

Statement of Common Ground

B&NES Core Strategy – Alternative Green Belt Site at Hicks Gate

Pegasus Planning Group on behalf of
Stratland LLP
and
Bath & North East Somerset Council

12 February 2014

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In his note of 3rd January 2013 (ID/44) the Inspector outlined his requirements in terms of Statements of Common Ground that he would like to be prepared in advance of his preparation for the hearings in March/April 2014. He has also confirmed the dates and scope of coverage for these hearing sessions.
- 1.2 The Inspector has requested that the Council and the various owners/developers/promoters of the Green Belt sites proposed for allocation in the November 2013 Amendments should prepare Statements of Common Ground relating to delivery and environmental impact of those allocations as per the Council's proposals in the following revised policies:
 - B3A Land Adjoining Odd Down, Bath
 - B3B Land Adjoining Weston, Bath
 - KE3A Land Adjoining East Keynsham
 - KE4 Land Adjoining South West Keynsham
 - RA5 Land at Whitchurch
- 1.3 The deadline for submission of hard copies of these Statements of Common Ground to the Inspector is noon on 14th February 2014; the Council has a working deadline of 7th **February** in order to ensure timely completion.
- 1.4 The Inspector has specified in ID/44 what the Statements of Common Ground, should include (but not be limited to), this template covers these issues accordingly:
 - Delivery: Availability/start on site/likely annual completions (assuming that the Core Strategy is adopted by Autumn 2014).
 - Evidence already submitted relating to the main documents, including the evidence from landowners/developers included in the Core Documents or submitted with representations to the November consultation.
 - The Statement of Common Ground should make clear which parts of evidence are agreed and where there is disagreement briefly the main reasons for that disagreement.
- 1.5 The Inspector has suggested that the Statements of Common Ground may need to involve parties not currently active in the Examination, but they will only have a right to be heard if they have already made representations at an appropriate opportunity. The Council considers that this relates primarily to landowners who have not previously been involved in the examination process prior to Nov-Dec 2013.
- 1.6 In addition, Statements of Common Ground between the Council and other promoters in relation to their suggested alternative or enlarged proposals are welcomed by the Inspector as separate submissions. This Statement of Common Ground relates to an alternative proposal.

2.0 Description of the site

- 2.1 Land controlled by Stratland LLP in the Hicks Gate area is shown on the attached map (BRS.4826_01-1a) together with land controlled by Crest Strategic Properties and Key Properties, which is the subject of separate representations and a separate Statement of Common Ground.
- 2.2 The Stratland LLP parcels include two areas in Bath & North East Somerset, south of the Hicks Gate Roundabout (A4/A4174): Area A (2.3 hectares) and Area C (11.8 hectares); and one area in Bristol, north of Ironmould Lane: Area B (3.7 hectares).
- 2.3 Hicks Gate is strategically located for an extension to the built-up area of Bristol. It is 4 miles from the Hicks Gate roundabout to the Temple Gate roundabout in Bristol and closer to the City Centre than some parts of the existing urban area. It is on two major transport corridors, A4 and A4174 and is well served by public transport as well as cycleways along the A4 and Bath-Bristol Railway Path.
- 2.4 The Hicks Gate Development Concept Options Report by Arup (March 2013 – CD9/CO8) includes Site A (as B2) and the western part of Site C (as B1) in ‘Option 1’. It includes factual descriptions of the opportunities, constraints and infrastructure requirements for the wider area. It also describes the varied topography and the coverage of trees and hedgerows. The ridgeline along Stockwood Lane to the south, the railway line to the north and the A4147 to the east all form strong defensible boundaries for the wider Hicks Gate area. Para 1.1 of the Concept Options Report clarifies their status, i.e. that the assessments are used to help consider the various locations for development, are not in themselves policy, and that by publishing them the Council is not agreeing to the development capacities identified. Subsequent to the Arup Concept Options Report further work has been undertaken by the Council exploring the impacts of development in this location
- 2.5 Sites B and C are currently in agricultural use. Site A was last used as a storage facility for the construction of the roundabout and Avon Ring Road (A4174).
- 2.6 See map included in **Appendix 1** (BRS.4826_01-1a)

3.0 Delivery: Matters of Agreement or Disagreement

- 3.1 Stratland’s view is that development of the sites controlled by Stratland could be achieved within five years, if the land were released from the Green Belt.
- 3.2 Stratland’s view is that area A could be developed for business uses and/or roadside services such as hotel accommodation and catering facilities, to serve

Keynsham and the A4/A4174 corridors and that areas A, B and C are also suitable for housing. The Council disagrees.

