

Warwick District Council Local Plan Examination

Written Statement

Oaklands Farm and AC Lloyd (Homes) Ltd.

Matter 7d: Proposed Housing Site Allocations,
Growth Villages

Omission Site: Oaklands Farm, Budbrooke

August 2016



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Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan

Written Statement produced by:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement is submitted to the Warwick District Local Plan Examination on behalf of Oaklands Farm/AC Lloyd (Homes) Ltd in respect of their land interest at Oaklands Farm in Budbrooke, Hatton Park. This site was put forward by Oaklands Farm/AC Lloyds as an additional housing site for inclusion in the Local Plan at Proposed Modification stage.
- 1.2. The proposed housing sites in the Growth Villages will be considered at the examination under Matter 7d. This includes a specific session dealing with the proposed housing sites in Hatton Park scheduled to take place on Wednesday 16 November 2016. Discussions with the programme officer have confirmed that in addition to the Local Plan allocations, omission sites (such as Oaklands Farm) will also be discussed at this session.
- 1.3. This statement addresses the questions raised by the Inspector in respect of the proposed housing sites, which will form the basis for discussions at the hearing session.

2. Planning Status of the Site

The site

- 2.1. The site at Oaklands Farm (see Appendix 1 for site location plan) lies within a wider hamlet of dwellings fronting Birmingham Road on the approach to Hatton Park.
- 2.2. The land is located in the Green Belt. However, it is a brownfield site which comprises a mix of residential and commercial uses including a caravan site, caravan repair workshop and storage, kennel/cattery and timber yard.
- 2.3. It is bounded by Birmingham Road to the north, agricultural fields to the east, the Grand Union Canal to the south and Ugly Bridge Road to the west with a Shell Petrol Filling Station beyond.
- 2.4. It lies in a highly accessible location with easy access to the services and facilities at Hatton Park and easy reach of Warwick Parkway Station, which is located less than one mile away to the south-east.

Planning History

- 2.5. The site has an extensive planning history relating to the various residential and commercial uses on the site. A brief summary is provided below:
 - Planning permission for the erection of a replacement kennel building (Ref. W/09/0246) was granted on 1 May 2009;
 - Outline planning permission for a replacement dwelling (Ref. W/10/0245) was granted on 13 April 2011;
 - Planning permission for the use of land for the importation and cutting of timber (Ref. W/10/1663) was granted on 3 May 2011;
 - Planning permission for the relocation of an existing stable building from the canal side to land alongside Birmingham Road (Ref. W/12/0768) was granted on 20 August 2012;
 - Reserved matters approval for the development of a replacement dwelling (Ref. W/14/0474) was granted on 28 May 2014.

Local Plan

- 2.6. Warwick District Council put part of the land at Oaklands Farm forward for consideration as a potential gypsy and traveller site. The site was identified as a preferred option in the March 2014 consultation document on Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations. It was selected as one of the preferred options given its previously developed nature and location close to an existing settlement and relatively small impact on the existing infrastructure. Warwick

District Council have not progressed the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation document.

- 2.7. In February 2016, the site was put forward jointly by the landowner (Oaklands Farm) and potential developer (AC Lloyds) for consideration in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. This was followed by a representation to the Local Plan Proposed Modifications document in April 2016 to promote the site as a suitable additional housing allocation.

3. Inspector's Matters and Issues

- 3.1. The Inspector has set out his key questions with regard to each matter to be discussed at the examination. With regard to the housing sites in the Growth Villages (Matter 7d), he has raised a number of questions regarding the suitability, deliverability and availability of sites and the potential impact on the Green Belt (where relevant). The Inspector's key questions are addressed below.

How does the site fit within the overall spatial strategy?

- 3.2. Strategic Policy DS4: Spatial Strategy sets out the principles that will guide the distribution of housing and employment allocations in the District. As the land at Oaklands Farm is currently located in the Green Belt, Policy DS4(g) is relevant. This states that:

"taking the national Green Belt policy in to account, sites that are currently in the green belt will only be allocated where exceptional circumstances can be justified. The following will be taken into account in considering exceptional circumstances:

- i) the availability of alternative suitable sites outside the Green Belt;*
- ii) the potential of the site to meet specific housing or employment needs that cannot be met elsewhere;*
- iii) the potential of the site to support regeneration within deprived areas; and*
- iv) the potential of the site to provide support to facilities and services in rural areas."*

- 3.3. The Village Profile and Housing Allocations document, which was updated in 2016, identifies Hatton Park as one of ten sustainable villages in the District that could support some housing growth.

