

**Warwick District Local Plan Strategy Hearing Statement
Matter 11 – University of Warwick and Major Sites in the Green Belt**

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
Localism Act 2011**

On Behalf Of:
LaSalle Investment Management

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Warwick District Council Local Plan Strategy Hearing Statement

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LaSalle Investment Management

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1.0 Matter 11 – University of Warwick and Major Sites in the Green Belt

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Harris Lamb Property Consultants (HLPC) on behalf of LaSalle Investment Management (LIM). LIM control Stoneleigh Park, one of the largest employment sites in the District.

Issue:

Whether the approach towards the University of Warwick and Major Sites in the Green Belt is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Policies MS1 and MS2

Policy MS2 – Major Sites in the Green Belt (including Former Honiley Airfield, Stoneleigh Park and Stoneleigh Business Park)

7) Should the policy be more positive/definitive about the prospects of development on the specific sites concerned?

- 1.2 Yes. There is a disconnect between the approach and development aspirations for the Major Sites in the Green Belt set out by Policy MS2 and the development objectives for these sites set out elsewhere in the Plan. There is also a tension between the policy and its supporting text.
- 1.3 The supporting text to Policy MS2 confirms that Stoneleigh Park is an established part of the rural economy both locally and nationally. It is confirmed that the Council have granted an outline masterplan planning permission that will help the site evolve into a national hub for rural and sustainability research and equine activities providing an opportunity for a clustering of businesses relating to these activities. (Planning permission reference: W/12/0766). It is advised that the long term economic plan for Stoneleigh Park is likely to bring significant economic benefits to the local area. It is also confirmed that the Council support the unique role of the Park and the delivery of a masterplan to secure its long term future. In

addition, it is advised that it may be necessary to revisit the masterplan for the Park during the course of the Plan period. Indeed, this is inevitable given that the emerging Plan covers the time period up to 2029 whereas Stoneleigh Park's outline masterplan planning permission W/12/0766 allows for the submission of reserved matters applications in conjunction with the permission up to 21st November 2020.

- 1.4 Proposed Policy DS8 – Employment Land, requires the provision of a minimum of 66 hectares of employment land during the course of the Plan period. The table beneath paragraph 3.41 of the submission Plan identifies the existing supply of employment land that is expected to contribute towards the 66 hectare employment land requirement. Stoneleigh Park is identified within this table. The submission version of the Plan advises that Stoneleigh Park is expected to provide 5 hectares of employment land towards the overall employment requirement, albeit we understand that the Council are proposing an alteration to this table to remove the quantum of employment land provided by each site. Regardless of this, the Warwick District Employment Land Review Update report (ELR) (ECA3), which has been used to inform the overall employment land requirement and supply of existing sites, confirms at Figure 18 – Identified Land Supply for General Employment Development, that Stoneleigh Park is expected to provide 5 hectares of employment land during the Plan period.
- 1.5 There is, therefore, a clear presumption that Stoneleigh Park will play a key role in delivering additional employment land during the course of the Plan period. The emerging Plan confirms that it should provide approximately 7.6% of the total overall employment land provision during the course of the Plan period. The Council have concluded that it is appropriate to grant an outline masterplan planning permission that allows for the quantum of floorspace on site to be increased from 96,347 sq. m. to 117,332 sq. m. (approximately a 22% increase). In addition, Policy MS2's supporting text clearly outlines the Council's development aspirations for Stoneleigh Park including the recognition that the masterplan may need to be reviewed in the

future. Despite this the guidance of Policy MS2 acts to impede, rather than support, development at Stoneleigh Park.

- 1.6 Policy MS2 effectively replicates the guidance of paragraph 89 of the Framework, indeed it could be interpreted as being more restrictive than the requirements of paragraph 89 of the Framework due to its wording.
- 1.7 The first paragraph of Policy MS2 advises that development at Major Sites in the Green Belt will be 'restricted' to the limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land in accordance with the requirements of the national policy. It effectively replicates bullet point 6 of paragraph 89 of the Framework. As drafted paragraph 1 of the policy could be interpreted as seeking to prevent all other forms of development, including 'appropriate' forms of development in the Green Belt identified by the Framework due to the use of the word 'restricted'.
- 1.8 The policy then goes on to advise that in the case of the former Honiley Airfield, Stoneleigh Park and Stoneleigh Deer Park there may be very special circumstances to justify further development. This section of the policy effectively replicates paragraph 88 of the Framework that confirms that very special circumstances need to be demonstrated in order for inappropriate forms of development to be granted planning permission in the Green Belt.
- 1.9 As a consequence the first part of the policy fails to recognise the growth aspiration for the Major Sites in the Green Belt identified elsewhere in the Plan. The Plan requires 5ha of employment land to be developed at Stoneleigh Park but then puts in place a very special circumstances test for it to be delivered.
- 1.10 The third paragraph of the policy suggests that as well as passing the very special circumstances test it is also necessary for development proposals to be linked to an approved masterplan or development brief for planning permission to be granted. This approach is more restrictive than the

approach of the Framework as it puts in place an additional test over and above the very special circumstances test. For example, an agreed position could be reached with the local authority that very special circumstance exist to support a development. If, however, there is no masterplan or development brief in place paragraph 3 of the policy could prevent the development happening.

