

# EXAMINATION OF THE NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN – 2011 TO 2026 PART

## 1

### STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND PREPARED BY NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL AND THE GILLINGHAM STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATION CONSORTIUM

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared jointly by North Dorset District Council (NDDC) and the Consortium that controls the majority of land included within the Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation (SSA) as set out in the submission version of the North Dorset Local Plan (NDLP).

1.2 The Consortium comprises CG Fry & Son, Welbeck Land, Taylor Wimpey, and the landowners at Newhouse Farm. These four parties are working together with NDDC and stakeholders to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the SSA.

1.3 This SoCG has been prepared to assist the Inspector examining the NDLP. It confirms agreement between the above parties that the SSA is a suitable and deliverable site allocation. It also demonstrates the Consortium's commitment to a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to the delivery of the SSA.

#### 2.0 THE SSA SITE AND ITS SURROUNDING AREA

2.1 The SSA site is located to the south of Gillingham, Dorset and occupies a total area of approximately 125 ha, centred on OS grid ref: 381600, 125350. The SSA comprises gently undulating agricultural land and land either side of the B3081 Shaftesbury Road which is in commercial use. The River Lodden flows through the site from north-east to south-west. The SSA comprises land in five areas:

1. Park Farm to the east of the B3081 Shaftesbury Road
2. Land in the Shaftesbury Road corridor bordering the B3081
3. Ham Farm and Newhouse Farm bordered by the urban area of Gillingham and the River Lodden in the north, Cole Street Lane in the south, Shaftesbury Road in the east and the B3092 New Road in the west
4. Land east of Lodden Lakes and north west of the River Lodden
5. Land south of Brickfields Business Park

### **3.0 SSA LAND CONTROL**

3.1 The Consortium controls the following SSA land:

1. Park Farm controlled by C G Fry & Son Limited (40.5 ha)
2. Ham Farm controlled by Welbeck Land (32.8 ha)
3. Newhouse Farm owners represented by Nigel Jones of Chesters Commercial (18.5 ha)
4. Land east of Lodden Lakes controlled by Taylor Wimpey (10.5 ha)

3.2 These land parcels are identified on the Land Ownership Plan at **Appendix 1**. The parcels extend to a total of approximately 102.3 ha or 82% of the SSA area.

3.3 The other major landowner is Sigma Aldrich which owns the land known as Brickfields. The Consortium have met with representatives from Sigma Aldrich and have shared technical evidence and their emerging draft Master Plan Framework (MPF). The Consortium invited views on the evidence and MPF in September 2014 and January 2015, and although to date the Consortium has not had any formal feedback, there will be further opportunity to engage through the MPF formal consultation process.

### **4.0 COLLABORATIVE WORKING**

4.1 NDDC and the Consortium together with a range of other stakeholders have worked collaboratively over many years to establish a vision for the southern extension to Gillingham and an appropriate policy and technical context for its consideration.

4.2 NDDC has led extensive consultation with stakeholders, including: a Concept Plan Workshop, facilitated by ATLAS and attended by NDDC and DCC officers, stakeholder organisations, local community groups, and land controllers from within the SSA. The Parties worked above together using evidence drawn from Local Plan consultation and studies shared by the land controllers to develop ideas on how the southern extension could be developed in broad terms and to establish a vision and design principles to complement the composite concept plan. A meeting also took place on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2013 between NDDC senior officers, Portfolio Holder, and the land owners and controllers from across the southern extension to communicate the intentions of the SSA and promote collaborative working to ensure comprehensive delivery of the SSA.

4.3 NDDC officers, ATLAS and the Consortium representatives meet regularly to discuss the SSA and progress made on all aspects of the proposed development.

- 4.4 The Consortium attends bi-monthly meetings of the Gillingham Growth Board (GGB). A document confirming the role and function of the GGB is set out at Appendix 2. The GGB is chaired by Cllr David Walsh (Town, District and County councillor) and is also attended by ATLAS, NDDC and DCC officers together with parties including Gillingham Town Council and Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan Group.
- 4.5 The Council has set up a monthly technical officers group meeting whereby technical issues are discussed with a view to progressing the development of the MPF and move through the design and approval process.
- 4.6 The Council has received an award of Large Sites Infrastructure Programme Capacity Funding and has recruited additional capacity in the form of a Major Projects Officer to progress the SSA through the development management process. The funding will also support additional work on urban design and viability.
- 4.7 The Council has secured continued HCA/ATLAS support through the master planning and planning application process.
- 4.8 The parties identified as members of the consortium are currently actively pursuing a collaboration agreement.

