

## **WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**

Statement in response to Matter 7d: Proposed housing site allocations – Growth Villages and Hockley Heath prepared by Amec Foster Wheeler (AmecFW) on behalf of the King Henry VIII Endowed Trust (Warwick) in relation to their land interests at Hampton Magna.

### **MATTER 7d: PROPOSED HOUSING SITE ALLOCATIONS – GROWTH VILLAGES AND HOCKLEY HEATH**

With specific regard to our client's land interests at Hampton Magna (Site H27), we respond to each question in turn below.

#### **1) What is the current planning status of the site?**

Land south of Arras Boulevard (Site H27) is in the freehold ownership of the King Henry VIII Endowed Trust (the Trust) and, although the site is located immediately adjacent to Hampton Magna, it presently lies outside the 'village envelope' (settlement boundary) as defined in the adopted Warwick District Local Plan, Policy RAP1. The site's current planning status is Green Belt; the Warwickshire Green Belt technically 'washes over' the whole settlement with the extent of the Green Belt defined on the Policies Map.

In order to accommodate limited growth at Hampton Magna, in the Proposed Modifications version of the Publication Draft Local Plan it is proposed that a new village boundary is established and that Hampton Magna is removed (inset) from the Green Belt. The new village boundary extends to include Site H27, which is allocated for 130 houses and associated infrastructure and uses under draft policy DS11-Allocated Housing Sites.

#### **2) How does it fit within the overall spatial strategy?**

As has been highlighted by the District Council, focusing rural housing development in the District's most sustainable village locations, provides an opportunity to assist in re-balancing the local housing markets in villages such as Hampton Magna and to provide much needed affordable housing and market homes for local residents. Furthermore, much of the District's future housing supply is dependent on delivery coming forward on major urban extension sites which, notoriously take longer to build-out due to major upfront infrastructure requirements to first 'un-lock' the sites. Within this context, proposed housing allocations such as that at Site H27 (Hampton Magna) are able to not only offer wider choice in the local housing market but, importantly, can also be brought forward in a timely way to help maintain a deliverable supply of housing land.

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**3) In addition to housing provision, are there other benefits that the proposed development would bring?**

By focusing development at Hampton Magna and on the Trust's site we consider that, in addition to housing provision, a number of important opportunities can be realised for the village and the wider Parish. In summary, key additional opportunities and benefits are presented in the following table:

Key Opportunity/ Benefit	Summary
Help support and sustain local services, facilities and businesses.	<p>We are aware that over recent years the number of shops in the village has declined. It is our considered view that in these challenging economic times other local services could be lost unless there is new residential development. New housing will bring more people and, through increased patronage, will help maintain the viability of local community facilities and services, including :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shops</li> <li>• Doctors surgery</li> <li>• Public House</li> </ul> <p>It is worth noting that the café in the village is supported by the parish church of St Michael's, which is itself a beneficiary of charitable donations made by The King Henry VIII Endowed Trust (approx £1.9 million over the last 20 years).</p>
Keep community buildings in good order and improve overall offer	<p>As part of planned new development, and subject to viability considerations, the opportunity exists for s106 (or CIL) monies to be collected to provide for and/or help maintain and improve local community infrastructure, which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New sport and recreational facilities</li> <li>• Clubhouse/ pavilion</li> <li>• Informal public open space</li> <li>• Allotments.</li> </ul>
Retain and enhance existing bus services	<p>The success and viability of rural bus services very much depends on levels of patronage. New development at Hampton Magna will bring more demand for such services and additional revenues.</p>

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<b>Key Opportunity/ Benefit</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Budbrooke School oversubscribed	Budbrooke Primary School is currently operating as a 1.5 FE school, with different age groups being taught in joint classes. The Local Education Authority, the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors have indicated that they are keen to see the school expand to a 2FE school, and believe that this can best be achieved if new housing development (of a suitable scale) is allowed to take place in the village. Furthermore, if over time a greater proportion of pupils at the school are from the village this would result in a reduction in local traffic, as children who attend from further afield are predominantly dropped off /picked up by car.
Road traffic and safety	As part of planned new development the opportunity exists to secure, as appropriate, improvements to the local highway network. Improvements which could include traffic calming measures on Old Budbrooke Road to help control traffic speeds through the village, plus improvements to pedestrian and cycle path infrastructure e.g. cycle route to Warwick Parkway Station, Aylesford School and 6th Form College. Opportunities also exist to improve access to Budbrooke Primary School by providing an alternative /secondary access via our client's site to the school.