- 1.11 Turning to Stoneleigh Park specifically the outline masterplan planning permission time expires in 2010. That being the case during the final nine years of the plan period there will be no masterplan planning permission in place. Furthermore we are not aware of the Council having any aspirations to prepare a development brief for the site. Whilst LIM would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council on a new masterplan planning application for the latter part of the Plan period there is no real policy guidance in Policy MS2 on the forms or quantum of development that is considered acceptable in Stoneleigh Park despite the recognition elsewhere in the Plans supporting text that the Policy should provide 5 hectares of employment land during the course of the Plan period and evolved to be a national hub for rural and sustainability research and equine activities assisting with the clustering of businesses.
- 1.12 It is LIM's view that Policy MS2 should take a more positive approach to encouraging development at Stoneleigh Park in accordance with the wider aspirations for the Park set out in the remainder of the Plan. Policy MS2 should confirm that Stoneleigh Park is expected to provide 5 hectares of new employment land during the course of the Plan period as per the Plan's employment policy objectives. The supporting text regarding the Council's aspirations for development at Stoneleigh Park set out in paragraphs 3.155 through to 3.160 should be reflected in the policy itself so that it is confirmed that the Council actively support Stoneleigh Park's existing role and will assist in facilitating its development as a rural innovations science park with an emphasis on sustainability, the environment, agriculture, equine activities, forestry and rural businesses.

1.13 Furthermore, the policy should be worded in such a way that it facilitates the delivery of 5 hectares net new employment land at Stoneleigh Park without the need to demonstrate very special circumstances. It is our view that it is inappropriate for the Plan's employment policies to suggest that 5 hectares of new employment land should be delivered on the Park whilst Policy MS2 could be interpreted as suggesting that very special circumstances must also be demonstrated to deliver this development.

8) Should it be more specific about the types of development that may be acceptable?

1.14 Yes. There is no policy guidance in the policy on the forms of development that the Council support at Stoneleigh Park. Whilst the policies supporting text contains a range of helpful comments regarding the Council's aspirations for additional development at Stoneleigh Park as drafted Policy MS2 does not seek to support their delivery, as referred to above. As well as advising that 5 hectares net new employment land should be delivered at Stoneleigh Park during the course of the Plan period the policy should also provide guidance on the forms of development that are considered acceptable.

1.15 The Plan recognises that it may be necessary to revisit the Stoneleigh Park outline masterplan planning permission during the course of the Plan period. Indeed, given that the outline masterplan planning permission time expires in 2020 this is inevitable. It is, therefore, essential that Policy MS2 includes guidance on the forms of development considered appropriate at Stoneleigh Park. Helpful guidance on this matter can be found in the masterplan planning permission where the Council have granted planning permission for the following uses:

- The development/redevelopment and use of buildings at Stoneleigh Park to provide science, business, technology, innovation park (Use Classes B1a and B1b)
- Equine facilities

- Livestock and agricultural facilities
- Education and learning (Use Class D1)
- Sustainability and energy
- Exhibition facilities
- Showgrounds
- Hotel and conference facilities (Use Class C1/D1)
- Animal husbandry and animal hospital
- A visitor centre
- Camping facilities
- Other ancillary uses and activities including retail, leisure and catering, parking, services and landscaping

1.16 It is our view that Policy MS2 should confirm that these forms of development are appropriate within the Park to add clarity to a range of uses the Council will support through any future planning application.

9) Should the sites be removed from the Green Belt and allocated for development?

1.17 It would be helpful to remove Stoneleigh Park from the Green Belt to assist the Council's stated development aspirations for the Park. The emerging Plan makes it clear that it is expected to deliver a significant quantum of new employment land during the course of the plan period. However, as drafted Policy MS2 restricts this due to its approach. Given that there is an expectation of development it seems entirely sensible to remove Stoneleigh Park from the Green Belt to allow for additional development to take place. Safeguards can be put in place through a new policy guiding the development of Stoneleigh Park to protect the local environment, including listed buildings and the local landscape.

1.18 In this regard it should be noted that Stoneleigh Park plays a limited role in supporting any of the 5 purposes of Green Belt land that are identified by paragraph 80 of the Framework, as detailed below:

- **To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas** - The Park does not check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. It is detached from any large built up area.
- **To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another** - The Park does not prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- **To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment** - There is already significant development across the Park and further additional development is expected. The Park does not, therefore, safeguard the countryside from encroachment to any real degree.
- **To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns** - Development at Stoneleigh Park will not adversely impact on the setting and special character of historic towns.
- **To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land** - The Park does not assist in urban regeneration. The Park is brownfield site in accordance with the definition of previously developed land set out in the Framework. In addition, the emerging Plan requires development to take place at Stoneleigh Park to meet the overall employment requirement.

1.19 It is our view that the limited role the Park plays as Green Belt land and the recognition that additional development is required at Stoneleigh Park to meet the Plan's employment requirement coupled with the outline masterplan planning permission that allows for significant new development constitutes exceptional circumstances that warrant the removal of the Park from the Green Belt in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 82 of the Framework.

10) Is the boundary for the Former Honiley Airfield site appropriate, should the site be extended to include the test track?

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11) Are the potential implications of the HS2 route for the Stoneleigh Park site adequately taken into account?

- 1.20 No. It is understood that the Council are proposing to introduce additional text to the policy to advise that appropriate amendments to the Stoneleigh Park masterplan (it is assumed this means the masterplan planning permission) as a result of HS2 will be supported without the need to revise the masterplan. The masterplan planning permission takes the form of an outline application with all matters reserved for subsequent approval with the exception of access. The current masterplan planning permission is, therefore, already flexible enough to take account of HS2. This additional wording therefore takes the policy no further forward.
- 1.21 As referred to above the masterplan planning permission expires in 2020. Clearly the impacts of HS2 on Stoneleigh Park will go beyond 2020. There is, however, no policy guidance within Policy MS2 or its supporting text as to how the Council will address the implications of HS2 on the Park. This is a major failing of the policy. It is our view that Policy MS2 should clearly state that the Council will support the re-planning of Stoneleigh Park to take account of the impacts of HS2 including the provision of replacement and new floorspace and facilities (such as the various arenas and other supporting infrastructure) as a consequence of the impact of HS2 through the planning application process.