## **5.0 GILLINGHAM SSA MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The Consortium is leading on the production of a MPF for the SSA in accordance with the brief set out in Policy 21 of the NDLP. The MPF is intended to act as a link between Policy 21 and an outline planning application.
- 5.2 Comments have been obtained from statutory consultees, ATLAS, NDDC and DCC officers on an initial draft version of the MPF. At the time of writing, the Consortium is amending the MPF to reflect these comments where appropriate.
- 5.3 The Consortium has agreed EIA Scoping with NDDC. Background evidence that will form part of the EIA is being prepared. Where available this has informed the MPF.
- 5.4 When the content of the MPF has been agreed informally with NDDC officers as meeting the policy brief, and any policy departure in the MPF appropriately justified, the Consortium will undertake formal consultation with stakeholders including other landowners from within the southern extension, statutory and non-statutory bodies and the local community. This consultation will form part of the pre-application process for a single outline planning

application for the residential and local centre uses so as to support ultimate delivery of the southern extension without delay. Consultation will include a public exhibition, copies of the MPF deposited in key public places and a web site where consultation responses can be made on-line. Further comments will be sought from statutory consultees. Public consultation is envisaged to take place for six weeks in spring/early summer 2015.

- 5.5 Following public consultation, the Consortium will review the comments received and amend the MPF accordingly before it is submitted formally to NDDC with a statement of community consultation. NDDC will then present the MPF to relevant Committees and Full Council so that the Members have the opportunity to 'agree' that the process of production of the MPF meets the brief set out in Policy 21.
- 5.6 Following 'agreement', the Consortium envisages that it will prepare and submit a single outline planning application for the SSA land within its control that delivers the principles and content of the MPF, unless material circumstances justify otherwise.

## **6.0 PRINCIPAL AREAS OF COMMON GROUND ON THE NDLP**

- 6.1 Savills submitted representations on the NDLP on behalf of the Consortium by letter dated 24 January 2014. Representations were also submitted by individual Consortium members as follows:

WYG on behalf of C G Fry & Son Ltd

Montagu Evans LLP on behalf of Welbeck Land

Savills on behalf of Taylor Wimpey

- 6.2 This section details the areas of agreement, beyond those which resulted in amendments to the NDLP, in respect of the Consortium's representations only. The areas of agreement that are additional to those accepted in amendments to the NDLP as submitted on 5th December 2014, are areas of agreement between the consortium and NDDC officers which will be subject to Members agreement for consultation on modifications to the NDLP. The Council supports the Inspector giving consideration to recommending the following modifications.
- 6.3 For the avoidance of doubt it is agreed that where modifications are not proposed the Consortium's objections remain as per their previous representations. However, to assist the Inspector the main points are expanded where necessary in the Consortium's further written Statements.

## **Policy 21: Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation**

- 6.4 Policy 21 sets the policy basis against which the Gillingham Southern Extension will be delivered. It is reasonable to expect that the overarching vision for the SSA as defined in the NDLP can be delivered across the SSA within the plan period. Consultation on the MPF with other landowners within the SSA provides a mechanism which will assist the delivery of policy objectives for a comprehensive and sustainable development.
- 6.5 The process for agreeing the MPF is as set out in Section 5.0 above. The status of the MPF will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 6.6 The production of a MPF for the whole of the SSA, in consultation with all of the willing landowners within the SSA, will provide the link between policy and planning applications across the southern extension to ensure comprehensive planning and delivery. The MPF will act as the co-ordinating mechanism for site wide infrastructure delivery, ensuring that each parcel of land contributes towards provision of the whole.
- 6.7 Extensive work has already been undertaken in assessing the transportation and highways infrastructure implications in developing the SSA. In working on a Transport Assessment for the SSA, negotiation and agreement has been provided between the consortium, the County Highway's Authority (DCC) and NDDC on issues such as modelling and scenario testing. It has been agreed with DCC that as a result of the proposed highway improvements, the local highway network can accommodate the SSA (based on about 1,800 dwellings plus the expanded Brickfields Business Park delivering circa 23,000 sqm of employment floorspace). The proposed phasing and trigger points for the highway mitigation measures have been discussed in detail with DCC. The timing for the majority of measures have been agreed and the remaining outstanding matters are expected to be agreed shortly.
- 6.8 It is agreed that it will be necessary to provide other infrastructure items in relation to the SSA which include but are not limited to: a principal street; green infrastructure; SuDS; a local centre, primary and pre-school education provision, a community hall, and small convenience shops. The Council and the Consortium are currently engaged in discussions about the level of detail and scale of other elements of infrastructure justified by the SSA. The scale and nature of provision of education, social and community infrastructure will be based on a range of matters including available up-to-date evidence.

