

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 car park to the east of Bedford Heights Business Centre, Brickhill Drive, Bedford, MK41 7PH

On behalf of client [REDACTED] 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 Local 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.

It should be noted that the Local Housing Need for Bedford is unchanged from 2014 and as such this is the starting point in national policy. The LPA is required under paragraph 23 of the Framework to allocate sufficient sites to deliver the strategic priorities for the area. Paragraph 68 states that small and mediums sized sites can make an important contribution as they are often built out quickly. This site is no exception as the delivery of the site would require little if any infrastructure.

The Review of the Local Plan is an important opportunity to provide 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 need for the Review has increased as a consequence of the foreshortened plan period of the current Plan, and the strategy of apportioning specific (albeit minimum) values for the distribution of leisure uses across the settlement hierarchy and the deferral of site allocations to Neighbourhood Plans. Our client seeks to provide a bespoke 100% specialist and affordable housing development for its lifetime.

We note that there was a shortfall in the delivery of affordable housing in the first three years of the current Local Plan which has not been compensated for since (Appeal Reference: 20/3256134). The allocation of a specific site for specialist supported and affordable housing will contribute to meeting this unaddressed need.

Our client's site at the car park at Bedford Heights Business Centre 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. The site is located within the urban area and would reduce the need for development on green field land outside of the settlement boundary.



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The site is located within the urban area and close to nearby cycle links leading into Bedford Town Centre, which are conveniently located for new residential development. Whilst the site is located within a 'Protect and Maintain' employment site, the site itself is within the car park. As such the development would not compromise or diminish the wider employment led uses at Bedford Heights as there is no loss of employment floorspace. Matters such as an appropriate design for the building and car parking strategy can be addressed through the planning application process and associated discussions.

The site is free from overriding constraints to availability or suitability and that access can be provided. There is an existing access available from Brickhill Drive which could be readily utilised, and the site is located outside of ecologically sensitive areas. It is within Flood Zone 1.

In light of the 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. Our client's site would involve development on brown field land within the urban area and as such would reduce the need to build on green field sites.

In the case of our client's land at the car park at Bedford Heights Business Centre would achieve appropriate levels of growth with sustainable rural settlement.

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 ahead of future stages of consultation regarding the Local Plan Review.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Associate Director

Encl:

- Completed BBC Call for Sites Form
- Location Plan