

# Winchester District Local Plan (2020-2040)

## Hearing Statement Relating to Matter 3 On Behalf of Bellway Strategic Land

April 2025

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Client

Bellway Strategic Land

Date of Issue

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared on behalf of our client Bellway Strategic Land ('Bellway') and the landowners' agent Ian Judd and Partners in response to the publication of the Winchester District Local Plan 2020-2040 (the 'Plan').

1.2 Representations have previously been submitted to the Council's Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 consultation stages of the Winchester District Local Plan on behalf of Bellway and the landowners' agent; this included documentation which set out the significant planning benefits of the site, which adjoins the settlement boundary of Bishop's Waltham.

### **Bellway Homes' Interest**

1.3 Bellway Homes have a specific interest in land within the Plan area adjacent to Crown Hill House, to the east of Botley Road, Bishop's Waltham, Winchester, SO32 1DQ. Botley Road, the B3035, is a main road into Bishop's Waltham from Botley to the south. The site comprises a single field paddock that is framed by a mature hedgerow interspersed with trees on its northern, eastern and southern boundaries and a modest hedgerow on its western boundary.

1.4 The site measures approximately 2.62 hectares and is currently an undeveloped parcel of land that adjoins the settlement boundary of Bishop's Waltham to the south-east. The site is situated between existing dwellings and the character of the site is influenced by the presence of these dwellings and the urban edge of the settlement to the north.

1.5 The site is sustainably located within walking distance of the town centre and is connected by pavements. The measured walking distance between the centre of the site and the clock tower in the centre of St George's Square is just 395 metres, this being a comfortable, convenient and very sustainable five-minute walk.

1.6 There are bus stops located at St George's Square within 400m of the site providing good connections to Winchester, Fareham and Portsmouth and numerous small settlements between, including Wickham and Swanmore. The site is a sustainable location for development in our view and this site represents a valuable opportunity for a development which would relate very well to the existing settlement.

1.7 The site is shown outlined in red on the aerial photograph below and full details of our vision for the site are contained within the 'Botley Road, Bishop's Waltham Vision Document' that was submitted alongside Regulation 19 stage representations.

- 1.8 The site has not been allocated for development; it is therefore an 'omission site' and we continue to promote it for development because of our concerns that the Plan will not deliver enough homes that the evidence confirms are required.
- 1.9 The site is shown edged in red below, and this helps to show the site's relationship with the town, the high street, the town square and local schools. The aerial photograph shows the recent developments to the north-west of the site that were considered to be developments in sustainable locations despite their location further away from the town centre.



Aerial Photograph Showing the Site Outlined in Red, by Courtesy of Google Maps © All Rights Reserved

### **This Statement**

- 1.10 This brief Hearing Statement has been prepared in accordance with the prevailing planning policy and guidance, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), September 2023 and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 1.11 We do not seek to unnecessarily repeat points raised in the representations submitted by Bellway, but we have answered the questions posed by the Planning Inspector in the Matters, Issues and Questions (ED13) where we feel it would be helpful to do so.
- 1.12 Gillings Planning, on behalf of Bellway and the landowners' agent wish to take a full and active part in the relevant Hearing sessions relating to their interests in the site.

## 2.0 Our Responses to the Matters, Issues and Questions

### Matter 3 – The Plan’s vision and strategic policies SP1, SP2 and SP3

**Issue: 1 – Whether the Vision and strategic policies SP1, SP2 and SP3 are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.**

#### Policy SP2

**Q1.** Given the transitional arrangements set out in NPPF December 2024 paragraphs 234-236) would a modification requiring a Plan review within a stated timescale be clear and effective? Given the above national policy would such a modification be necessary for soundness?

2.1 Yes, if it is possible that the Plan can be found sound in all other respects, then yes, in our view a modification requiring a Plan review is absolutely necessary. There simply must be a written and adopted commitment to deliver an early Plan review, and it must be cast in such a way that does not require it to merely be ‘commenced’ it must include all stages with milestones and deadlines established, and this can then be used to ‘hold the Council’s feet to the fire’. Such a timetable, if missed, can then be a material consideration when planning application or planning appeal proposals are being considered.

**Q2.** To accord with national policy at NPPF paragraph 60, to boost significantly the supply of homes, should the numbers expressed in policy SP2 be stated as minimums?

Yes, of course. We are in the midst of a housing crisis, and an economic crisis. Housing growth is not just imperative to address the UK housing crisis, it is also essential if we are to secure the economic future of the UK. Maximum thresholds will throttle growth unnecessarily.

#### Policy SP3

**Q1.** Does the policy strike the right balance between protecting the countryside and promoting development to meet local needs? Should the policy explicitly recognise the sustainability of locations immediately adjacent to existing settlement boundaries or previously developed land;

2.2 As we have set out in our Regulation 19 representations, and not repeated here, the policy is overly protectionist in its approach; and of course, with the world’s climate being

at a pivotal moment; we must of course as town planners seek to recognise and locate development in the most sustainable locations; and this includes locations that immediately adjoin an existing sustainable settlement with good connections to the services and amenities that it has to offer. Bellway's site which is an enviable 395 metres away from the town square would be such a site.

**Q2.** Would policy SP3 accord with NPPF paragraph 89, which states that '... The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.'?

- 2.3 As we have stated in our Regulation 19 representations, and not repeated here, Policy SP3 is written to restrict all housing in the Plan area to site allocations as set out at (i.) and 'exceptional' housing options such as affordable housing exception sites, agricultural dwellings and traveller accommodation at (vi.).
- 2.4 Given that the Plan is overly reliant on windfall allowances in our opinion, it is difficult to understand where they can be provided with Policy SP3 being so restrictive. The policy as drafted will be reliant therefore on brownfield sites and affordable housing exception sites to deliver the windfall allowance, and this is not credible and will not be effective.
- 2.5 Sites such as Bellway's site in Bishop's Waltham would be a very good candidate for a site that could come forward if Policy SP3 recognised that sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements should be encouraged.