

YORK LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

PHASE 3 - MATTER 4

STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATION SITE REF. ST14
LAND WEST OF WIGGINTON ROAD

TW FIELDS

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This hearing statement is written on behalf of TW Fields in **support** of York Local Plan strategic site allocation Ref. ST14 Land West of Wigginton Road.
- 1.2 TW Fields are one of two developers (along with Barratt Developments plc) promoting the delivery of the strategic site allocation Land to the West of Wigginton Road (Ref. ST14). The two developers are working in collaboration to promote the allocation of the site. This statement should be read alongside our previous submissions to the Local Plan and Phases 1 and 2 of the Examination in Public process.
- 1.3 Land to the West of Wigginton Road, referred to as the Clifton Gate Garden Village scheme, is identified as a Strategic Allocation in the submitted York Local Plan (ST14) to deliver a new sustainable Garden Village of a minimum of 1,348 new homes, alongside the delivery of significant community infrastructure in the form of a new primary school, a village centre, a health centre, affordable homes, elderly persons care homes, public open space, and recreational facilities.
- 1.4 The identified Vision of the Clifton Gate site is to deliver: -

A new village with its own identity and good local facilities to meet the everyday needs of residents as the community grows over time. A new village which is well-connected to the centre of York and surrounding settlements by sustainable modes of transport but clearly separated and screened from existing settlements to avoid coalescence. A place that feels a part of York but is still a separate place.
- 1.5 The Clifton Gate site is strategically located to the north of York, beyond the established boundary of the Outer York Ring Road. The site is separated from the existing urban edge and surrounding villages. The site's location respects the historic and landscape character of this area of the City.
- 1.6 The development proposals are situated in a suitable and highly sustainable location in respect of connectivity to existing jobs and services at Clifton Moor. Importantly, there are no technical or environmental (built and natural) constraints that would preclude the development of the site.
- 1.7 The Clifton Gate site will make a significant contribution to meeting the City's housing needs over the emerging Local Plan period.
- 1.8 The Local Plan supports a development of 1,348 homes at the site. Whilst TW Fields supports the principle of this allocation, they consider that the defined boundary of the site is unsound and have therefore proposed a number of expansion options for the scheme, each of which they consider to be a more appropriate strategy for the development of the site in the context of the guidance presented in NPPF 2012.
- 1.9 In making representations to the Local Plan the developers have presented three potential development options to the Council to provide a new Garden Village of either 1,350 homes; 1,725

homes; or 2,200 homes. The final resolution of the precise boundary of the new settlement will be determined following Phase 3 of the examination of the Local Plan.

- 1.10 Following a review of the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan and the amended Evidence Base documents, the developer's stance has not changed. The proposed detailed boundaries of the site allocation should be expanded. The reasoning for which is provided within this and previous submissions to the City of York Council.
- 1.11 Notwithstanding the above, it remains the developer's intention to collaborate with the Council to agree a Statement of Common Ground ahead of the Phase 3 hearing sessions. An update on this work is provided below. A Statement of Common Ground was of course previously agreed for the Phase 2 hearing sessions, and thus we fully expect that one will be agreed ahead of the Phase 3 hearing sessions.
- 1.12 Masterplans presenting each of the development options proposed by the developers have been prepared and were enclosed with our Phase 1 hearing statements and are enclosed again with this statement for ease of reference.
- 1.13 A masterplan which aligns with the Council's current proposed boundary for the has also been prepared and was enclosed with our Phase 1 hearing statement. The masterplan delivers each of the key land-use policy aspirations required by Policy SS12 of the Local Plan and identifies the following key elements: -
- 1,350 homes to be delivered by 2033
 - Up to 405 Affordable Homes & Extra Care Facilities
 - 10.25ha of public open space, green corridors, and recreational facilities as part of the development proposals. Including new playing pitch provision.
 - Provision of a Two Form Entry Primary School & School Playing Fields
 - Health Centre & Village Centre
 - Key views to York Minster will be preserved and accessible green corridors will be placed within them.
 - The retention and enhancement of existing woodland, hedgerows and trees located within and surrounding the site. Providing landscape, visual and biodiversity enhancements.
 - The provision of substantial levels of new landscape planting within and surrounding the site. Providing landscape, visual and biodiversity enhancements.
 - Existing water features including ponds and streams will be incorporated into the development. New water features relating to a Sustainable Urban Drainage system will also be delivered. These features will together form an integral aspect of the biodiversity benefits that the development can deliver. The developers have additional land within their control adjoining their three site options and these areas can be used for further mitigation or to enhance Biodiversity Net Gain.
 - New walking and cycling routes will be provided in the form of a new pedestrian/cycle underpass connection at the Clifton Moor Roundabout Access and a new pedestrian/cycle footpath connecting the site's access on Wigginton Road to the Outer Ring Road. These connections will also make the site accessible to the wider York footpath and cycle network.