- 3.3 Area B is in Bristol where it forms a link between the existing urban area and the land controlled by Crest Strategic Properties/Key Properties which they are promoting through the Core Strategy as an urban extension.
- 3.4 Pegasus confirms that there are no ownership constraints that would prevent a comprehensively planned urban extension. Stratland LLP is keen to work on a comprehensive scheme with Crest Strategic Properties/Key Properties, who control most of the Hicks Gate area, although Areas A, B and C are also capable of being accessed and developed independently.
- 3.5 The 2013 SHLAA includes Area A and part of Area C in SEB2c and the western part of Area C in SEB2d. It describes SEB2b as largely suitable for development, SEB2c is also described as suitable although the high landscape and visual impacts would be greater (stating that development in parts of this area would have an unacceptably high impact on the distinctive undulating landscape) and SEB2d as not suitable. The eastern part of Area C is not appraised.
- 3.6 There is no formal agreement between Stratland LLP and Crest Strategic Properties/Key Properties about the development of their respective areas, but Stratland LLP is confident that proposals on their sites can complement proposals by Crest Strategic Properties/Key Properties on their sites to achieve a comprehensively planned development for the whole area.
- 3.7 Stratland LLP therefore agrees with matters raised in the Statement of Common Ground by Crest Strategic Properties/Key Properties (BNES/xx) about the strategic significance of the Hicks Gate area and its potential to contribute to serving the development needs of Bath & North East Somerset and Bristol, subject to some changes in the masterplan that affect land controlled by Stratland LLP.

4.0 Key relevant evidence

- 4.1 Key evidence prepared by the Council in relation to land at Hicks Gate includes:

Key evidence submitted 2011-2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South East Bristol Urban Extension – Key References CD6/O3 • Topic Paper 2 – Overall Strategy CD6/S3 • Previous iterations of SHLAA • Green Spaces Strategy CD4/ENV3
Additional evidence to support proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hicks Gate Development Concept Options Report CD9/CO8 • Green Belt Review Stage 1 CD9/E2

changes Submitted March -Sept 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing Viability Study CD9/H1 • Flood Risk: The Sequential and Exception Tests Update CD9/FR3 • Infrastructure Delivery Plan CD9/I1 • Preliminary Ecological Survey and Assessment: South East Bristol Urban Extension: Location Option 2 – Hicks Gate CD9/E4 • Transport Evaluation Report: Main Report (CD9/I2/1); Appendix I: Hicks Gate, Keynsham Evaluation (CD9/I2/10)
Documents associated with the Core Strategy strategic site allocation Submitted Nov 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bath and North East Somerset – Community Infrastructure Levy: Strategic greenfield allocations – viability testing CD10/E7 • Renewable Energy Assessment for B&NES Green Belt sites: Assessment CD10/E16 • Valuing people, place and nature – a Green Infrastructure Strategy for B&NES CD10/E17 • Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) CD10/E19 • B&NES 51
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Appraisal Annex L – Locational Alternative Appraisal Matrices CD9/A1/5 • Sustainability Appraisal Matrices (Annex O) CD10/A1/3 • Previous iterations of the SA

5.0 Summary of Agreed Matters

- 5.1 The following are matters agreed between the various parties and are therefore reproduced from the Statement of Common Ground produced by Crest Strategic Properties and Key Properties.
- 5.2 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.’*
- 5.3 In its report to Council dated 15 September 2011 (CD5/24) and within the context of the housing requirement and housing supply at the time, Hicks Gate was 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. 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)

5.4 However, the inclusion of this as a Proposed Change to the Submission draft Core Strategy was rejected by the Council. The Council has subsequently pursued a spatial strategy that seeks to release land from the Green Belt at two of the three alternative locations previously assessed in CD5/24 (Whitchurch and Odd Down, and other sites at Bath and Keynsham).

5.5 Relevance of the Bristol City Core Strategy: it is agreed that the 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 within the Bristol City Council administrative area as set out in Policy BCS5 (delivering up to 800 homes in the Bristol City area if required).

6.0 Summary of Matters in Dispute

6.1 There continues to be dispute between the parties on the following matters.

6.2 In common with Crest Strategic Properties and Key Properties, Stratland LLP believes that the draft Core Strategy is unsound in its current form, for a number of reasons:

- The proposed housing target fails to address housing requirements in Bath & North East Somerset or the wider needs of the Sub-Regional Housing Market Area, which includes Bristol.
- The draft Strategy fails to apply the Duty to Co-operate because it has not addressed the potentially unmet housing needs of the Bristol Core Strategy as described in the Inspector’s report (paragraphs 49-54), or even to consider adequately the impacts of the Bristol housing market on demand

for existing and new housing in those parts of Bath & North East Somerset that are closely related to Bristol.

- Hicks Gate is a key location that can cater for the demands of housing, economic activity, open space and other land uses, in a strategic urban extension.

The Council disagrees with this view and considers that it is not consistent with the Inspectors conclusions in ID/44.

