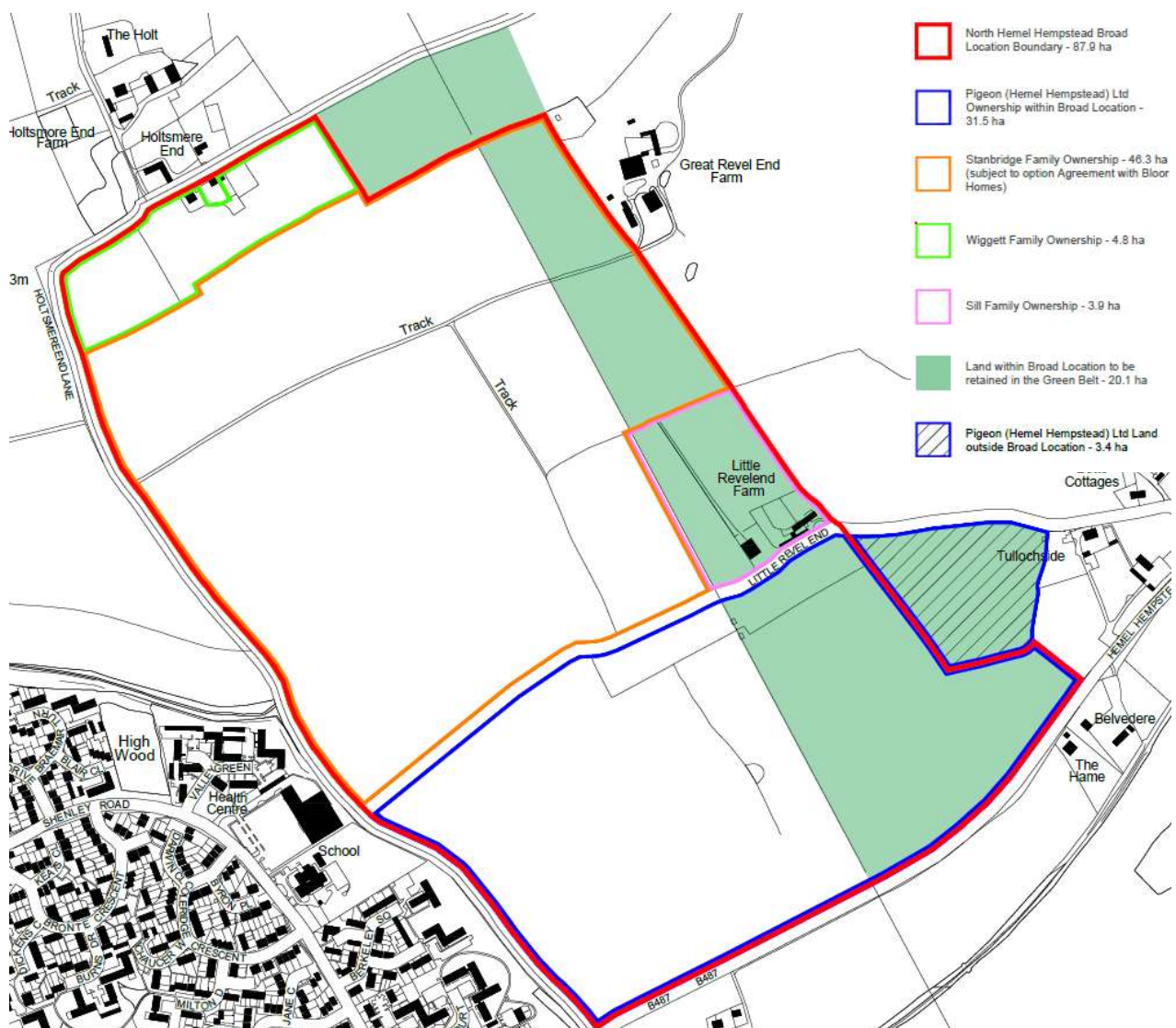
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement is submitted on behalf of Pigeon Investment Management Ltd on behalf of Pigeon Hemel Hempstead Ltd (Pigeon) in response to the Inspectors' Matters, Issues and Questions for the St Albans City & District Council (SADC) Local Plan Examination.
- 1.2 Pigeon Hemel Hempstead Ltd is the freehold landowner of the southern part of the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location site, as identified in the St Albans Publication Draft Local Plan (Policy S6 iv), and as shown in Figure 1. This Statement follows on from previous representations, which were submitted by the former landowners throughout the plan-making process (Local Plan Representor reference no. 1157883).
- 1.3 Pigeon Hemel Hempstead Ltd is promoting the whole Broad Location for development, working in conjunction with neighbouring landowners, both within the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location and the surrounding Broad Location's. This Statement assists with providing information on the deliverability of the site in response to the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions.