- An existing public footpath connection between Clifton Moor and Skelton will be enhanced and made suitable for pedestrian/cycling connectivity. In doing so this will increase inter-activity between the Clifton Gate settlement and Skelton so that the two settlements can share their services and facilities. This proposal would have the benefit of increasing the sustainability of the existing settlement of Skelton as well.
- Vehicular access to the site will be taken from the upgraded Clifton Moor roundabout, which will include a 4th access arm that solely serves the development site. A new access will also be provided from Wigginton Road to the east.

1.14 This statement seeks to respond to **Matter 4** of Phase 3 of the York Local Plan Examination in Public. For brevity, where possible we refer to our previously submitted Phase 1 and Phase hearing statements, and to our representations to the Council's Proposed Modification & Evidence Base consultation.

1.15 We respond below to each of the Inspector's specific questions in respect of the site.

IS THE ALLOCATION AND ASSOCIATED POLICY SS12 RELATING TO ST14 SOUNDLY BASED?

2.1 The allocation of the site is soundly based.

2.2 As we have stated previously, the site has been identified as strategic housing site allocation ST14 within different iterations of the City of York Local Plan and its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal since June 2013. At that time, the Preferred Options Local Plan identified the site as having the potential to deliver 4,020 homes, along with the allocation of Safeguarded Land to the north of the allocation. The number of homes to be provided at the site was reduced to 2,800, along with an amendment to the red line site allocation boundary, within the now withdrawn City of York Publication Draft Local Plan (October 2014).

2.3 Prior to the withdrawal of the previous Publication Draft Local Plan (October 2014), the developers undertook and submitted a full package of technical assessments for the previously proposed larger site allocation boundary associated with the delivery of 4,020 homes. This work was considered within the Council's Sustainability Appraisal at that time. The package of documents included: -

- Masterplanning & Design Vision Document – JTP Architects
- Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment – Turkington Martin
- Transport Assessment – Fore Consulting
- Ecological Appraisal – Baker Consulting
- Archaeology Assessment (including trial trenching work) – York Archaeological Trust
- Air Quality Assessment – ARUP
- Geology & Ground Conditions Report – ARUP
- Noise Impact Assessment – ARUP
- Flood Risk & Drainage Appraisal – ARUP
- Utilities Report – ARUP
- Sustainability Statement – ARUP
- Tree Survey – Barnes & Associates
- Statement of Community Involvement – JTP Architects

2.4 The Council published a new Local Plan Preferred Sites Document for consultation in July 2016. Within this version of the Local Plan the Clifton Gate site boundary was the same as proposed in the now submitted version of the Local Plan.

2.5 At that time, the developers proposed two site options to the Council associated with the development of 1,348 homes (on a larger site area than proposed by the Council) and 1,725 homes. Each of the

previously submitted technical assessments were updated to reflect the developers two proposed options.

