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13 December 2024

EXAMINATION OF THE ASHFIELD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

HEARING STATEMENT

Matter 9 – The supply and delivery of housing land

Matter 10 – Site allocations

Stainton Planning previously submitted representations in response to the Local Plan consultation on behalf of Evolution Homes and has registered to participate at the hearing sessions on 22nd and 23rd January 2024.

Charlotte Stainton will be representing Evolution Homes in relation to Matter 10, proposed site allocation: **H1St - Land off Blackwell Road/Main Street, Huthwaite (Sutton Area Site Allocations)**. On this basis we have registered to attend the Examination on Day 5 i.e. Wed 22 Jan 2025.

Charlotte will also be representing Evolution Homes, in relation to Matter 9, The Supply and Delivery of Housing Land, although this will specifically be in relation to the deliverability and timescales of site H1St and it is possible that this evidence can be provided on Day 5. We have also registered to attend on Day 6 i.e. Thurs 23rd Jan 2025, in case this is required.

At the Examination, Charlotte Stainton of Stainton Planning wishes to rely on previous submissions made, and also make comments in response to the Main Matter questions as follows.

MAIN MATTER 9 -THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF HOUSING LAND

On 12th December 2024 Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister for Housing and Planning, wrote to RTPI President Lindsey Richards.

This letter included the following comments: “We inherited a housing crisis. The average new home is out of reach for the average worker, housing costs consume a third of private renters’ income, and the number of children in temporary accommodation is at a historic high. Yet just 220,000 new homes were built last year and the number of homes granted planning permission has fallen to its lowest in a decade.

We have acted with the urgency this crisis demands. We published a consultation on a revised National Planning Policy Framework within a month of gaining office, proposing measures to reverse anti-supply changes introduced in December 2023 and in their place setting out pro-growth reforms. These included ambitious new housebuilding targets and a modernised Green Belt policy, alongside a wider set of changes designed to boost the supply of land and better meet community needs”.

There is no doubt that the supply and delivery of housing land is a top priority of the Government and that Local Plans must ensure that a deliverable and developable supply of housing land of a variety of types and locations is available.

Under Matter 10 below, the total number of dwellings expected to be delivered, and the timing of projected completions, in relation to site H1St are set out in a revised version of the Council’s Housing Land Supply Position Statement table. This indicates a reduction in the number of houses to be delivered on this site from 99 to 86 and also brings forward the completion years. This needs to be taken into account when considering the District-wide figures and the number of homes estimated to be delivered on each site needs to be carefully considered to ensure that this over-estimation is not occurring for other sites.

Stainton Planning is concerned about an over-reliance on windfall sites to deliver homes and does not consider that the indicated increase of 31 dwellings per annum in the windfall sites has been appropriately evidenced.

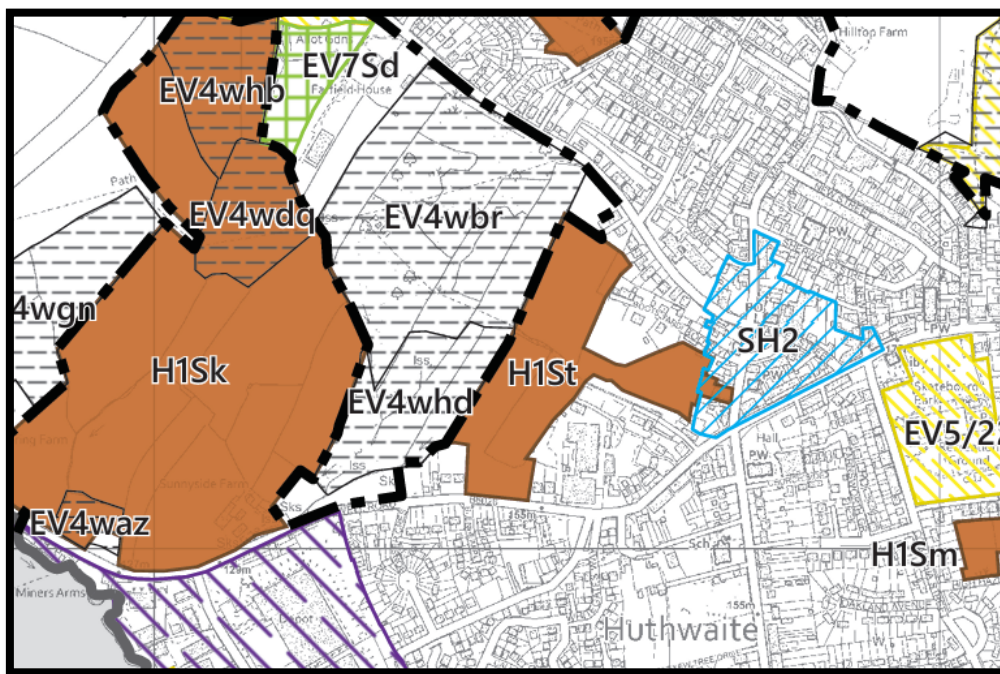
Given the significant housing need in this District and across the country, the available and deliverable sites evidenced through the Local Plan process should be allocated for development so they can come forward for development ASAP.