Figure 1: Site Plan of North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location



2 Matter 7 (S6 (iv)) – North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location

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

- 2.1 Yes, the site is suitable for housing and the limited number of constraints can be mitigated through good design. SADC's Sustainability Assessment (SA) examined the site against 20 objectives and concluded that for 11 of these it would be "sustainable" or "very sustainable"¹. These included:
- greenhouse gas emissions (split conclusion – see below);
 - air quality (split conclusion – see below);
 - resource efficiency;
 - health;
 - sustainable locations;
 - equality and social inclusion;
 - good quality housing;
 - community identity and participation;
 - sustainable prosperity and growth;
 - fairer access to jobs and services; and
 - revitalise town centres.
- 2.2 There was uncertainty over the potential impact upon the historic environment, with regard to nearby listed buildings, and over health, with regard to oil and gas pipelines, electricity transmission lines and public rights of way. However, there is clear potential to mitigate the impact upon these matters through good design. For example, impact upon listed buildings, pipelines and transmission lines can be limited through the use of green infrastructure rather than built development in their vicinity. The impact upon public rights of way can be mitigated through incorporating them into the masterplan and through good levels of permeability in the masterplan in general.
- 2.3 The SA identified minor adverse impacts regarding six objectives: biodiversity, soils, greenhouse gas emissions, air quality, use of brownfield sites and landscape/townscape. Two of these – greenhouse gas emissions and air quality – were split conclusions, with the report noting that both sustainable and unsustainable outcomes were possible, with the latter potentially able to be mitigated. For both matters, the proximity to employment opportunities and services at Woodhall Farm were considered

¹ Sustainability Appraisal Report September 2018, Appendix F

beneficial in reducing the need to travel, but the distance from the nearest railway stations might have the opposite effect. This, however, could be addressed through improvements in public transport.

- 2.4 On biodiversity and landscape/townscape, Pigeon has commissioned a comprehensive package of technical studies, including a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Landscape and Visual Appraisal to assess the development of the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location. The assessments conclude that the impacts are not significant and can be mitigated.
- 2.5 Neutral conclusions were reached with regard to four objectives: water quality/resources, flood risk, climate change and crime/fear of crime. Significantly, the assessment did not reach a “very unsustainable” conclusion on any matter.
- 2.6 Therefore, the site scored well on the sustainability assessment compared to other sites assessed. It has also been identified as a site suitable for release from the Green Belt, with the SA noting that the gap between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead is 2.1km wide and a minor reduction through development at North Hemel Hempstead is unlikely to compromise the separation of those settlements.
- 2.7 Development at North Hemel Hempstead also accords with the spatial strategy in the Local Plan 2020-2036 Publication Draft, Policy S1. Briefly, this is to prioritise development at the larger urban centres, including the Category 1 centre of Hemel Hempstead. This accords with paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that,

“The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities.”
- 2.8 In addition to the local authority-led assessment work described above, Pigeon has commissioned a range of surveys to identify constraints upon development of the land and this information has informed the production of a draft masterplan. Appended to this statement is a Vision and Delivery Statement (Appendix 1) that provides this information in detail. It identifies relatively few constraints to development, noting that existing trees, woodland belts and hedgerows screen the site and that these can be integrated into the development as green infrastructure. Public rights of way can be retained, and provision of access and services is straightforward. Existing pipelines and powerlines can be retained in situ and incorporated into the masterplan, with green infrastructure used to create buffer zones around these where necessary. Section 5 of the Vision and Delivery Statement includes a Considerations Plan that identifies the constraints on the land.
- 2.9 The use of this site for housing development is therefore aligned with the objectives of the SA, the emerging spatial strategy for the district and the NPPF. Pigeon’s own assessment work has identified no constraints that might prevent development of the scale envisaged. Those constraints that do exist can be mitigated through good design. The site is therefore suitable for housing.

2. What evidence is there to demonstrate that the proposed broad location is capable of delivering 1,500 dwellings? (1000 of which are beyond the plan period).

- 2.10 The Vision and Delivery Statement includes initial masterplanning work that shows that, even accounting for the constraints that exist, the delivery of a minimum of 1,500 homes is achievable within the Broad Location. The masterplanning work also demonstrates that the Broad Location can deliver

the other policy requirements of Policy S6(iv) including at least one care home, a 3-Form Entry Primary School and pre-school, a Supporting Local Centre, a Country Park and transport and other supporting infrastructure.

