

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

Dear Sir/Madam

LOCAL PLAN REVIEW
CALL FOR SITES SUBMISSION
LAND WEST OF WYBOSTON – DENYBROOK GARDEN VILLAGE

Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land have an agreement with the Landowners to promote the Land to the west of Wyboston 'the Site' through the call for sites process. The Site is , identified on the enclosed Site Location Plan. The site is being submitted through the call for sites process for consideration as a new Garden Village which could make a significant contribution to meeting the future housing needs of Bedford Borough.

A Call for Sites form has been prepared detailing the basic information requested by the Council to enable consideration of the site. A red line plan showing the site boundary and the point of access has also been provided along with a high-level Concept Masterplan showing how the site could be developed. Further site assessment and visioning work is currently being prepared and will be submitted in due course along with a response to the Issue and Option consultation which will set out why we believe the site is ideally located to form part of the spatial strategy for the area up to 2040 (and beyond). This letter supplements the information on the form setting out the opportunities and constraints offered by the site and introducing the development proposal.

Background

Land at Wyboston was one of the four areas considered for a new garden village through the preparation of the now adopted Local Plan 2030. Ringhouse Developments Ltd put forward an area of land for consideration (site reference 659) in 2015 through the call for sites and it was this 255 hectare site, which could deliver around 4,000 homes, employment land and community/retail facilities that was considered by the Council, alongside alternatives, as a potential new settlement.

Taylor Wimpey Land have now taken up the promotion of the site and extended the amount of land available for development in the area. This current submission therefore incorporates site reference 659 but also a significant amount of additional land to the north and west, which is included within the existing landownership. This provides the opportunity to deliver a truly sustainable new community of up to 10,000 new homes and associated uses.

Taylor Wimpey are one of the largest PLC housebuilders in the country, delivering around 16,000 homes annually. The Strategic Land division are committed to working closely with Local Planning authorities and communities to deliver high quality developments which align with local aspirations. This commitment extends to land West of Wyboston, the potential of which we believe is enhanced by our involvement and commitment to early delivery to meet increasing housing need in the area. The site is in a key location within the Oxford to Cambridge arc where there is a clear Government drive for the delivery of a new settlement as part of the wider aspirations for the area.

The Site

As shown on the site location plan, the site lies between the villages of Wyboston in the east and Colmworth in the west. The village of Chawston sits just beyond the south east boundary of the site with the hamlet of Honeydon lying within the north extents of the site. St Neots to the east of the A1 is the nearest main town which provides services, facilities and employment for the surrounding area.

Key to the sustainability of the site is its strategic location north of the A421, from where the employment centres of Cambridge and Milton Keynes can be easily accessed by car, and to the west of the A1, which provides north south connections to a number of destinations.

The site lies close to a number of key infrastructure projects including the enhancements to the Black Cat roundabout and the A428, and the preferred route of east west rail, which is proposed to run immediately south of the site. The identified location for a new 'Sandy/St Neots focused' rail station is just 3km from the site, with longer-term potential for a further station, to the south of the site.

The site itself is currently in agricultural use with a mix of arable and pastoral fields. Physically, the site is relatively flat with limited topographical features of note. As is common with rural landscapes, the site contains a number of mature hedgerows which bound fields with small pockets of mature woodland, particularly in the north of the site. There are also a number of small brooks which cross the site east to west, feeding into the River Great Ouse. Each of these has a small area of associated flood risk. As is set out in the next section, it is around these features that a green framework would be developed within which the development would sit.

There are four Grade II listed buildings within the site, each of which are farmhouses associated with the current agricultural use. There are also a number of the listed buildings within the villages in the vicinity of the site, which have been noted on the Concept Masterplan.

The area is not covered by any landscape designations which would be a constraint to development. The site is also free from any ecological designations, with only the small areas of woodland in the north of the site noted as priority habitat. Overall, the site is considered to have low ecological value, with significant opportunities for development to facilitate a net gain in biodiversity across the area.

Access to the site is currently provided from Bushmead Road to the north and Colesden Road to the south. Principal access to the site would be provided from these roads, with a number of secondary accesses also being possible. Staple Road runs north/south towards the eastern edge of the site which would provide a route through the site, alongside new primary routes created as part of the development.

The site is already served by a number of public rights of way and cycle routes, including national cycle route 12 which connects into St Neots to the east and south towards Roxton.

The site is bisected north/south by a high-pressure gas main. However, given the scale of the site, this does not constrain development with the required 40 metre easement able to form part of the structural landscaping for the site.

The Development Proposal

Building on consideration of the site's opportunities and constraints, we are preparing a high-level Concept Masterplan which will show how the site could provide:

- Residential development of between 7,500-10,000 new dwellings, alongside local employment opportunities, including a potential technology park;
- Two Secondary schools;

- Six primary schools;
- Significant area of open space including country and linear parks; and
- Area of ecological enhancement to facilitate a net gain in biodiversity.
- Local centres
- Community and sports provision
- Allotments

This masterplan will be provided in due course as part of a more detailed submission on the suitability of the site.

Key to the proposal will be consideration of the Garden Village principles and the expectation set out in the NPPF that large numbers of homes, such as that which Bedford Borough Council will need to deliver through the Local Plan review, can often be best achieved through large scale development.