## **Master Plan Framework**

6.9 It is agreed that the Consortium will continue to lead on the production of the MPF and in consultation with other landowners within the SSA. The Council and the Consortium will continue to work jointly on the MPF for land within the Consortium's control and that by agreement with the Council the Consortium will pursue the requisite planning permissions to enable the development to be implemented in a timely fashion.

### **Supporting Economic Development**

6.10 Following issues raised by the Consortium about difficulties in delivering the proposed local centre in land outside its control, the Council requested that the Consortium undertakes a due process to understand the most up to date position of availability of land as identified in the proposed allocation of the local centre. The following information, has been established by the Consortium:

- The Consortium has contacted landowners on the Shaftesbury Road corridor to ascertain their willingness to work with the Consortium to deliver the local centre on the Shaftesbury Road corridor in the locations shown on Figure 9.5 – Gillingham Southern Extension Proposals Map.
- **Sydenhams:** The Consortium met with Sydenhams several times between 2010 to 2012 and again at the meeting on 9 October 2013 organised by NDDC. For operational reasons and viability reasons this land is not available for development as the local centre.
- **Land owned by Mr B Hopkins – Kingsmead Business Park:** NDLP Figure 9.5 proposes that the local centre would be located partly on Mr Hopkins land on the east side of Shaftesbury Road. The Consortium met Mr Bill Hopkins and his advisers on 14 August 2014 to discuss the potential to deliver a local centre on his land. Mr Hopkins' agent Matthew Kendrick of Grassroots Planning confirmed by email dated 02.09.14 that the landowner would not be prepared to deliver the local centre and that he is pursuing alternative development proposals.
- **Land Controlled by Hine Brothers:** Welbeck Land controls land on the west side of Shaftesbury Road which the freehold of which is owned by Hine Brothers. This land is included within the MPF as a potential location for the local centre.
- **Orchard Park Garden Centre:** Brimble Lea, advisers to Lagan Farms, the owner of Orchard Park Garden Centre confirmed by letter dated 16.06.14 that Lagan Farms would be prepared to offer this site and adjoining land for the purposes of a local centre. This land is included within the MPF as a potential location for the local centre.

6.11 The land identified to accommodate the local centre in Figure 9.5 of the NDLP has some availability issues. Accordingly, the Consortium has identified two further site options which are available and are also considered to be suitable and deliverable. In order to provide greater flexibility in relation to the possible location for the local centre, it is agreed that the

allocation boundary of the local centre be removed and replaced with an indicator to indicate the location of the Shaftesbury Road corridor, as shown on Plan ref **Appendix 2**. This will provide greater flexibility for provision of the local centre within the Consortium's control. Whilst this is welcomed by the Consortium it remains of the view that the SSA should be further extended to include the Orchard Park Garden Centre as indicated in its representations.

### **Other Main Points**

- 6.12 Within the Consortium representations there are a number of other objections that have been taken into consideration by the Council as part of the pre-submission consultation process, but have not resulted in amendment within the schedule of changes as submitted. The majority of these arise, in the Consortium's view, from duplication of issues covered by other policies within the NDLP. One of the Consortium's remaining objections is over the level of detail in a number of the criteria in Policy 21 given the need for flexibility in deliverability of the SSA to reflect the length of time over which development will be brought forward. The Consortium's representations suggest an alternative wording for Policy 21 that would in the opinion of the Consortium address its objections.
- 6.13 NDDC's position is that the policy has been developed with a view to multiple planning applications being submitted across the SSA; the spirit of the policy is to ensure, as far as possible, a comprehensive development across the SSA taking into consideration the delivery of infrastructure across different land ownership parcels. An outline application for part of the site would not address the comprehensive delivery of site wide infrastructure, and so the policy detail and the MPF seek to ensure this.

### **Other Parts of the NDLP**

#### **Policy 17**

- 6.14 The following amendments to Policy 17 and its supporting text are agreed:

*About 1,490 homes will be provided at Gillingham over the Plan period, with additional provision at the SSA extending beyond the plan period.*

There remains disagreement in respect of other criterion within this policy and supporting text as per the Consortiums representations.

Signed on behalf of the Consortium



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Date: 3 March 2015

Position: Associate Director, Savills

Signed on behalf of NDDC



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Date: 3 March 2015

Position: Planning Policy Manager, NDDC

**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX 1 – LAND OWNERSHIP PLAN**

**APPENDIX 2 – LOCAL CENTRE PLAN**