- 2.11 Regarding the timing of delivery, we refer you to our Statement on Matter 5 (Housing) where we provide evidence that the stepped trajectory is inappropriate and unnecessary in itself but also unnecessary in relation to this Broad Location as the site has relatively few constraints and can be delivered earlier than the trajectory currently suggests. The Vision and Delivery Statement (at Appendix 1 of this Statement) envisages first housing completions occurring in 2026/27.

3. What arrangements have been made for joint working between the Council and Dacorum Borough Council to deliver the proposed broad location

- 2.12 A joint bid for Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) between Dacorum Borough Council, Herefordshire County Council, Herts Local Enterprise Partnership and St Alban's City & District Council, with support from Homes England and the Crown Estate, was made in November 2018 and was successful in receiving official government Garden Community status and funding in March 2019.
- 2.13 This joint-working has continued and a Strategic Memorandum of Understanding between SADC, Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council has been agreed and approved by Members of all three authorities and sets out the approach to be taken towards the masterplanning of the Hemel Garden Communities sites. All three authorities have also created the HGC Board and Steering Group to co-ordinate a strategic cross-boundary approach to deliver the Hemel Garden Communities, which includes the Broad Locations to the east of Hemel Hempstead.
- 2.14 As demonstrated through the Statement of Common Ground between Pigeon and SADC and the separate Statement of Common Ground between Pigeon, Bloor Homes (who are in advanced negotiations with the landowners of the northern part of the North Hemel Hempstead Site and hope to conclude an agreement in early 2020) and The Crown Estate, Pigeon is liaising closely with both authorities and other land owners and promoters to deliver the Broad Location.

4. Should the policy refer specifically to the provision of sports facilities?

- 2.15 No. Pigeon consider that it is not necessary or appropriate for Policy S6(iv) to refer specifically to the provision of sports facilities. Policy S6(iv) already refers to the provision of recreation space and public open space which could encompass sports facilities. Moreover, Policy L22 of the Local Plan already states that the provision of new community, sport and leisure facilities should be located in town centres, district centres or local centres and within Broad Locations.
- 2.16 Any development at North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location will require the preparation of a masterplan to be led by SADC in partnership with Dacorum Borough Council, local communities, landowners and other stakeholders. This will provide the opportunity to assess local requirements in more detail and the local need for sports facilities will be considered through this process and any subsequent planning application. Any approved planning application will include a signed S106 planning agreement, which is legally binding, will state exactly what infrastructure, including sports facilities, will be delivered in a timely manner. This is in addition to any planning conditions that will need to be satisfied. Therefore, no further prescription to the provision of sports facilities in Policy S6(iv) is necessary.

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

- 2.17 Policy S6(iv) requires the masterplan for the Broad Locations to be led by the Council in collaboration with Dacorum Borough Council, local communities, landowners and other stakeholders. Pigeon considers it to be entirely appropriate for detailed infrastructure requirements to be assessed at the master planning stage based on the more detailed assessment work and in collaboration with these stakeholders, as required by Policy S6(iv).
- 2.18 Pigeon has already commissioned a comprehensive package of technical studies to identify the infrastructure required to deliver the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location as part of the preparation of the draft masterplan, including a Utilities Report and a Transport Position Statement. These technical studies are appended to this Statement at Appendix 9 and 10 respectively.
- 2.19 Both the Transport Position Statement and the Utilities Report demonstrate that the site is deliverable and Pigeon are confident that the required infrastructure that has been identified can be delivered at the masterplanning stage. As the draft masterplan progresses, Pigeon will continue to collaborate with the stakeholders to further develop the infrastructure requirements on road connections, drainage and utilities as required by Policy S6(iv).

6. What are the timescales and funding sources for the necessary improvements to junction 8 of the M1?

- 2.20 The improvements to Junction 8 and associated improvement works to the Breakspear Road roundabout (SC1 and SC2b) would be implemented in stages in accordance with the measures outlined in the Maylands Growth Corridor Prospectus to facilitate the planned growth at East Hemel Hempstead. It is understood that initial works to the Breakspear Road roundabout would be implemented by The Crown Estate supported by potential LEP funding and with the main elements of the scheme to be implemented by Highways England and funded through various sources including Department for Transport funding. Whilst funding has yet to be confirmed, Highways England have been drawing up more detailed plans ahead of its potential inclusion in RIS 2 funding announcement next year with delivery by 2031 at the latest.