MAIN MATTER 10 – SITE ALLOCATIONS

Whether the proposed site allocations are justified and deliverable/ developable at the point envisaged

Relevant Policies –H1, S6a and S6b

Stainton Planning are representing Evolution Homes in relation to site H1St as shown below on an extract from the North Map of the Regulation 19 Local Plan.



Ashfield District Council is proposing to allocate this site for the delivery of 99 homes, with delivery anticipated as shown in the Housing Land Supply Position Statement October 2024 (Sutton Area Page 11):

Site	pp	SHELAA	Address	Area	Total	Yr1	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
H1St	n/a	SA082	Blackwell Rd/Main St Huthwaite	4.42	99	0	0	0	9	35	35	20

Evolution Homes Land Control

The plan below (and at Appendix 1 -Phasing Plan and Indicative Layout) shows the land currently under the control of Evolution Homes. Evolution Homes have an option agreement over this land as follows:

Phase 1 (pink 0.36ha) – Option date for purchase December 2024

Phase 2 (Yellow 0.73ha) – Option date for purchase July 2025

Phase 3 (blue 0.94ha) – Option date for purchase December 2025

Phase 4 (grey 0.90ha) – Option date for purchase December 2026

The completion of this option agreement and development of the indicative plan demonstrates Evolution Homes commitment to delivery of this scheme.



Evolution Homes have prepared draft plans for the proposed development of this land which indicates that these four phases are likely to deliver 66 homes.

The indicative layout has been developed following a detailed analysis of the topography of the site, advice from HSP Consulting in relation to access and transport and drainage with initial consideration of noise and odour issues, a biodiversity survey by Armstrong Ecology and discussion with Blue Willow Heritage.

The intention is to serve Phase 1-3 and the third-party land via access off Blackwell Road and Phase 4 via an access off Main Street. The site topography would make an access link between phases 3 and 4 difficult to achieve but there would be a pedestrian and cycle link.

Third Party Land

The Inspector will note that the land to the northern side of proposed allocation H1St is not currently in the control of Evolution Homes. Evolution Homes are currently in discussions with the landowner over this part of the site and hope to have an option agreement finalised soon.

The indicative layout has been designed such that vehicular access could be achieved to the third-party land from Evolution Homes Phase 3 (blue land). Due to the topography of the site, it is estimated that the third-party land can potentially deliver 20 dwellings.

Although the third-party land is not currently in the control of Evolution Homes it is considered logical that this land be included in the proposed site allocation given there are existing dwellings to the north and east and proposed biodiversity site to the west.

Planning Permission Status & Inspector Comments

In both the Regulation 19 Local Plan and in the Council's Housing Land Supply Position Statement October 2024 (Sutton Area Page 11) the Council has failed to acknowledge that full planning permission V/2022/0601 was granted 3 June 2024, for the erection of nine dwellings as Phase 1 of this development.

