

Statement of Common Ground

Major Alternative Sites in the Green Belt:
Land to the west of Twerton (Bath)

Woolf Bond Planning LLP

on behalf of

The Prince's Foundation

and

The Duchy of Cornwall

13 December 2011

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 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* ("SoCG") to establish areas of agreement between those hearing participants pursuing major alternative development sites in the Green Belt and the Council to help focus discussion at the hearings.
- 1.2 The Inspector is clear that these must not be lengthy description 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 include:
- What evidence remains relevant and how it should be used
 - What evidence is lacking
 - What are the critical areas of agreement/disagreement
- 1.3 This SoCG has been prepared between the LPA and Woolf Bond Planning LLP (on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall). It sets out matters of agreement, as well as those in dispute, with the aim of assisting the inspector in his assessment of the merits of the West of Twerton as an option in providing for an urban extension.

2.0 Description of the site

General

- 2.1. The Duchy of Cornwall owns approximately 2,532ha of land to the south and west of Bath which includes 88ha of land located to the west of Twerton, adjoining the urban area of Bath. The 88ha is edged red on the plans included in the Urban Extension Development Proposal document (Feb 2011) (CD4/UE1) submitted with our representations upon the Submission Draft Core Strategy and identified at diagrams 26 and 27 of the Spatial Options Document, October 2009 (CD5/4). It comprises land referred to as "West of Twerton" which is being promoted by the Duchy as a sustainable urban extension to Bath.
- 2.2. The site is broadly triangular in shape, extending from the Globe roundabout (the junction of the A39 and A4) to the west to Twerton to the east. The northern boundary is formed by the A4 and the Bristol to London railway whilst Whiteway Road/Pennyquick define the southern boundary to the site. This is a main road serving the village of Newton St Loe, as well as providing a link to the south of Bath.

Landscape and Policy Designations

- 2.3. The site is located on the western edge of Bath. It is not within the Cotswold AONB or the World Heritage Site ("WHS"), although it is located within the Green Belt.

Sustainability and Connectivity

- 2.4. The site is located within 2km of the City Centre.
- 2.5. Public bus routes run along the A4, connecting to Bath, the University and beyond Bristol.
- 2.6. There are a number of existing Public Rights of Way that cross the site and a series of tunnels underneath the railway that allow access to the river valley and direct links with the Sustrans Bristol and Bath cycle path to the north.

3.0 Summary of Agreed Matters

- 3.1. Matters are agreed as follows:

- The site was identified in the 2009 Spatial Options Document (CD5/4) as the preferred location for an urban extension adjoining the urban area of Bath.
- For the purposes of general conformity as set out in Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the regional strategy is RPG10.
- The site could provide a mix of house types and tenures, including a significant proportion of affordable housing.
- The Preferred Core Strategy option at West of Twerton is not located in the floodplain, with the exception of the eastern edge of the site around Newton Brook which lies within flood zone 3.
- The Duchy of Cornwall has prepared and submitted an Urban Extension Development Proposal (CD4/UE1).
- The Arup report commissioned by the Council (CD4/ENV6) sets out an assessment of the slope, geology and stability conditions of the urban extension options, including land west of Twerton.
- The site is comprised mainly of monoculture arable fields.
- The methodology for the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the 2009 Core Strategy Spatial Options (CD4/A9).
- The findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the 2009 Core Strategy Spatial Options (CD4/A9) which did not identify any likely significant effects of development at West of Twerton (SWB1 in CD5/4).

4.0 Matters in Dispute

4.1. There continues to be disagreement between the parties in relation to the following:

- The overall housing requirement to be met during the plan period.
- The Duchy's position that there is a need to review the Green Belt in order to remove land from it to provide for an urban extension at Bath based upon the 11,000 dwelling requirement set out at Core Strategy Policy DW1.
- The weight to be attached to the evidence supporting draft RSS (CD3/4) and the draft RSS incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes.
- Landscape/visual impacts of development in this location, in particular the inter relationship with and impact on the setting of the World Heritage Site
- The significance of issues presented by slope instability and undermining of land West of Twerton (SWB1 in CD5/4).
- 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.

5.0 Declaration

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

Signed on behalf of Woolf Bond Planning:

..... *Jeremy Woolf*
 Position..... *Agent for Duchy of Cornwall*
 Date *12/12/11*

Signed on behalf of the LPA:

..... *R. Dams*
 Position..... *PLANNING POLICY TEAM LEADER*
 Date *13/12/11*