

Statement of Common Ground

Major Alternative Sites in the Green Belt

**Hicks Gate, SE Bristol**

**Crest Strategic Projects & Key Properties and  
Bath & North East Somerset Council**

13 December 2011

## 1.0 Introduction

As requested by the Core Strategy Inspector, Simon Emerson, Bath & North East Somerset planning authority has been asked to coordinate the production of succinct *Statements of Common Ground* to establish areas of agreement between the hearing participants pursuing major alternative development sites in the Green Belt and the Council to help focus discussion at the hearings.

The Inspector is clear that these must not be a lengthy description of background, but should highlight matters that will assist him with getting to grips with the complex and diverse material relating to the sites, including clear cross referencing to existing material. The content of these statements should as far as possible include:

- What evidence remains relevant and how it should be used
- What evidence is lacking
- What are the critical areas of agreement/disagreement

## 2.0 Description of the site

The Hicks Gate site occupies a strategic location on the south east edge of Bristol on the A4 corridor; the main highway linking Bristol and Bath. The site lies within the Green Belt.

The site promoted by Crest Strategic Projects and Key Properties Limited occupies land both north and south of the A4 and comes under the jurisdiction of two local authorities – Bristol City Council (BCC) and Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES). A range of uses surround the site including employment, recreation, community, leisure, retail and public parkland uses and facilities. A site location plan is attached to this statement that indicates the land promoted by Crest Strategic Projects and Key Properties Limited for development.

The Bristol-Bath Railway line bounds the site to the north while the eastern boundary of the site is formed by the A4174 (Bristol Ring Road), the Hicks Gate Roundabout and agricultural fields. The southern boundary of the site is delineated by the Stockwood Road leading to a large public park (Stockwood Open Space) and a Local Nature Reserve. The south eastern boundary is defined by a series of field boundaries with Stockwood Hill further to the southeast. A Park & Ride facility (operated by Bristol City Council), Long Fox Manor, Heath Farm, Broomhill Nurseries and the residential area of Broomhill form the western boundary of the site. St. Brendan's College is located further to the west.

There are no landownership constraints that would affect the implementation of a comprehensively planned urban extension. Crest Strategic Projects together with Key Properties Limited control the vast majority of land within the site boundary and are working jointly together to promote the proposed urban extension. The parties wish to develop the site in a comprehensive manner.

The majority of the site is in agricultural use however there are a number of other uses within the site boundary. These include Brislington Football Club's and Brislington Cricket Club's playing facilities, Oakleigh House (a listed Georgian country house), Hicks Gate Farm, Wyevale Garden Centre, and Bristol City Council Allotments.

In a wider context, the site is located 5.3 km from Bristol Temple Meads Station (from the B&NES/Bristol administrative boundary on the A4). In addition there are high frequency bus services linking the site to the city centre (the A4 is a showcase bus corridor) whilst pedestrian access towards central Bristol is facilitated via footways alongside the A4.

### 3.0 Matters of Agreement

- A 'Statement of Deliverability' (CD4/UE2) in respect of the Hicks Gate site was prepared on behalf of Crest Strategic Projects and Key Properties in January 2010 and was submitted to Bath and North East Somerset Council and Bristol City Council to assist both Councils with the preparation of their respective Core Strategies. The statement comprises the following sections:

- Introduction
- Planning Background
- Evidence Base Analysis
- Development Proposals
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Conclusions

A masterplan document is included as part of the Statement of Deliverability which demonstrates how Crest/Key Properties consider the land could be brought forward for mixed use development. The Statement of Deliverability is also supported by a number of technical submissions (already supplied to the Inspector). The technical evidence submitted is agreed to contain information relevant to the site but it has not been commented on formally by the Council, considering that the principle of development in this broad location is not supported by the Council and the site does not form part of the spatial strategy in the Submission Core Strategy.