- 3.4. Development in the village is, however, currently constrained by the fact that the whole of the settlement lies in the Green Belt. Suitable sites outside the Green Belt are not available and a decision therefore needs to be reached on which sites should be released from the Green Belt for housing development.

- 3.5. Warwick District Council has carried out a Green Belt and Green Field Review (November 2013) which includes an assessment of individual Green Belt parcels around the settlements of the District. The land at Oaklands Farm has been included as part of Land Parcel HP7, a large Green Belt parcel stretching from Ugly Bridge Road to the west to the built-up edge of Warwick to the east between Birmingham Road and the Grand Union Canal. Although an assessment of all the other Green Belt parcels around Hatton Park is included in the Green Belt and Green Field Review document, no

such a review has been included for land parcel HP7. It can therefore only be assumed that the Oaklands Farm site would be given the same assessment as the land immediately adjoining it to the west – land parcel HP2 – which was considered to be of low/medium value.

- 3.6. In addition to the Council's Green Belt Review, a Joint Green Belt Study, which covers Coventry and a number of Warwickshire authorities, was published in June 2015. The site has been considered as part of land parcel WA3, one of the mid-performing Green Belt parcels in the District. WA3 is a very large Green Belt parcel, which includes land to the north and south of the Grand Union Canal between Warwick and Hatton Park and land immediately to the north-west of Warwick. The Oaklands Farm site is located at the western edge of this Green Belt parcel adjacent to Hatton Park. The other Green Belt parcels around Hatton Park (HA1, HA2 and HA3) are also all considered to be mid-performing and score moderately well across all the Green Belt purposes or have a mixture of high and low scores across the five purposes.
- 3.7. Given that Hatton Park is one of the most sustainable villages in the District, it is considered that Warwick District Council's strategy to remove the built-up area of the settlement from the Green Belt and seek to focus some housing growth in the village is entirely appropriate and complies with the Local Plan's overall strategy as outlined at Policy DS4.
- 3.8. As outlined above, the findings of the two Green Belt studies do not provide a clear indication of which Green Belt parcel around Hatton Park might be more suitable for release from the Green Belt to accommodate housing growth. It is considered that the Oaklands Farm site provides a suitable site for housing, which due to its partially developed nature and easy access to both Hatton Park and Warwick makes it an ideal location for growth.
- 3.9. The site's accessibility to Warwick Parkway station and employment opportunities in Warwick and the wider sub-region, would make this site particularly attractive to young workers. The site offers potential for redevelopment for residential uses including a substantial proportion of starter homes. It could help to meet the District's housing requirements by redeveloping a suitable, partially developed site in the Green Belt, for a sensitively designed housing scheme. In a consultation on Proposed Changes to the National Planning Policy (December 2015), the Government signalled its intention to introduce greater flexibility into the NPPF to enable the release of such sites as Oaklands Farm for housing recognising that brownfield sites in the Green Belt could help to meet housing needs in a sustainable way.

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

- 3.10. It is considered that the development of this site would result in a sustainable development bringing economic, social and environmental benefits.
- 3.11. In terms of the economic dimension, the construction of new housing will support many jobs in the local construction industry and related services sector thereby assisting the local and national economy. New home formation also creates a boost in consumer spending and provides for the creation of new households with disposable income that will be spent in the local economy.
- 3.12. With regard to the social role, the new housing proposed would provide a range of unit sizes and will include both market and affordable housing and a proportion of starter homes catering for all sections of the community.
- 3.13. In terms of the environment, the development is located within easy reach of the village's facilities and to Warwick Parkway Station, which will help to minimise the need to travel by car to use local services or to access employment opportunities. Hatton Park itself is recognised as a sustainable location, being one of the larger and better serviced villages in the District.

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

- 3.14. A very small part of the site at the southern boundary with the canal is shown as falling within Flood Zone 3 on the Environment Agency Flood Maps. However, there is no history of the site flooding and the area affected has already been granted permission for a replacement dwelling. Flooding/drainage would require further investigation, but it is considered that appropriate on-site mitigation measures can be put in place as part of a development scheme to address potential issues.
- 3.15. The site immediately adjoins the Grand Union Canal, a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The potential ecological impacts will be fully assessed in the development of a scheme for the site and any features of ecological value can be protected and enhanced through the provision of an appropriate landscaping scheme including boundary planting along the Grand Union Canal.

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?

