

Bedford Borough Council  
Planning Policy Team  
Borough Hall,  
Cauldwell Street,  
Bedford, MK42 9AP

Dear Sir or Madam

**Re: Review of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 – Call for Sites Submission for Land at Marsh Lane, Milton Ernest**

On behalf of client Bedfordia Developments Ltd we are pleased to submit details of the above site for consideration as part of the Review of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 – Call for Sites submissions

In commencing an immediate Review in accordance with Policy 1 of the adopted Plan the Council is, as required, seeking to ensure that future needs for growth are provided for in-line with government policy i.e. local housing need calculated using the standard method. This will entail meeting a significant (up to c.35%) increase in the minimum annual requirement for development for at least the period 2020-2040 upon adoption of the Review, expected in 2023.

The Review of the Local Plan is an important opportunity to address issues regarding flexibility and choice in a variety of locations for growth, as well as ensuring a balanced allocation of land for development sufficient to meet future needs.

The scope for the Review has been enhanced as a consequence of the foreshortened plan period of the current Plan, and its strategy of apportioning specific (albeit minimum) values for the distribution of housing across the settlement hierarchy and the deferral of site allocations to Neighbourhood Plans. Equally, the challenges of housing delivery must also reflect realistic timescales to 'unlock' developable sites in the Urban Area, as well as ensuring necessary supporting infrastructure in other locations.

The Borough Council has acknowledged this through consideration of a diverse range of spatial options to inform the Local Plan Review. As stipulated by national policy this is an opportunity to ensure that Plans are positively prepared in terms of seeking opportunities for sustainable development.

Our client's site at Land at Marsh Lane, Milton Ernest should be considered in this context. The details submitted illustrate the opportunity for a sustainable contribution towards an appropriate spatial strategy that would satisfy key elements of the proposed Sustainability objectives and requirements for development.

As part of the details submitted for our client's site at Land at Marsh Lane, Milton Ernest we confirm that this location is free from overriding constraints to availability or suitability and that access can be provided.

The land, due to its size and location is capable of delivering a carefully considered residential development of up to 50 dwellings in accordance with the proposed development strategy for the



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village, in a sustainable location, providing a natural extension to Milton Ernest and well related to the existing pattern of development along Rushden Road. Planting and landscaping towards the northern and eastern boundaries of the site would be capable of establishing a defensible Settlement Policy Area boundary and maintain separation from Twinwoods Aerodrome.

This site additionally provides opportunities to unify the western and eastern portions of the settlement along Rushden Road. The allocation of this site would avoid further expansion away from the existing village centre and would instead facilitate development closer to the heart of Milton Ernest alongside improvements to highway safety and residential amenity.

In light of the extensive scope for the Review of the Local Plan 2030 we consider that an appropriate strategy will require a combination of multiple spatial options over the plan period. In the case of our client's land at Marsh Lane, would contribute to a 'Dispersed' strategy for the rural area. The submitted details would achieve appropriate levels of growth for Milton Ernest as a rural service centre, in accord with the adopted development plan and suitable to meet the Borough's additional requirements for growth in the period to 2030 and beyond.

We would invite the Council's Planning Policy Team to consider the previous site assessment findings for this location when assessing the submitted details. In the case of our client's Land at Marsh Lane, Milton Ernest, the site was considered favourably in the Council's 2017 Consultation Paper as part of preferred options for site allocation. The Council's 2018 HELAA records this location as suitable, available and achievable for development and in its 2017 Assessment of Site Options the Council identified scope for a positive contribution towards several plan-making objectives. These conclusions remain entirely valid in the context of Milton Ernest role as a Rural Service Centre and specific planning considerations regarding our client's land including meeting local needs for development and delivering requirements for ecological mitigation and additional open space.

We look forward to future updates regarding preparation of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review. We would be happy to answer any questions or requirements for clarification as part of the Council's assessment of the site within the next version of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment and ahead of future stages of consultation regarding the Local Plan Review.

Yours Sincerely

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