- 6.3 Stratland LLP believes that the Inspector should find the draft Core Strategy unsound unless the housing target is increased beyond 14,000, Hicks Gate (as defined on the attached plan) is allocated as a strategic urban extension and Green Belt boundaries in this area are amended accordingly. The Council disagrees with this view and it is not consistent with the Inspectors conclusions in ID/44.
- 6.4 Alternatively, if the Inspector considers that he must find the Core Strategy sound without the allocation of a strategic urban extension at Hicks Gate, Stratland LLP consider he should recommend that land at Hicks Gate is designated as '*safeguarded land*' in accordance with paragraph 85 of the NPPF: to meet longer-term development needs following a review or partial review of the Core Strategy in conjunction with a review of the Bristol Core Strategy. The Council disagrees.
- 6.5 The Bristol Core Strategy is due for review by 2016, which is expected to follow a Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the West of England in 2014/15. In Stratland's view a mechanism will need to be available at that time to facilitate a joint review of Green Belt in the Hicks Gate area by Bristol City Council and Bath & North East Somerset Council.
- 6.6 In Stratland's view the provision of '*safeguarded land*' at Hicks Gate will make it possible for a partial review of the Bath & North East Somerset Core Strategy to work in conjunction with a review of the Bristol Core Strategy; releasing land from the Green Belt in a co-ordinated way across council boundaries to achieve a comprehensively planned urban extension, serving the housing and other needs of both districts.

7.0 Declaration

- 7.1 The content of this document is agreed for the purposes of the B&NES Core Strategy hearing 2013.

Signed on behalf of Stratland LLP:


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Position: Director of Pegasus Planning Group

Date: 24 January 2014

and

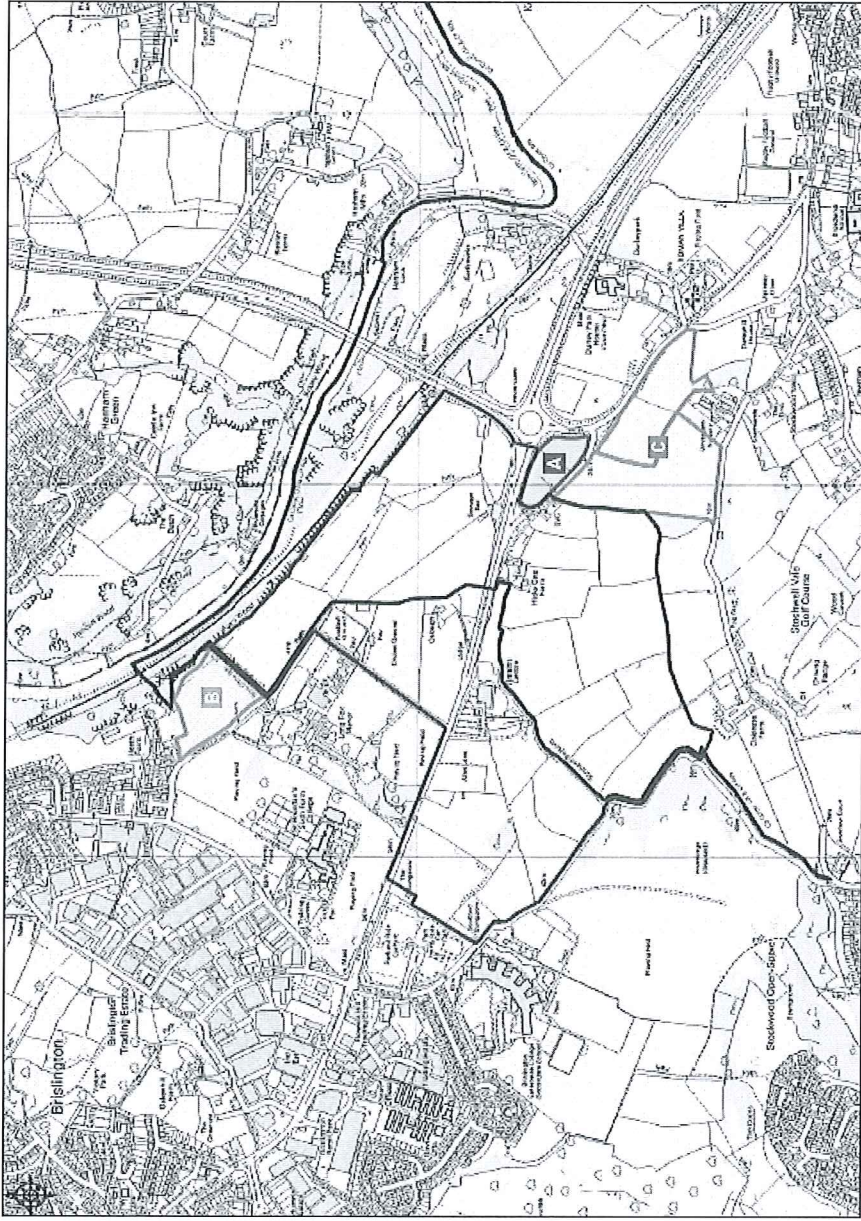
Signed on behalf of Bath & North East Somerset Council:





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Position: Planning Policy Team Leader

Date: 13/02/14

Appendix 1: Site Plan (BRS.4826_01-1a)



- KEY**
-  Stratland LLP, Site A
5.6 Acres
 -  Stratland LLP, Site B
8.1 Acres
 -  Stratland LLP, Site C
29.2 Acres
 -  Cross Nicholson/
Key Presenties
 -  Council Boundary

Hicks Gate,
Bristol
Context Plan
Stratland LLP

www.pegasuse.com
1st January 2014
1:10000000
Pegasus
Partners
BRS.4826_01-1a

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