- 3.16. As set out in the Council's latest Village Profile and Housing Allocations document (February 2016), Hatton Park is one of ten sustainable villages in the District considered to be suitable for housing growth.
- 3.17. The site is well related to Hatton Park, but also to Warwick with easy access to services and facilities by sustainable transport modes. A regular bus service runs along Birmingham Road and a bus stop is located immediately opposite the site. There are also excellent connection from the site to Hatton Park and Warwick by foot and cycle with a footway/cycleway running along Birmingham Road and the canal towpath. Warwick Parkway station is located less than one mile away and can be reached in less than 20 minutes by foot or 5 minutes by bicycle.
- 3.18. Part of the Oaklands Farm site was previously identified by Warwick District Council as a preferred option for a gypsy/traveller site. In its justification for selecting the site as a preferred option, the Council refers to its proximity to Hatton Park and availability of services and facilities in the surrounding villages (including Budbrooke Primary School and GP surgery at Hampton Magna), which can be easily reached from the site.
- 3.19. As the site currently accommodates various residential and commercial uses, it is fully connected to water, gas and electricity services.

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

- 3.20. As set out above, flooding/drainage will require further investigation, but it is considered that any potential issues can be dealt with through on-site mitigation.

Is the site realistically viable and deliverable?

- 3.21. The Oaklands Farm site is a partially developed site in the Green Belt. No physical constraints to development have been identified to date that cannot be addressed through a development scheme and it is therefore considered that a residential development on this site would be viable.
- 3.22. AC Lloyd is working with the landowner Oaklands Farm to bring the site forward for development. The site is in single land ownership and immediately available for development. It is therefore considered that the site is deliverable within the next five years.

What is the expected timescale for development and is this realistic?

- 3.23. As outlined above, the site is a suitable site for development, it is available and deliverable. The site clearly presents a deliverable option which can make an important contribution to the District's housing land supply within 5 years.

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

- 3.24. Although the land at Oaklands Farm was considered in both Warwick District Council's Green Belt and Green Field Review and the Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Green Belt Study, it was assessed as part of larger land parcels (HP7 and WA3 respectively), mainly comprising undeveloped land different in character to the Oaklands Farm site.
- 3.25. Given the fact that the site already accommodates a mix of different uses and therefore appears largely developed in character, it is considered that a housing development on the site would not lead to new ribbon development along Birmingham Road or reduce the gap between Hatton Park and Warwick. It is also largely contained by substantial and defensible boundaries including roads and the Grand Union Canal. It is therefore considered that it only play a limited role in restricting the sprawl of large built-up areas, prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 3.26. It is also considered that Oaklands Farm site makes a limited contribution in preserving the setting and special character of the history town of Warwick given its location approximately 1km to the west of the town, intervening development and well-screened nature of the site itself.
- 3.27. The site is located at the edge of a village in the rural part of the District. It would therefore not support the fifth purposes of Green Belts (to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land), but also does not directly conflict with it as its redevelopment would still secure the recycling of a brownfield site.

What would be the effect on the openness of the Green Belt?

- 3.28. The openness of the Green Belt in this location has already been comprised to some extent as the site accommodates a mix of various residential and commercial uses and appears developed in character.
- 3.29. The site is largely contained by clear and permanent boundaries (roads and a canal) and there is significant landscaping along these margins. Opportunities exist to strengthen the existing landscaping along these boundaries to ensure that the openness of the wider Green Belt is not further eroded.

- 3.30. It is considered that a sensitively designed scheme on the site including additional landscaping along the site boundaries would help to protect the open character of the Green Belt surrounding the site.