- 2.6 In response to the publication of the Pre-Publication Draft Local Plan (September 2017), the developers proposed a third alternative site option for 2,200 homes. This was on the basis of the site being able to deliver 2,200 within the period and in doing so providing permanence to the Green Belt in this area of the City.
- 2.7 The developers of the site have been promoting three alternative development options at the site in response to every publicised version of the Local Plan since September 2017. Including the Publication Draft Local Plan (February 2018) and the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan (June 2019).
- 2.8 The updated Sustainability Appraisal (EX/CYC/62) again assesses the sustainability of the site and again supports its allocation for a Garden Village of 1,348 homes. The focus of the update in respect of Site Ref. ST14 was in relation to the findings of the updated HRA and the proposed main modification to Policy SS12 which seeks to respond to them. The developers do not object to the proposed main modification to Policy SS12 as this issue is something that the site can comprehensively respond to.
- 2.9 Accordingly, the Council and the developers have undertaken detailed technical work and Sustainability Appraisal work in respect of a number of different development site options for the Clifton Gate proposals ranging from 1,348 homes to 4,020 homes over a 10-year period. All of these options were considered to be sustainable.
- 2.10 The developers have been keeping abreast of the Local Plan progress since the preparation and submission of their previous technical evidence. They have now instructed further updated work to take place, which will re-affirm the site's deliverability, whilst also ensuring that a future planning application can be submitted expediently. An update on this work can be provided at the hearing sessions if desired.
- 2.11 We trust the Inspectors will agree that undertaking this updated work prior to this point may have been premature on the basis that it could have been rendered 'out of date' for the purpose of determining a planning application given the delays to the Local Plan examination process.
- 2.12 Overall, the site is suitable for housing development, has been made available by every required landowner/developer, and evidence has been provided to demonstrate that residential development is viable and achievable at the site. The site is situated in a suitable and highly sustainable location in respect of connectivity to existing jobs and services at Clifton Moor and within the Main Urban Area of the City, and importantly there are no technical or environmental (built and natural) constraints that would preclude the development of the site. Accordingly, the site is deliverable.
- 2.13 With regards to the specific wording of Policy SS12 of the Local Plan in respect of the site, further work has been undertaken with the Council since the Phase 2 hearing sessions to prepare a Statement of Common Ground for the Phase 3 hearing sessions. The focus of which is associated with the modifications that are required to be made to the policy in order to ensure that the policy is sound and up to date when considered against the Council's latest evidence base documents, with specific reference to the evidence presented in Appendix 2 of the Council's Phase 2 Matter 6 hearing statement (Ref. HS/P2/M6/IR/1b), the updated Infrastructure Requirements Updated Gantt Chart (Doc Ref. EX/CYC/70), and the Phase 2 Infrastructure Note (Doc Ref. EX/CYC/79).
- 2.14 The latest draft version of the Statement of Common Ground is enclosed with this hearing statement. Once agreed, it is intended that the modifications to the policy will be included as Main Modifications to the Local Plan. Subject to these modifications being made to Policy SS12, the policy will be soundly based.

ARE THE GREEN BELT BOUNDARIES OF THE ST14 SITE REASONABLY DERIVED?

- 3.1 Whilst TW Fields support the identification of the Clifton Gate site as a new Garden Village within the Local Plan, they have concerns with the size of the current site allocation boundary.
- 3.2 Though the site can deliver 1,348 homes within the plan period within CYC's proposed site allocation boundary, TW Fields remain of the view that the current boundary should be expanded in order to: -
- Enhance the community and green infrastructure provision.
 - Provide sufficient flexibility to deliver a quality of development which meets the Council's Garden Village design aspirations.
 - Ensure the delivery of a critical mass of future population to sustain the requested community facilities.
 - To ensure that all of the policy aspirations required by Policy SS12 of the Local Plan can be viably delivered.
- 3.3 With regards to net density and overall design quality, we maintain our position that in order to ensure there is flexibility to deliver the design/landscaping aspirations of a Garden Village and the required community facilities outlined in Policy SS12, a more appropriate density and gross : nett area calculation for the site should be 32 dwellings per hectare (dph) with a 60% net developable area.
- 3.4 The Council's 35dph and 70:30 gross : nett calculation is more associated with an edge of settlement development site, where the 30% non-developable area would **not** be required to deliver the following items which are required to be provided as part of the ST14 scheme: -
- Public open space, green corridors, and recreational facilities as part of the development proposals. Including new playing pitch provision.
 - Provision of a Two Form Entry Primary School & School Playing Fields
 - Health Centre & Village Centre
- 3.5 Whilst the draft Phase 3 Statement of Common Ground between the developers and the Council outlines the agreement to include further wording within Policy SS12 which enables "*infrastructure and features associated with the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems, Biodiversity Gain, Open Space & Recreational Use, and Landscaping can be delivered within proximity of the site allocation boundary*", this wording would relate to 'green infrastructure', and the development would still need to deliver the primary school buildings, Village Centre, internal areas of public open space (including equipped play area) and corridors of greenspace within the existing proposed allocation site boundary.
- 3.6 Accordingly, should the existing allocation area not be expanded this could potentially result in the need to retain or deliver a higher density than 35dph (which again is more suitable to an urban extension site) to deliver the minimum 1,348 home requirement of the policy, or otherwise it could lead to a reduction in the number of homes that the site can deliver in order to meet the Council's other aspirations for the site as set out in Policy SS12.
- 3.7 Put in numerical terms, the existing site allocation area is 55ha. If the site was developed with a 60% net developable area of 33ha, and at an average density of 32dph (which we think would be more appropriate to meet Garden Village aspirations), this could result in only 1,056 homes being delivered at the site within the current allocation boundary. Which would result in a 292 home deficit against the site's requirements of the Local Plan, which would be unlikely to be met elsewhere due to the Council's proposed approach to setting tight Green Belt boundaries.