The Government consider the main characteristics of new garden communities to be:

- a purpose-built new settlement, or large extension to an existing town.
- a community with a clear identity and attractive environment.
- it provides a mix of homes, including affordable and self-build.
- planned by local authorities or private sector in consultation with the local community.

As well as building new homes, the communities develop:

- job opportunities.
- attractive green space and public realm areas.
- transport infrastructure, including roads, buses and cycle routes.
- community infrastructure, schools, community and health centres.
- a plan for long-term stewardship of community assets.
- Paragraph 72 of the NPPF, discusses the potential for large scale development and identified the key considerations for making new settlements or large urban extensions sustainable. Considerations include:
 - The opportunities presented by existing or planned infrastructure investment.
 - The scale of development and access to services and employment opportunities.
 - The quality of the development, including following Garden City principles.

Looking first at the location of the site, as noted above, the site is in a key strategic location close to both the A421 and A1 where significant investment in enhanced infrastructure has either already taken place or is planned. It is also adjacent to the proposed east west rail route and ideally situated to take advantage of the improved connectivity that this route will offer.

Whilst residents of the new settlement would benefit from new local job opportunities, those created in the in the A421 corridor near Bedford, and existing opportunities in nearby St Neots, the infrastructure

improvements would also enhance access to major employment centres, particularly Cambridge in the east, a significant advantage of the location.

Compared to the previous submission, the scale of the site is such that it would create a critical mass of development capable of supporting a full range of day-to-day community facilities. Whilst the previous promotion would have delivered 4,000 homes alongside services and facilities, the resident population associated with 7,500 - 10,000 homes and associated employment land means a greater range of services could be sustained. Additionally, and importantly, the focus of 7,500 - 10,000 homes plus employment land also means that investment in infrastructure enhancements can be focused on one area rather than spread around the Borough in potentially more than one new settlement, making delivery of the overall strategy more viable and the quality of the built environment greater.

The emerging Vision Document and Concept Masterplan will give an indication of the quality of development that would be created in the area building on the Garden Village principles. The original garden towns were built around an ethos of creating sustainable settlements with a mix of housing and employment opportunities as part of well designed, healthy, social and affordable places. The quantum and quality of land available within the promoted site makes it possible to realise this ambition.

As set out above, there is a total of 981 hectares of land within the site area. Of this approximately 300 hectares would be developed for residential and formal employment purposes yielding 7,500 - 10,150 dwellings (at 35 dwellings per hectare) and up to 80 hectares of employment land. This is just 30% of the site with a further 681 hectares available for other uses.

Additional land would be made available for more dispersed, informal employment and retail areas uses across the site. These would sit alongside traditional local centres which would provide day-to-day services for residents as part of a walkable and cyclable settlement.

The quantum of development would generate a population to support two onsite secondary schools which would sit alongside six primary schools, each of which would be at the heart of the community. The settlement would also provide over five hectares of land for allotments for local residents and would be able to support a new sports centres with a range of indoor and outdoor facilities.

As noted above, key to the proposal is the ability to set this development within a green framework including county and linear parks, structural landscaping, retained woodland and formal sports pitches. There is a substantial opportunity to deliver a net gain to local biodiversity and contribute to the ecological enhancement of the site, as well as ensuring local and national policy compliance. This would be to the west of the settlement in what is considered to be the most sensitive area of the site from a landscape and heritage perspective.

A series of country parks would be used to frame the edge of the development, providing a mix of formal and informal open space for residents and visitor to the area. Within these areas, as appropriate, structural landscaping would be provided to filter views from the surrounding area.

Smaller 'fingers' of linear park would then radiate into the development providing a green setting for development within which walking and cycling infrastructure would be provided along with sustainable urban drainage.

The green framework would build on the existing features of the site, including the brooks which run across the site and the pockets of woodland. It would also be used to both mitigate the impact of the development on heritage assets in the area either through providing appropriate buffers or by protecting key views, as is

demonstrated on the Concept Masterplan by the retention of a view from the site through to the Church of St Denys in the west.

Summary and conclusion

This call for sites submission marks the first stage in Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land's promotion of land west of Wyboston as a new settlement which can make a significant contribution to meeting the needs of Bedford in a highly sustainable location.

The land promotion builds on the proposal previously considered by the Council in the preparation of the Local Plan 2030 and, in our view, offers a more sustainable opportunity, largely by virtue of the scale development that can now be achieved. This brings added benefits in terms of the range of services and facilities that can be provided on site and importantly allows greater consideration to be given to the green credentials of the site, particularly the overall ecological enhancements and biodiversity net gain. Furthermore, there is the opportunity for early delivery of key infrastructure to support local needs and aid in establishing integration into the existing community.

The site is also in a key area of the Borough which has been, and will continue to be, a focus for infrastructure investment over the next plan period. Importantly the delivery of the new settlement would sit alongside the delivery of enhanced infrastructure, with projects such as the A428 improvements now funded and committed. It is therefore logical that serious consideration is given to the potential of the area and the scheme that Taylor Wimpey are working to realise.

Moving forward, Taylor Wimpey are committed to working with Bedford Borough Council and other key stakeholders to develop and refine the proposal. The next step will be a response to the ongoing Issues and Options consultation paper which will be followed by a more detailed Vision Document which will further the case as to why land west of Wyboston is the most suitable location for a new settlement as part of the wider spatial strategy.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

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Enclosures:

- **Call for Sites form**
- **Location Plan**
- **Vision Document – supplemental and will be provided in due course**