

Planning Policy Committee 22 February 2022

Written Deputation by Land & Partners Ltd

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.

Land & Partners Ltd is the promoter of the proposed housing site north of Long Copse Lane in Emsworth which falls wholly within the allocation H8 for around 260 dwellings in the Submission version of the Local Plan (now EM7 in the proposed Housing Delivery Position Statement). We have an outline planning application running which will accommodate most of this proposed growth; this amounts to around 210 dwellings.

The suitability for the site for housing was considered in depth at a Local Plan examination Stage 1 hearing session, with objectors able to have their say in front of the Inspector. We made a commitment at the hearing to wait for the findings of the Inspectors before the application was determined and we were very pleased to see in the interim findings that no soundness or legal compliance concerns have been raised in relation to our site. This is in contrast to other sites examined at the Stage 1 hearings where problems with deliverability have been identified.

In the circumstances, we support the proposed Housing Delivery Position Statement. It offers a clear and positive framework for bringing forward suitable housing sites where there is no up-to-date Development Plan. A huge amount of work has gone into the identification of the suitable housing allocations by the Council and it is vital that that this work is carried forward.

In our case, following the positive assessment in the Housing Land Availability Assessment more than five years ago the site was included as a site for early release in the Housing Statement at that time, before scoring positively in the Council's Borough-wide Sustainability Appraisal and subsequently included within every stage of the emerging Local Plan.

For the Housing Delivery Test to be below 75% for two years running and for the housing land supply to now have fallen below four years is a critical position for the Council to be in. If the Plan is to be withdrawn, it will require responsible developers to work with the Council to ensure all the policy requirements of the withdrawn plan are met and opportunities for local infrastructure delivery are brought forward, by way of individual planning applications. This is what the Government expects from the stakeholders in these circumstances and we certainly will play our part. For example, with our site we are putting together a package of funding for the proposed Warblington footbridge to improve pedestrian accessibility, particularly for schoolchildren.

As you know, Havant Borough is very constrained by environmental designations and there are very few options available to the Council to meet their housing requirement. In particular, Hayling Island presents unique challenges in terms of its limited highways infrastructure and sites of international ecological importance. And the northern part of the Borough is surrounded by extensive woodland that contains Bechstein's Bats and other

Protected Species. Urban intensification will obviously take some considerable time to deliver and sites that are underused and wholly or partly brownfield such as ours will have a vital role to play in securing sustainable development.

The final point we would like to make is that sustainable development involves taking opportunities to enhance the environment. The land north of Long Copse Lane is able to secure strategic-scale benefits that should act as an example of best practice for the new Plan. We have achieved a technically-compliant scheme following a Development Consultation Forum and substantial engagement with statutory consultees. It will deliver generous open spaces and a cycle and footpath network, alongside much-needed housing including 63 affordable homes. Following advice from Natural England, we have secured a major package of off-site environmental improvements beyond the boundaries of the Borough that will not only achieve net nitrogen neutrality but – together with the new, substantial landscape buffers within the site - will provide more than 100% net gain in biodiversity. To put this into perspective, when the Environment Bill comes into force it will require just 10% gain.

Schemes such as ours have the ability to create new habitat corridors to help Protected Species like Bechstein's Bats move more easily between their existing habitats, in this case Southleigh Forest and Stansted Forest. This is exactly what Natural England is now looking for from development and aligns with the Government policy for creating habitats for nature recovery to help tackle challenges like climate change and the decline of rare species.

We would urge the Council to look beyond its boundaries for the next Local Plan and to be ambitious and strategic with regard to ecosystem repair and recovery.