By allocating this site for housing at Hampton Magna we consider that, in accordance with Para 55 of the NPPF, the District Council is taking a proactive step to help ensure rural services are maintained and the village remains a vibrant place to live for all sections of the community, young and old.

**4) What are the potential adverse impacts of developing the site? How could they be mitigated?**

At this time, there are no known potential adverse impacts of developing Site H27 that cannot be mitigated for. The following table highlights some potential adverse impacts of development and mitigation.

<b>Potential Adverse Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Amenity of local residents	<p>The number of potential visual receptors is considered relatively low due to a combination of factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• neighbouring residential properties being one storey and/or having their gable end orientated towards the site;</li> <li>• part of the site being set back from existing housing by intervening playing fields and hedgerow planting; and</li> <li>• local topography means that boundary screen planting will be very effective in screening the proposed development.</li> </ul>

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Potential Adverse Impact	Mitigation
Landscape and visual	Structural landscaping/ screen planting can be provided so that the visual impact of development at this location does not have an adverse impact on the wider landscape.
Traffic	The development of 130 dwellings on site H27 will lead to increased local vehicular trips which will have an impact on the local highway network. The extent of any adverse impact this might have is not known at this time, and will be assessed through a Transport Assessment prepared in support of a future planning application. However, it is considered that any identified adverse impact could be addressed through a package of measures including off-site financial contribution towards highway/ junction improvements. Furthermore, as noted under Q3, if over time a greater proportion of pupils at the school are from the village this would result in a reduction vehicular traffic currently associated with the morning and afternoon 'school run'.
Existing utilities	There is a 225mm diameter foul sewer running SW to NE through the site; this pipe is between 2.5m and 3.5m deep underground. As part of the site's development the sewer can be diverted to run within the roadway and this has been factored into a concept masterplan which illustrates how the site could be developed for up to 130 dwellings (at an average of 30 dph). It is possible that the sewer would need to be upgraded in any event to accommodate the additional loadings that will arise as a result of the proposed development at Hampton Magna.
Biodiversity	Although the majority of the site to be developed comprises arable land with limited biodiversity, the site's trees provide a foraging resource for bats, as do its hedgerows, field margins and marshy grassland. Retention and enhancement of these habitats has therefore been factored into development options for the site. An opportunity also exists to enhance the non-statutory Local Eco Site located immediately adjacent to the site's southern boundary and also in the ownership of the Trust.

**5) Is the scale of development proposed compatible with the capacity of the village to accommodate further growth in terms of its character and appearance, the level of services and existing infrastructure?**

Yes. The scale of development is considered to be compatible with the capacity of the village to accommodate further growth without it being detrimental to either its character or appearance. In fact we believe that the scale of development will have a positive impact on the village for if too few dwellings are provided for it is likely that insufficient funds will be available from the development to help address existing local concerns over infrastructure

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capacity and/or meet existing Parish Plan objectives, including improvement to existing services and facilities within and available to the village.

**6) What are the infrastructure requirements/costs and are there physical or other constraints to development? How would these be addressed?**

The infrastructure requirements associated with developing site (H27) and their costs are currently not known but are expected to be proportionate to the scale of development. With the exception of a foul sewer which crosses the site, there are no known constraints (physical or other) which might constrain development or undermine its financial viability.

**7) Is the site realistically viable and deliverable?**

The site is a greenfield site with no known constraints which would prevent its future development, and is in the sole ownership of the Trust who hold the freehold and are a willing landowner who want to see the site developed. The site is available and deliverable within the first 5 years of the Plan period.

**8) What is the expected timescale for development and is this realistic?**

Detailed baseline assessments of the Site have been undertaken by the Trust and used to inform initial concept masterplan proposals. This evidence will also be used to inform and support an outline planning application for the Site which, assuming the Council adopt the Local Plan March 2017, it is the Trust's intention to submit late Spring /early Summer in the same year.

