**REPRESENTATION: Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040: Plan for Submission (Regulation 19 publication stage)**

**Land at Gibraltar Corner, Bedford**

**Prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Axis Land Partnerships**

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#  INTRODUCTION

1. This representation has been prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Axis Land Partnerships (“Axis) in response to the current Regulation 19 consultation on the emerging Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040: Plan for submission consultation.
2. Strutt & Parker on behalf of Axis, have been promoting land at Gibraltar Corner as part of the emerging Local Plan and this representation should be read in conjunction with earlier representations made. This representation responds to relevant policies in the plan, having regard to land at Gibraltar Corner, which has obtained an allocation for a residential development and provision of the delivery of open space and green infrastructure improvements under policy HOU13 of the emerging Local Plan.
3. As set out within previous representations Axis are promoting the land to the north of Wood End Lane and to the east of Home Road. The land on the south side of Wood End Lane and Home Close are being promoted separately by the Crown Estate.
4. The allocation HOU13 is shown in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1: Allocation HOU13**

1. This representation provides a response in relation to key policies within the plan in turn. For the reasons explained further within Section 2 of this report, Axis as promoters of the site fully support the proposed allocation as set out in Policy HOU13. In accordance with the requirements of the consultation, it is considered that the plan in its current form is legally compliant, sounds and complies with the duty to co-operate.
2. Section 2 of this representation seeks to assess the soundness of this allocation having regard to tests set out within national policy.

# REVIEW OF KEY POLICIES

1. The tests of soundness are set out in Paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). According to Paragraph 35, plans are ‘sound’ if they are:
2. **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
3. **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
4. **Effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
5. **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.
	1. This section provides a response in relation to key policies within the plan as follows:

**Policy DS2(S) Spatial Strategy**

* 1. Policy DS2 (S) Spatial Strategy of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 sets out the Strategic locations proposed for growth as part of the emerging Local Plan.
	2. This includes an allocation on land at Gibraltar Corner, Kempston Rural, under policy HOU13. The wording set out within policy DS2(S) is considered to be sound and Axis fully support the key objective of delivering sustainable development and working towards a net zero carbon emissions borough. The allocation of land at Gibraltar Corner is considered to be fully aligned with the objectives set out within policy DS2(S) and the proposed allocation, given its proximity to Bedford and Kempston will assist maintaining and enhancing Bedford and Kempston as a vibrant location as identified in policy DS2(S).

**Policy DS3(S) Amount and Timing of Housing Growth**

* 1. The proposed quantum of housing growth as set out in policy DS3(S) is supported, which appears to be positively prepared and seeking to meet Bedford BC objectively assessed housing needs.

**Policy DS5(S) Distribution of Growth**

* 1. The proposed distribution of growth is supported and policy DS5(S) is considered to be both justified and effective.
	2. The proposed allocation of 1,500 dwellings within strategic locations adjacent to the urban area, are considered to be particularly important to the Distribution of Growth Strategy. It is noted that a large quantum of the proposed growth relates to new settlements to the South of Bedford and Little Barford. Whilst no objection is raised to either allocation, the delivery of both sites will require the provision for significant infrastructure, which is likely to mean that they will not come forward within the immediate term. The allocation of the smaller and medium sized sites such as Gibraltar Corner is therefore imperative to maintain a consistent delivery of housing, as required by paragraph 74 of the NPPF.

**Policy HOU13- Land at Gibraltar Corner, Kempston Rural**

* 1. Land at Gibraltar Corner, Kempston Rural will be developed for a mix of residential uses and open space including the delivery of strategic green infrastructure improvements.
	2. A response to each of the policy requirements is set out below:

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|  | **Policy Wording**  | **Response**  |
|  | A masterplan and design code to be prepared and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document prior to the submission of any planning application for the site. The preparation of the Supplementary Planning Document will be led by the Council in partnership with landowners / developers, stakeholders and the local community. This document will accord with the South of Bedford strategic framework and will be prepared in advance of the submission of a planning application and will pay particular regard to ensuring that the development is designed to preserve the setting of heritage assets; | Axis are happy to assist the Council with the preparation and completion of a masterplan and design code for the site. To ensure that this does not unduly delay the delivery of the development on the site, it is requested that the wording is amended to ‘prior to the determination’ rather than prior to the submission of the application, which would enable a planning application to be submitted whilst the advanced stages of the masterplan are being completed.We suggest therefore the following revised wording: A masterplan and design code to be prepared and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document prior to the determination of any planning application for the site. The preparation of the Supplementary Planning Document will be led by the Council in partnership with landowners / developers, stakeholders and the local community. This document will accord with the South of Bedford strategic framework and will be prepared in advance of the submission of a planning application and will pay particular regard to ensuring that the development is designed to preserve the setting of heritage assets. |
|  | Provision of a mix of dwelling types and sizes; | This policy criteria is supported and Axis are committed to the delivery of a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet local and Borough housing needs.  |
|  | Submission of a Transport Assessment; | This policy criteria is supported and is sounds in planning terms.  |
|  | Measures to facilitate access by bus services across the site including a shuttle bus connecting the site with Kempston Hardwick and Wixams railway stations and the provision of a mobility hub; | Axis are happy to review measures for improved bus services across the site and work with local bus operators.  |
|  | Provision of a pedestrian cycleway between the site, Kempston and surrounding green infrastructure and NCN 51; | Axis support the proposed improvements to pedestrian and cycleway between the site and Kempston, linking into the surrounding green infrastructure, which was a key consideration within the illustrative masterplan, previously prepared and submitted as part of the Call for Sites consultation.  |
|  | Provision of a 2.4ha serviced site to accommodate a 2FE Primary school to include early years' provision; | No objection is raised to the delivery of a primary school and early year’s provision on the site on the basis that the educational need for the school exists. It is noted that the policy HOU13 shows it on land to the south of Wood End Road.  |
|  | Financial contribution towards secondary school provision; | No objection is raised to a financial contribution towards Secondary Education.  |
|  | Delivery of improvements to the green infrastructure network; | Axis are happy to liaise with Bedford BC on proposed improvements to the green infrastructure network.  |
|  | Masterplan to ensure development is designed to preserve and, where opportunities arise, enhance the significance of heritage assets and the contribution made by setting including for:* Grade II listed The Cottage,
* Grade II Kempston House,
* Grade II Ramsay Cottage,
* Grade II 157 Bedford Road, and
* Listed buildings in and around Keeley Green;
 | As part of our earlier response to the Strategic Policies and Draft Policies, a Heritage Assessment was undertaken. Axis are fully committed to the protection of heritage assets in close proximity of the site and assessing opportunities for enhancement to the setting of the heritage assets, where appropriate. ­The green space zone within the allocation has been appropriately located to provide a green space and landscape buffer along the sites northern boundary to ensure the setting of the Grade II Listed Buildings and their settings are adequately protected. |
|  | Include appropriate mitigation measures where necessary for heritage assets listed under ix; | This policy wording is supported.  |
|  | Pre-determination archaeological evaluation for the parts of the site to be developed; | No objection is raised to the requirement for archaeological evaluation on the site. It is however important to recognise that the site will be delivered on a phased basis. In addition, the extent of archaeological remains will be identified by way of submission of desk based archaeology assessment/Geophysical assessments prior to the submission of the planning application and it may not be necessary for the full extent of archaeological evaluation to be undertaken pre- determination of planning applications. It is therefore recommended that the wording pre- determination is deleted from the policy wording as follows:archaeological evaluation for the parts of the site to be developed; |
|  | Areas of ridge and furrow earthworks to be protected during construction; | No objection is raised to this policy criteria.  |
|  | The developable area shall be located within Flood Zone 1; | No objection is raised to this requirement, which accords with national policy.  |
|  | Contribution to the Forest of Marston Vale with a minimum of 30% tree cover to be provided on the site with appropriate public access and may include areas of wet woodland; | Axis recognises the importance of tree cover within the development site. It is considered that a minimum of 30% of the Open Space areas should have tree cover rather than 30% of the entire site. For clarity the wording of the policy should be amended to reflect this.  |
|  | Submission of a wildlife and habitat survey with appropriate mitigation and enhancements; | No objection is raised in relation to this policy criteria.  |
|  | Provision of land to facilitate the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park to the east of Gibraltar Corner; | This area of land is outside the control of Axis, but support is provided to the principle of this policy, subject to deliverability.  |
|  | Provision of a public car parking area to provide parking for local residents and visitors, including those to the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park, Forest of Marston Vale, walking and cycling routes. The proposed car park shall be designed and located to minimise disturbance to the best preserved sections of ridge and furrow earthworks in this area; | The promoter acknowledges that there is some local concern regarding residents and visitor car parking along Wood End Lane and Ridge Road. No objection is raised to the proposed public car parking area, which is within land under the control of the Crown Estate. Axis are happy to work with Bedford BC to review solutions for additional parking for local residents and visitors as part of the masterplanning/planning application process.  |
|  | A site specific flood risk assessment will be needed and mitigation required for all sources of flood risk where necessary. Opportunities to reduce surface water run-off and flood risk on and off site should be identified and could consider the ability of the Waterway Park to assist with flood mitigation; | No objection is raised to this policy criteria.  |
|  | Delivery of a low carbon and environmentally resilient development that is adaptive to and resilient to climate change; | Axis recognises the importance of delivering a development which prioritises sustainability from the outset as required by point 19 of Policy HOU13. In respect of climate change resilience, the development will be designed to be adaptable to our climate both in terms of building designs and the wider landscape setting. Achieving low carbon will be vital and in addition to reducing transport related carbon emissions the landowner is also dedicated to achieving this by minimising the energy demand of new buildings, provision of energy from renewable energy sources and utilising energy efficient supplies through low carbon technologies.  |
|  | Early engagement with Anglian Water is required in order to identify connection to water network infrastructure. | No objection is raised to this policy criteria.  |

* 1. Overall the allocation of the site under policy HOU13 is fully supported by Axis. The site is fully deliverable in planning terms and offers an appropriate location for strategic growth. It is considered to be sound in planning terms and retention of the allocation is important to ensure that the Local Plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and in accordance with national policy. It is requested that the minor adjustments to the policy as set out above are made in order for the policy wording to be effective as required by national policy.