Appendix 2 provides a copy of the appeal decision in relation to V/2022/0601. The appeal reference is APP/W3005/W/24/3336447.

Appendix 3 provides a copy of the site layout plan (Revision B) approved as a result of the appeal being allowed.

In allowing the appeal the Inspector made the following comments which the Local Plan Inspector is asked to note:

Paragraph 24: "the provision of nine dwellings would make a very positive contribution to the housing under-supply provision in social terms. Moreover, the proposal would seek to make efficient use of land in a sustainable location".

Paragraph 26: "I find some limited and localised harm would be caused to the open and undeveloped character of the appeal site. Despite this limited harm, the dwellings would nonetheless assimilate well with other properties in the area and would be suitably designed. They would closely relate to the adjacent settlement and would not be appreciated as an isolated form of development".

Paragraph 28: "the harm caused to the character and appearance of the countryside would be localised and limited".

Paragraph 29: "There is no reasonable evidence to substantiate the Council's claim that the proposal would not be acceptable from a functional, safe and accessible point of view. In reaching this conclusion, I have had regard to consultee responses, none of which advise refusal of planning permission".

It is worth noting that the Planning Officer recommended approval of this application for nine dwellings but it was refused at Planning Committee contrary to their recommendations. Full costs were awarded to the appellant against the Council.

The approval of V/2022/0601 has secured the purchase of Phase 1 which is currently being finalised.

The pre-commencement condition information (4 Drainage, 11 highways design, 14 site investigation and 16 badger survey) in relation to V/2022/0601 will be submitted shortly, with the intention to start work on site towards the end of February 2025.

Stainton Planning was instructed in October 2024 to prepare an outline planning application for Plots 10-42 (i.e. Phases 2 and 3 shown in yellow and blue) and the supporting work for this is currently underway.

During the course of the outline application for phases 2 and 3, initial work will continue in relation to Phase 4 as well as negotiation in relation to the third-party land.

This demonstrates a clear intention of Evolution Homes to deliver homes on this site.

Delivery of Each Phase

Evolution Homes have confirmed their intention that the scheme would be delivered as follows:

Site	pp	SHELAA	Address	Area	Total	Yr1	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31
H1St	V/2022/0601 Plots 1-9	SA082	Blackwell Rd/Main St Huthwaite	4.42	86	0	0	Plots 1-6 6	Plots 7-12 6	Plots 13-25 13	Plots 26-37 12	Plots 38-66 29	Plots 67-86 20

Evolution Homes version of Council Delivery Table.

The table above demonstrates that Evolution Homes intend to start the development sooner than has been anticipated in the Council's housing trajectory.

It also shows that Evolution Homes reasonably anticipate that the proposed housing allocation will deliver 86 homes in total (compared with 99 the Council has estimated) -although more work is needed on the proposed layout for the third-party land in particular.

Conclusion

The inclusion of site H1St in the Ashfield Local Plan is justified and deliverable/developable. The site can deliver a significant number of homes to the Council land supply and this delivery would substantially be achieved within five years.

Evolution Homes have signed an option agreement with the landowner for phases 1-4, and phase 5 (referred to as third-party land in this statement) is under negotiation.

Planning permission has already been granted on appeal, for Phase 1, and Evolution Homes are expected to complete the purchase of this land in the near future. Work will start on Phase 1 in late February 2025. This planning permission is missing from the Council's Housing Land Supply Position Statement table.

An Outline application for Phases 2 and 3, and later for phase 4, will be submitted in 2025. If the site is allocated in the new Ashfield Local Plan during 2025 it may be that Evolution Homes decide to go straight to the full planning application stage.

Significant technical work was undertaken for the Phase 1 planning application and additional work is underway for discharging conditions and the submission of applications for the later phases.

This statement has demonstrated a clear intention to bring forward site H1St for development at the earliest opportunity. Stainton Planning will of course be very happy to answer any questions that the Inspector may have in relation to this site.

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