Assuming outline planning permission is obtained, say October 2017, the Trust will sell the site on the open market to a housing developer by end of 2017. Based on past experience we would a build-out timescale broadly as follows:

- June /July 2018 - application(s) for reserved matters prepared and submitted by the housebuilder
- October 2018 – reserved matters approval
- March 2019 – construction starts on site
- December 2019 – first units completed
- June 2022 – site complete

The timetable above assumes one housebuilder and a construction rate of approximately 45 units per annum.

Although the Trust has not formally advertised the Site, market interest is strong.

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**9) What would be the effect of the proposal on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt?**

Of the five stated Green Belt purposes in the NPPF, we consider that three are applicable to the development context at Hampton Magna. Each of these purposes are reprovided below, together with our considered view on how well the Trust's site performs against each:

- checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

Proposed development on the Trust's landholding immediately to the south of the village performs well against this purpose, in that the important area of green belt between the village and Warwick would not be compromised.

- preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another

Unlike potential development sites to the north and east of the village, proposed development on the Trust's landholding immediately to the south of the village performs well against this stated purpose. In fact, development on the Trust's site would avoid both further ribbon development along the Old Budbrooke Road and the coalescence of the village with Warwick, whose outer urban limits are now defined by Warwick Parkway Station.

- helping safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Proposed development on the Trust's landholding immediately to the south of the village would represent a natural 'rounding-off' of the settlement, with well-defined field boundaries which can be strengthened by additional tree planting. Development at this location would therefore help safeguard the wider countryside from encroachment.

**10) What would be the effect on the openness of the Green Belt?**

Future development on Site H27 would represent a rounding off of Hampton Magna and, as such, would not cause encroachment into the countryside which otherwise might be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore, through the retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows, plus tree planting and other structured landscaping, it is considered that a 'soft' edge to the development can be achieved and therefore visually the development would not cause demonstrable harm to openness.

**11) Are there exceptional circumstances which justify altering the Green Belt? If so, what are they?**

The District Council's decision to review Green Belt boundaries is consistent with national planning policy guidance:

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- The NPPF at paragraphs 83-84 states that, once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in 'exceptional circumstances', through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period. Further, when reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development.
- To boost significantly the supply of housing, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Paragraph 47) requires local authorities, in preparing their local plans, to ensure that the full objectively assessed needs for housing are met as far as is consistent with policies set out in the Framework. Seeking to meet such needs is part of the soundness test of development plans being positively prepared (Paragraph 182).

According to the Warwick District Council, there is insufficient suitable and available sites outside of the Green Belt to meet a housing requirement of 16,766. The lack of suitable and available sites to meet the District's objectively assessed housing needs and a proportion of the City of Coventry's housing needs (as it is unable to accommodate its housing needs in full within the City boundary) provides the exceptional circumstances for a review of Green Belt boundaries. However before land can be released from the Green Belt for development it has to be shown that doing so would not be in conflict with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy nor the stated five purposes it serves (refer NPPF paragraphs 79 – 80). This has been achieved via the Warwick District Council's own review of Green Belt designated land and specifically of village green belt boundaries undertaken in 2013 to inform the Village Housing Options and Settlement Boundary Consultation (November 2013) plus the Green Belt and Green Field Review – Parcel Update (April 2014).

Importantly the District Council's decision to carry out this work is not only consistent with the NPPF but also with advice issued by Inspector's at a number of recent Local Plan Inquiries (e.g. Waverley, Stevenage and St Alban's) where local authorities had failed to undertake a Green Belt review to demonstrate how objectively assessed housing needs might be met. At these LPIs, the Inspector's in charge called on the local authorities to conduct a review so that they had a robust evidence base to, either demonstrate why development of potential sites in the Green Belt would be inconsistent with the policies of the Framework, or to establish where land in the Green Belt could be released for development and new boundaries established that would be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.

Based on our own experience of undertaking objective Green Belt appraisal work for other local authorities, we consider the approach adopted in the District Council's Green Belt study to be sound and the key findings robust.

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