- 3.8 The risk of this potential reduction in housing numbers could also lead to wider issues in respect of the critical mass of population needed to sustain the community facilities which are required by Policy SS12, and the overall viability of the development (taking into account the site's infrastructure requirements)
- 3.9 Alternatively, as the Inspectors' have already concluded in Paragraph 30 of their letter to the Council dated 12th June 2020 (Ref. EX/INS/15) that the "*Local Plan neither seeks to establish new Green Belt nor proposes to alter established Green Belt boundaries*", it begs the question of why the site allocation boundary is being drawn so tightly, given that the development requirements of the Local Plan should be the first point of call when considering allocation site boundaries. Accordingly, if additional flexibility is required to ensure the delivery of a Garden Village of at least 1,348 homes, then this matter should be considered now given the ability to amend the site allocation boundary in the future will be severely constrained by the need to demonstrate exceptional circumstances at the future Local Plan review, as the Green Belt boundaries will be fully established at that time.
- 3.10 The latter point we make above is also linked to our case in favour of increasing the number of homes to be delivered at the site to meet the City's housing needs over the Local Plan period. We maintain the view we presented in our Phase 1 and Phase 2 hearing statements that additional homes are required to be delivered in the Local Plan on account of the City's housing needs (including the acute shortage of affordable homes) and employment needs (including educational needs). If the Inspectors deem this to be the case following the Phase 3 hearing sessions, then the ST14 site can be expanded to deliver this increased requirement with little or no harm to the environment.
- 3.11 Furthermore, an increase in the number of homes at the site would also be justified in order to enhance the site's critical mass to ensure that it remains sustainable for the next 20+ years, given that the site's boundaries/size may not be reviewed or amended for that period of time given the current Local Plan should be establishing long-term Green Belt permanence.
- 3.12 Finally, an expansion of the allocation boundary in the manner being proposed by TW Fields and Barratt Homes would bring the allocation, and the new homes to be delivered within it, closer to the services and facilities located within the Clifton Moor commercial and leisure area, thus making the allocation more sustainable from a purely locational/distance point of view. For the avoidance of any doubt, the expanded proposals would still deliver a similar level of separation from the A1237/Outer Ring Road as other existing settlements located outside of the ring road. Meaning it would still establish a village character and provide a distinct identity for the development, whilst reinforcing the City's historical character of which can be seen in the relationship of the City to villages such as Poppleton, Earswick, Copmanthorpe, Murton, Bishopthorpe, and Haxby.
- 3.13 The increase in the size of the site to that being proposed (or to at least 1,725 homes) would also deliver proportionate social, economic, and environmental benefits (as set out in the developer's options assessment which is enclosed), whilst also providing additional viability headroom.
- 3.14 The net developable area of each of the proposed options are similar in size to the current allocation site area identified within the Local Plan. The expansion of the site required to deliver each of the proposed options would not require a significant amount of further land to be allocated when considered against the wider extent of the proposed boundaries of the York Green Belt.
- 3.15 Accordingly, an amendment to the allocation boundary in the manner proposed could be dealt with under Main Modifications to the Local Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal would also need to be updated, but as this process is iterative, and as the expanded site options have previously been as part of this process, this would not identify any significant constraints.
- 3.16 With regards to the developer's proposed option which recommends the delivery of 1,725 homes at the site, the Council's Officers previously endorsed an increase in the proposed site allocation from

