

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 School Approach and Land south of Odell Road, Sharnbrook ('Stoneyfields' Masterplan Proposals)

On behalf of client we are pleased to submit details of the above sites for consideration as part of the Review of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 – Call for Sites submissions. The land is within the ownership of the Bedfordshire Charitable Trust and promoted on its behalf by Bedfordia Property.

For the avoidance of doubt this submission of details for the Bedfordshire Charitable Trust's Land at Sharnbrook as part of the Local Plan Review process has been undertaken in a manner that reflects promotion of its interests under the current Local Plan and emerging Sharnbrook Neighbourhood Plan. An illustrative Masterplan has been prepared for a comprehensive opportunity for development, to be known as 'Stoneyfields' and can provide for the requirement of 500 homes in accordance with Policy 4S of the Local Plan 2030. A copy of the Illustrative Masterplan is enclosed.

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 School Approach and Land south of Odell Road, Sharnbrook 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 School Approach and Land south of Odell Road we confirm that this location is free from overriding constraints to availability or suitability and that access can be provided. Land to the south of Odell Road, presents exceptional opportunities, not only accommodating a substantial proportion of residential growth (circa 500 dwellings) but also facilitating a comprehensive opportunity for sustainable development well-related to the existing settlement form of Sharnbrook as a Key Service Centre. Over 50% of the site area is to be provided as non-built areas comprising land to be managed for Ecology and a Riverside Park comprising ecological mitigation and enhancement of recreation, open space and green infrastructure provision in the village.

The creation of this area, adjacent to the River Great Ouse Green Infrastructure Opportunity Area and Felmersham Gravel Pits SSSI, not only optimises the use of land within Flood Zones 2 / 3, but also serves to enhance the village and the open countryside beyond. This would additionally introduce a series of new footpath connections, linking to those currently within the area and providing greater linkages to the open countryside.

Given the above, it is considered that the development of these two sites could substantially support the housing needs to Sharnbrook and the wider rural area, accommodating a mixture of dwelling types and forms in addition to providing the land to accommodate a new Primary School and other community facilities, if required. Both sites have a strong relationship to the existing built form of the village, immediately adjoining the settlement boundary of Sharnbrook

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 Land at School Approach and Land south of Odell Road this option would contribute to a 'Dispersed' strategy for the rural area. The submitted details would achieve a logical and comprehensive development option for Sharnbrook that will respond to the Village's development needs over the plan period at a sustainable location. The submitted details support the review of the housing requirement for Sharnbrook given its importance as a Key Rural Service Centre.

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 School Approach and Land South of Odell Road, Sharnbrook, both sites were considered favourably in the Council's 2017 Consultation Paper as part of preferred options for site allocation. The Council's 2018 HELAA records both sites 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 Sharnbrook's role as a Key Service Centre and specific planning considerations regarding our client's land including meeting the needs of Sharnbrook Academy, requirements for ecological mitigation and highways improvements.

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

████████████████████
████████████████████