- A Sustainability Appraisal of development at the site has been prepared by the Council in the context of the potential Significant Changes to the Core Strategy (November 2010) (CD4/A10). An alternative assessment of how the proposed development of the Hicks Gate site performs against the criteria within the Council's original Sustainability Appraisal is set out in Chapter 5 of the Deliverability Statement.
- The appraisal of the accessibility of the Hicks Gate site as part of the Core Strategy (Spatial Options) appraisals as referenced in paragraph 5.4 of the Sustainability Statement is agreed: *'The Hicks Gate development in option B particularly had good access to Bristol facilities and services due to good public transport accessibility.'*
- Hicks Gate is considered by the Council's Officers to be the preferred location for inclusion as a long-term contingency location for up to 700 dwellings when compared to three alternative Green Belt locations as set out in the Report to Council dated 15 September 2011 (CD5/24). However, the inclusion of this as a Proposed Change to the Submission draft was rejected by the Council. The report to Council states:

*"Hicks Gate area has a critical role in the Bristol-Bath Green Belt maintaining the separation of Keynsham and Bristol. Development at this location would significantly impact on this green belt gap. However, by keeping development back from the ridge-line the highest landscape impact can be significantly avoided. This could also maintain the principle of the green belt gap" (CD5/24 page 29)*

- Relevance of the Bristol City Core Strategy: it is agreed that the recently examined and adopted Bristol Core Strategy (June 2011) is relevant to the B&NES Core Strategy having particular regard to the following:
  - The provisions of Policy BCS6 which acknowledge that proposals for urban extensions in the Green Belt may come forward via the development plans of neighbouring authorities and the City Council's willingness to work with neighbouring authorities on the accommodation of any appropriate proposals:

*'Proposals for urban extensions in the Green Belt beyond Bristol City Council's boundaries may emerge through the development plans of neighbouring authorities. If appropriate proposals come forward the Council will continue to work with the adjoining authorities to consider the impact on existing areas, to assess infrastructure requirements and to ensure integrated and well-planned communities are created to the benefit of existing and future residents.'* (Policy BCS6)

- Identification of the Hicks Gate site as an appropriate contingency site for development as set out in Policy BCS5 (delivering up to 800 homes in the Bristol City area if required).

## 4.0 Matters in Dispute

- Crest Strategic Projects and Key Properties Ltd believe that the Core Strategy is unsound in its current form, on the basis that the housing target (11,000 homes) proposed within the plan, fails to address the level of need and demand within B&NES over the period 2006-2026.
- Crest and Key Properties position that the Hicks Gate site represents a key strategic site that would sustainably cater for housing and economic demand and need generated within B&NES and the Bristol sub-region.
- Crest Strategic Projects and Key Properties Ltd critique of the Council's Sustainability Appraisal of the draft Core Strategy (CD4/A10) as set out in Chapter 5 of the Statement of Delivery (CD4/UE2).
- The extent to which there is likely to be displaced demand and need for housing in Bristol that will need to be addressed by neighbouring Local Authorities.
- Whilst the Council is of the view that the Core Strategy as submitted is sound, should the inspector conclude that it is unsound in respect of either the level of housing and economic development it plans for or the degree of flexibility required there is disagreement between the parties regarding the process by which one or other of these aspects of unsoundness would be addressed and the likely need to identify greenfield locations as a result. At the time of the Core Strategy Spatial Options document the Council was of the view that, if required, urban extension development should take place at locations within areas of search to the south east of Bristol and the south/south west of Bath. Following submission of the draft Core Strategy which does not plan for urban extension development and consideration of the Inspector's preliminary comments and questions (ID/1) the officer report to Council on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011 (CD5/24) recommended that, in the context of identifying a long-term contingency location for about 700 dwellings, the preferred location is Hicks Gate when compared to three alternative Green Belt locations. The Council is of the view that the most appropriate solution for either contingency location(s) or strategic allocation(s) (as the basis for re-consultation) would be dependent upon: (i) the scale of contingency/allocation required; (ii) relevance of existing evidence; and (iii) any new evidence available. Crest Strategic Projects and Key Properties accept this as the Council's position and acknowledge that in the context of contingency for about 700 dwellings the officer report is useful in helping to determine the most appropriate Green Belt locations for consideration, without prejudicing the Council's re-assessment of options that would be needed. However, Crest/Key Properties consider that alternative routes are available to address this area of soundness; these routes will be rehearsed in the relevant position statements.

## 5.0 Declaration

The contents of this document are agreed for the purposes of the B&NES Core Strategy hearing.

Signed on behalf of Participant

*S. Jittin* .....

Position *TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, RPS* .....

Date *13/12/11* .....

Signed on behalf of LPA

*R. D...* .....

Position *PLANNING POLICY TEAM LEADER* .....

Date *13/12/11* .....