55ha (1,348 homes) to 68ha (1,672 homes) to the Council's Local Plan Working Group on the 10th July 2017. The reasoning behind the recommendation was as follows: -

“This reflects developers/landowners concerns regarding the viability/deliverability of the site and the ability to deliver the planning principles including the significant infrastructure requirements given the sites location adjacent to the A1237.”

- 3.17 This option was also put forward by the Council's Officers as a potential change to the Local Plan ahead of consultation in respect of the Publication Draft Local Plan at CYC's Local Plan Working Group on the 23rd January 2018. Whilst the recommendations of Officers were not approved on either occasion, the developer believes that there is still a compelling case for the expansion of the site to deliver each of the aspirations of Policy SS12 of the Local Plan and to meet an expected increase in the City's housing numbers.
- 3.18 Finally, whilst the developers maintain their objection to the Council's proposed detailed boundaries of the site, the Phase 2 Statement of Common Ground between the developers and the Council (EX/SoCG/12) confirmed that both parties were in agreement that an outcome of the Council's further evidence base work is that both the Council's preferred allocation boundary area, and the expanded land areas required to deliver each of the developers proposed options for the site, are not located within any areas of development constraint used as Site Selection Criteria by the Council, as identified on the plan shown on page A5:19 of Annex 5 of Topic Paper 1 (EX/CYC/59g). This evidence again confirms the deliverability and overall soundness of the proposed allocation.
- 3.19 The two key constraints to defining the boundary of ST14 relate to the City's identified Green Wedges and coalescence with Skelton (which incorporates the need to consider the setting of the area surrounding the Village). These constraints have been considered in detail by the developers when identifying the proposed development options for the site. In all of the presented options the identified Green Wedge and *Nova Scotia Plantation* to the east of the site area has been maintained as the appropriate natural and physical boundary to the site in this location. Each of the options would also deliver a 1km separation with Skelton, ensuring the avoidance of coalescence between the two settlements in perpetuity, which establishes the site's western boundary.
- 3.20 The area of land located between these two established boundaries can therefore be considered to be appropriate for development, following the delineation of the required detailed site boundaries located within it. The Council's own assessment work identified in EX/CYC/59g supports this position.
- 3.21 Whilst the Council's proposed detailed site boundaries have considered historical field boundaries and patterns, each of the developers proposed options have also used a similar process. As can be seen in the Land Use Plans submitted alongside our Stage 1 Hearing Statements. However, the previously submitted Land Use Plans also identify other site-specific constraints that have been considered by the developers. Which we believe adds a further layering of detail on top of the assessment undertaken by the Council as set out in EX/CYC/59g.
- 3.22 Furthermore, as outlined above, when establishing the proposed boundaries of the other presented options we have also considered the Council's policy aspirations for the site as set out by Policy SS12 of the Local Plan. Particularly in relation to design and density; increased areas of public recreation and open space; increased internal and external areas of landscaping; and the delivery of the City's market and affordable housing needs.
- 3.23 To conclude, TW Fields and Barratt Homes' alternative development options for the site would ensure the delivery of an exemplary new Garden Village which respects the historic character of the City. It can deliver new homes alongside significant areas of community and green infrastructure, in a sustainable location within proximity of the City's existing urban edge. The expanded site proposals would provide flexibility and enhance the site's sustainability and viability credentials though the provision of an increased critical mass of population, whilst also delivering a proportionate uplift in the social, economic, and environmental benefits that the site can deliver. The expanded site proposals

could also meet an increased housing requirement of the Local Plan should that be considered necessary by the Inspectors following the Phasing 3 hearing sessions. Without an expansion of the boundary there is a risk that the site may not achieve all of its housing, community infrastructure and greenspace expectations.