
Charnwood Local Plan Examination

Matter 6 – Urban Area Policies, Site Selection, Sustainable Urban Extensions and Housing Site Allocations

Define Planning and Design Ltd on behalf of Bloor Homes Ltd – Land off Willow Road, Barrow upon Soar (PSLP Representations Ref. PSLP/570)

SITE HA48

Question 6.7: Is the site selection process for the proposed housing allocations soundly based, including the testing of reasonable alternatives? How have the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal informed the site selection process? Are the reasons for selecting allocated sites and rejecting others clear and justified and where are they documented?

Charnwood Borough Council's (CBC) selection of sites to be allocated for development has been carried out using a comprehensive and transparent process that is clearly based on the plan's robust evidence base. Notably, all promoted sites have been considered at various points by CBC, for example through the Council's Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA), in order to ascertain their suitability, availability and achievability. The reasoning for allocating the sites included in the Local Plan is clear and justified and, therefore, soundly based.

Question 6.16a: Is the proposed scale of housing development justified, having regard to constraints and the provision of necessary infrastructure?

The Local Plan suggests that Site HA48 should accommodate approximately 215 dwellings, based on the site capacity assumptions that are queried in Question 6.9. Notwithstanding that those assumptions are generic in nature and do not reflect a detailed assessment of a site's capacity, BHL's Regulation 19 representations also highlight that this capacity is based on the proposed allocation boundaries, which do not reflect the full and logical extents of the site. The site's logical boundaries actually align with the area being promoted by BHL (shown in Figure 1 of the Masterplan Report submitted alongside BHL's representations). Whilst that is discussed further in relation to the site-specific question for Site HA48, the extent of the allocation site inevitably influences its capacity, and therefore is of relevance here too.

However, since the submission of those representations, the context has further evolved; with Site HA48 now the preferred site of the key stakeholders for the provision of the 1 form entry (FE) primary school required to facilitate and support the planning growth within the village.

A Masterplan for the full and logical extents of the site has been prepared following very detailed consideration of the site's constraints and opportunities. That robustly demonstrates the site's capacity to accommodate 220 residential dwellings, a 1FE primary school, plus additional land (of c. 1ha) for its potential expansion and the required infrastructure, all set within an extensive green and blue infrastructure network. That Masterplan will form the basis of an outline planning application that is currently being finalised (following public consultation) and will be submitted to CBC ahead of the examination sessions.

The allocation policy and policies plan should, therefore, be modified to reflect the site's full and logical boundaries and its true development capacity (220 dwellings plus 1FE primary school).

Question 6.16b: Is the allocation consistent with the development strategy in Policy DS1 and where relevant, does it take account of a made Neighbourhood Plan?

The allocation of site HA48 is wholly consistent with the development strategy and is a key part of the plan's wider strategy for growth in the Service Centres and Barrow upon Soar specifically. Indeed, the site's development (as well as the development of other sites within the settlement) would deliver the amount of residential growth required to support the delivery of a new primary school within the site, which will alleviate pressure on the existing primary school in Barrow upon Soar; and effectively 'unlock' growth in the settlement.

Whilst there is a made Neighbourhood Plan for the settlement, it considers only the period from 2016 to 2028 and does not seek to allocate sites for development; stating that the Core Strategy had sufficiently met the Service Centres' housing need in the 2011-2028 period. As the emerging Local Plan is making provision for the following plan period (2021 to 2037), the PSLP's proposed approach to development in the settlement does not conflict with the made Neighbourhood Plan.

Question 6.16c: What is the likely impact of the proposed development on the following factors:

- **Settlement separation and identity and landscape character;**
- **Biodiversity, green infrastructure including public rights of way and agricultural land quality;**
- **Heritage assets;**
- **The strategic and local highway network and other infrastructure inc. health facilities, education and open space;**
- **Air and water quality, noise pollution, land stability and flood risk.**

Allocation site HA48 has been comprehensively assessed both through CBC's preparation of the evidence base for the Local Plan and through the technical and environmental assessments that have been carried out to support BHL's promotion of the site in the Local Plan process.

In relation to CBC's assessment, the allocation site was first assessed through the Council's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) under reference PSH461. The 2020 SHELAA found that the site is suitable, available and achievable and that there are no irresolvable site constraints; resulting in CBC taking the site forward as a draft allocation. The site was then assessed against CBC's Sustainability Appraisal (SA) criteria, and performed favourably by receiving 4 significant / minor positive effects. Moreover, and as was recognised in CBC's Topic Paper 2 (Development Strategy and Site Selection), whilst it did receive some negative effects, those can be mitigated through a combination of delivering a sensitive development scheme, facilitating on-site infrastructure provision, and contributing towards off-site enhancements (such as the extension of bus services, and pedestrian and cycle links).

BHL's assessments of the site are summarised in the Masterplan Report that accompanied the Regulation 19 representations. The conclusions of those assessments have since been verified by the detailed assessments that have now been prepared to support the imminent planning application for the site's development. They clearly demonstrate the site's suitability, as well as the deliverability of the Masterplan scheme proposals (220 dwellings, a primary school and an area for its potential expansion, a relocated farmstead, and associated infrastructure).