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

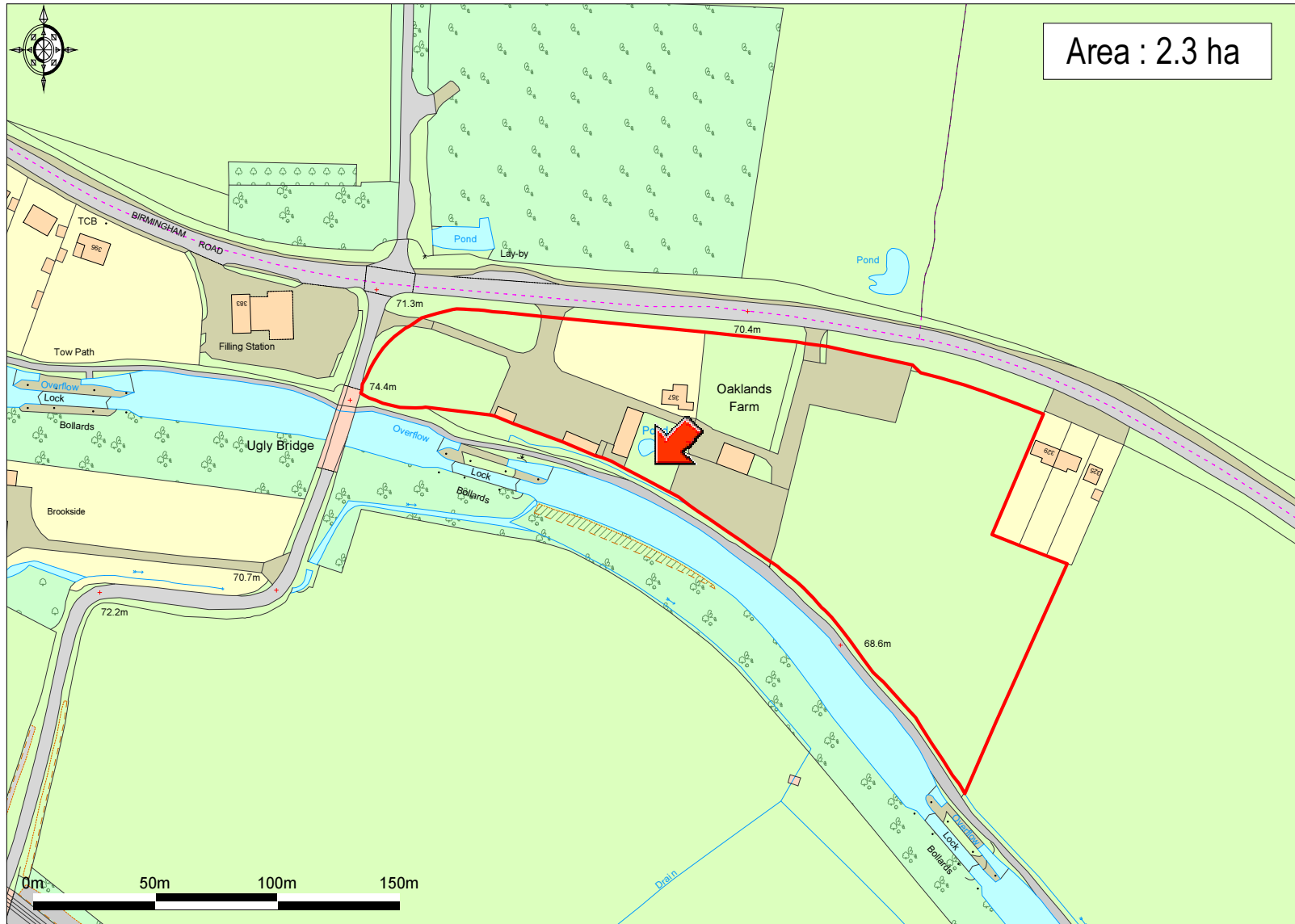
- 3.31. As set out in national policy, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the preparation or review of a Local Plan. In reviewing Green Belt boundaries, local authorities are required to have regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period. It is also essential to take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development.
- 3.32. It has been established that Warwick District will have to accommodate significant housing growth to meet the identified housing needs of the District as well as some of Coventry's needs. As development of much of the District is constrained by the West Midlands Green Belt, a review of the Green Belt has been carried out to guide decisions on whether and where to revise Green Belt boundaries.
- 3.33. As outlined above, Hatton Park has been identified as one of ten sustainable villages in the District that could accommodate some housing growth. As the whole settlement is currently located in the Green Belt, no suitable non-Green Belt sites are available to meet identified housing needs in Hatton Park and the Council is therefore proposing to release two sites at the edge of the built-up area of Hatton Park from the Green Belt. This includes Site H28 at the south-eastern edge of the village, which is located opposite the Oaklands Farm site.
- 3.34. The southern edge of Hatton Park has been acknowledged as an appropriate location for growth. The close proximity of the Oaklands Farm site to the proposed housing allocation H28 offers an opportunity to deliver a wider sustainable village extension. It is considered that the allocation of an additional site for housing in this sustainable location would widen the choice of housing site identified in the Local Plan and increase flexibility to enable the Local Plan to respond to change.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1. The site represents a sustainable growth option for Hatton Park, which can deliver housing in the short term. The site should therefore be allocated as an additional housing site in the Local Plan.

Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan

Oaklands Farm, Budbrooke, Warwick



Area : 2.3 ha

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Location Plan