7. Is the proposed site capacity appropriate taking account of constraints including the provision of infrastructure including the buffer zones and mitigations to address the Buncefield Oil Depot and pipelines? Has the Health and Safety Executive been consulted?

- 2.21 Yes, the proposed site capacity is appropriate.
- 2.22 The North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location does not fall within the consultation zones for the Buncefield Oil Depot, as shown on the Health and Safety Executive's Planning Advice Web App, and therefore is not considered a constraint on the development of this Broad Location.
- 2.23 Pigeon commissioned a utilities report to map the location of the British Pipeline Agency (BPA) fuel pipeline and to inform the development of the draft masterplan, as shown within the appended Utilities Statement (Appendix 9). This report identified that the pipeline crosses the site diagonally from north-west to south-east. The draft masterplan has taken the pipeline's location into consideration by incorporating a 6m buffer of the pipeline, in accordance with BPA guidance.
- 2.24 Overall, the draft masterplan demonstrates that the site can deliver all policy requirements of Policy S6(iv), including the 1,500 homes and necessary infrastructure.

8. Have the implications of the site's location in relation to the Luton Airport flight path been considered?

- 2.25 The Broad Location lies in the Luton Airport flight path and the implications of this have been considered when developing the draft masterplan.
- 2.26 Pigeon has reviewed Luton Airport's noise monitoring data, including the noise contours, published in the Luton AMR (2018) and Luton's Quarterly Monitoring Report (Quarter 2 2019), and as shown within the appended Vision and Delivery Statement (Appendix 1). It is considered that these demonstrate that the Luton Airport flight path will not be a constraint on the development of the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location.

9. Should the specific location for the primary school within the site be identified?

- 2.27 No. There is no need for further prescription in the Local Plan.
- 2.28 Pigeon consider that it is not necessary or appropriate for Policy S6(iv) to specify the location for the primary school within this Broad Location at this early allocation stage.
- 2.29 Point 1 of Policy S6(iv) requires masterplans for the Broad Locations to be prepared. The policy states that this should be led by the Council in collaboration with Dacorum Borough Council, local communities, landowners and other stakeholders. Therefore, the location for the primary school will be decided through this collaborative process and will be underpinned by an evidence base containing comprehensive technical studies and design principles generated to inform the location of the primary school.

10. How have heritage assets been considered and is a Heritage Impact Assessment required?

- 2.30 SADC prepared the SA Working Note (May 2018), which is Appendix E12 of the SA (2018), and sets out SADC's consideration of heritage assets within proximity to the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location. SADC noted that the Broad Location is not subject to any significant heritage or archaeological constraints.
- 2.31 Pigeon has commissioned a Desk Based Heritage Assessment for the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location. This assessment can be found at Appendix 7 of this Statement.
- 2.32 The assessment has been prepared following Historic England's guidance² and assesses the effect of the development of the North Hemel Hempstead Broad Location on designated heritage assets, non-designated heritage assets, archaeology and the historic landscape.
- 2.33 The assessment concludes that, subject to appropriate design, there are likely to be no significant impacts on the historic environment that should preclude the allocation of the site within the Local Plan.

11. What is the justification for the 3% self-build figure?

- 2.34 SADC state that the justification for the 3% self-build figure at Broad Locations is based on the number of people on the Self Build Register. Whilst this is acknowledged, SADC do not propose any additional approaches to deliver self-build housing in their Local Plan. Whilst Pigeon support the inclusion of a proportion of self-build housing within the Broad Locations, it is considered that alternative delivery

² Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes (2015a, 2015b, 2017).

mechanisms should also be secured within the Plan to more effectively respond to local demand and in accordance with good practice.

2.35 The Right to Build Task Force undertook some analysis of all Local Plans across England (published October 2019³). The research identified that good practice was for a local plan to adopt a 'package approach' of policies as this will help to respond to local demand and accords with paragraph 61 of the NPPF which states that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be reflected in planning policies. A package could include some or all of the following:

- allocations of small and large sites suitable for Custom and Self Build housing;
- policies that included a percentage of serviced plots on larger housing sites;
- the identification of specific locations suitable for Custom and Self Build housing (including exception sites);
- the use of public land to bring forward serviced plots for people who want to build or commission their own homes; and
- promoting Custom and Self Build as a route to affordable housing.

2.36 In accordance with good practice, SADC should therefore propose a package of measures to deliver self build housing. With this approach, the 3% requirement on Broad Locations should be reduced.

³ <https://nacsba.org.uk/news/local-authority-policy-provision/> - Published 25 October 2019