

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) and Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon Homes (TW/PH)

In respect of

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31

Date of agreement: 19th January 2017

1. This statement of common ground has been prepared in the context of the publication version of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (SBLP), which was placed on deposit for a six-week period ending 17 February 2016 and submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 22 July 2016.
2. The statement is intended to set out the position of both signing parties at the current time and will be kept up-to-date as SBC reaches key milestones in the preparation of their plan.
3. The statement refers to Stevenage Borough Council as local planning authority only.
4. Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon Homes have an interest in a large part of the site allocated under Policy HO2. This statement covers those issues raised within their consultation response to SBC, as well as any additional issues relating to this site.

Background

5. Following the allocation of Stevenage West in the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1998, duplicate applications were made in 2001 to SBC and NHDC. An allocation for that part of the site was made in the Stevenage District Plan Second Review [adopted in December 2004], when the site was removed from the Green Belt. Following a Call-In Inquiry for the duplicate applications in 2004, the SoS issued a minded to grant letter in 2005 followed by an approval in 2009. This was then subject to a Judicial Review, which in 2011 led to the quashing of the permission and the submission of further evidence. The SoS intended to re-open the Call In Inquiry in 2014 (following the revocation of the East of England Plan), however as a comprehensive EIA Regulation 19 update request was made, the application was withdrawn.
6. Concurrently, TW/PH have actively engaged in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan which included joint work undertaken by SBC and NHDC on the Stevenage and North Herts Action Plan [which was subsequently shelved]; the SBC Core Strategy 2011; a 2012 SBC Call for Sites submission; and a 2014 SBC SHLAA submission for a SBC only West Stevenage (south) scheme. Clearly TW/PH continue to be committed to West Stevenage.

Principle of site allocation

7. TW/PH agree to the allocation of Stevenage West within the Local Plan to provide approximately 1,350 new homes and 10,000m² employment floorspace within a new neighbourhood. Both parties agree this provides a sustainable, non-Green Belt site for development, which is required to meet the Objectively Assessed Needs of the Borough. Both parties agree to a small element of retail being provided, alongside educational and healthcare facilities to meet the needs arising from this scheme.

Site specific issues

8. Although the site has potential to unlock development within North Hertfordshire (NHDC) with any Masterplan for its development designed accordingly, both SBC and TW/PH agree that development of the site should be progressed as a standalone scheme and not as a cross-boundary application. The detailed Masterplan is, therefore, only required to cover the allocated site within the Borough boundary and must merely serve to demonstrate that any adjoining development could be enabled by the proposed layout.
9. TW/PH have reviewed the proposed wording set out in the schedule of proposed main modifications (Examination document: ED114) in relation to affordable housing (Policy H07). Both parties agree that this would provide further clarification and certainty for developers, and would resolve the objections previously raised in relation to the clarity of the requirement being sought (but not the more specific objection to the level of affordable housing being proposed for this site).
10. Both parties agree that the preferred access points for the site are the existing vehicular routes of Bessemer Drive and Meadway. TW/PH support the areas safeguarded under Policy IT2 to enable the wider-scale development of Stevenage West within NHDC.
11. In accordance with the CIL Regulations, any S106 Agreement relating to land at West Stevenage would ensure that any S106 contributions or provisions are not duplicated, once SBC have adopted a CIL charging schedule.

Delivery of the site

12. TW/PH confirm that the development of Stevenage West (HO2) is viable and can be delivered within the Local Plan period.
13. SBC and TW/PH agree that infrastructure should only be provided/requirements made to serve the site within the Borough boundary and no additional requirements should be sought to enable further development within the adjoining NHDC site.
14. SBC and TW/PH agree to continue to work together to ensure the delivery of this site. Both parties agree that further work is required to try and resolve issues relating to land

ownership, particularly in relation to the land controlled by the Homes and Community Agency if possible.

Timescales for delivery

15. TW/PH confirm that they are hoping to start formal pre-application discussions in April 2017, with the aim of submitting an application in September/October 2017.

Signatories to this Statement of Common Ground:


For and on behalf of Stevenage Borough
Council:



Cllr. John Gardner

Date: 19 January 2017

For and on behalf of Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon
Homes:



Date: 19 January 2017