

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

By e-mail to: planningforthefuture@bedford.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Review of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 – Call for Sites Submission for Willoughby Park, Land north of Roxton Road, Great Barford

On behalf of our client ORS Plc, 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 submission.

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 'Willoughby Park', land north of Roxton Road, Great Barford 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, whilst also enabling the development to conform with Policy 51S of the Local Plan, in engaging with Climate Change matters directly on a suitable site.

As part of the details submitted for our client's site at Willoughby Park, land north of Roxton Road, Great Barford we confirm that this location is free from overriding constraints to availability or suitability and that access can be provided.

Development of our client's site is suitable to provide 500 units, along with an extensive area (totaling 24 hectares) dedicated as a Countryside Park with wildlife ponds and creation of new pathways and access to the surrounding countryside. There would also be the provision of community facilities including the potential for a doctor's surgery, a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and a further two local areas of play which would be located adjacent to the existing village hall, extending the offer of recreational facilities in this location and to the village.

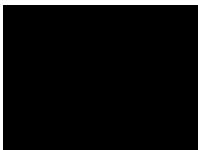
The site is within a sustainable location with easy access to a range of local services and facilities within the centre of Great Barford and is accessible by both foot and cycle. Buildings could be accommodated onsite to take account of existing topography, use of natural light source as well as providing natural surveillance to areas of public open space. The use of renewables will also be considered at detailed design stage.

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 Willoughby Park, land north of Roxton Road, Great Barford is located at the heart of the A421 Corridor spatial option that the Council wishes to test further. This option offers substantial opportunities to meet the Borough's increased requirements for growth without significant constraints to development or barriers to infrastructure. As a Key Service Centre Great Barford can contribute to this option through an increased contribution towards the Borough's housing requirement in the period to 2030 and beyond.

We would invite the Council's Planning Policy Team to reconsider the previous site assessment findings for this location when assessing the submitted details. In the case of our client's site at Willoughby Park, Land north of Roxton Road, Great Barford (Site Ref: 532), the site was partially considered favourably in the Council's 2017 Consultation Paper as part of preferred options for site allocation. The Council's 2018 HELAA records part of the site as suitable, available and achievable for development and in its 2017 Assessment of Site Options the Council identified scope in elements of the site for a positive contribution towards several plan-making objectives. These conclusions remain entirely valid in the context of Great Barford's role as a Key Service Centre and specific planning considerations regarding our client's land.

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,



Managing Director

Encl – Call for Sites Submission Form and Site Location Plan