Settlement and Landscape

The SA reiterates the findings of CBC's Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) and its Addendum that the site is located within an area that is of 'medium' sensitivity to residential development. The SA finds, therefore, that the likely effect of the site's development is neutral. Notably, there is no issue in relation to the separation of settlements in this area.

A great deal of thought has been given in the masterplanning process as to how housing and green infrastructure can be arranged in order to integrate the development with the built form, whilst also assimilating it into the surrounding landscape, and the Masterplan Report submitted alongside BHL's representations considers the proposed development's potential landscape and visual impact.

It finds that, despite incorporating some elevated areas, the site is well contained visually. Indeed, views of it are generally limited to the area to the immediate north and east, and crests of higher ground to the north-east. Therefore, whilst the site's development would constitute an expansion of the settlement edge onto the sloping land to the north of the village from these views, it would be well contained by the undulating landscape further north, surrounding vegetation at the site's boundaries, and the settlement edge to the south of the site. These conclusions have been confirmed by the landscape and visual impact assessment that will be submitted alongside the planning application for the site's development.

Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

The SA notes that the site comprises improved and poor semi-improved grassland with grazed fields and native hedgerows dividing the various fields. The SA found, therefore, that the likely impact would be neutral.

Those findings reflect the ecological appraisal of the site carried out on behalf of BHL, which identified the species poor nature of the grassland and the hedgerows, and also highlighted that the higher value features such as the woodland, pond and streams would be retained. Protected species surveys have also identified that there is generally low use of the existing habitats within the site by wildlife. The Masterplan, however, highlights the significant scope for betterment through the provision of linear green corridors, strategic landscaping and SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems).

The site would not impact on any existing public rights of way, but will provide significant pedestrian / cycle route improvements in the area.

Heritage

The SA highlights that the site is located over 300m from the nearest listed building of Strancliffe Hall, and is 265m from the locally listed chapel / cemetery at Cotes Road and that they are fully screened by multiple rows of buildings and trees in between. The effects are, therefore, likely to be neutral.

Highways and Accessibility

CBC's highways evidence base (Mitigation Report, Forecasting Report, and Further Analysis and Refinement Report) has found that combining sustainable travel interventions and highway capacity improvements will address the potential impact of the planned growth in Barrow upon Soar, including Site HA48. Indeed, those highway capacity improvements have been taken into account in the plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the proposed allocation site will therefore make appropriate financial contributions towards them.

Whilst the SA highlights some negative effects in relation to accessibility (notably public transport), it concludes (Appendix G para 6.3.9) that the site scores "*relatively well according to accessibility metrics.*" Indeed, the availability of a wide range of services and facilities in Barrow upon Soar is recognised in the Local Plan's Spatial Strategy, and the scheme for the site makes provision to enhance the pedestrian and cycle facilities and links to those services and facilities.

A Transport Assessment (TA) has been prepared to support BHL's planning application and that concludes that the proposed roundabout on Cotes Road will provide a safe and suitable access to the

development. It also highlights the proposed improvements to the pedestrian facilities along Cotes Road.

The proposals will improve accessibility to services and facilities available along Cotes Road and in the centre of Barrow upon Soar (including the health centre and convenience stores), but they will also ensure accessibility to the new primary school that is now proposed on the site. Moreover, two new bus stops are also proposed close to the site for both north and southbound trips on the existing services that run along Cotes Road to both Loughborough and Leicester. The TA, therefore, concludes that there are good opportunities for pedestrian, cycle and bus travel to and from the site.

The TA highlights that the scheme will provide appropriate contributions to highway improvements identified in the IDP. Notably, it concludes that the proposed development of the site will not have an unacceptable impact on the safety or capacity of the local highway network.

Pollution

The site is not located in or adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area and no concerns have been raised in relation to water quality; and thus neither are a constraint to the site's development. Nor has a noise issue been identified through the preparation of the imminent planning application, and there are no known constraints in relation to land stability.

Drainage

The site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1 and is at low probability of flooding. Whilst there are some areas that are at risk of surface water flooding, they are limited in scale and relate to the corridor along the existing watercourse and can, therefore, be dealt with by providing an appropriate development offset. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy is to be submitted alongside the planning application, and it demonstrates that the drainage strategy embedded in the development scheme Masterplan is deliverable.

Conclusion

In light of the above analysis, it is clear that the site is a suitable location for growth, and is not subject to any insurmountable constraints. Therefore, the proposed allocation of site HA48 is entirely justified and sound.

Question 6.16d: Are the development requirements clear and deliverable and are any further safeguards or mitigation measures necessary to achieve an acceptable form of development? Are any main modifications necessary for soundness?

The development requirements in relation to Site HA48 should be modified to reflect that the site is the preferred location of key stakeholders for the new primary school in the village. To facilitate that, and as set out in response to Question HA48, the allocation site boundaries should be modified to reflect the full and logical extents of the site (as shown in the Masterplan Report submitted by BHL in response to the Regulation 19 consultation).

The development requirements for the other allocation sites in the village should also be modified to ensure that they will in due course make proportionate contributions towards the land and build costs of the primary school.

Otherwise (and taking account of the suite of development management policies in the Local Plan) no other safeguards or mitigation measures are necessary.

Question 6.16e: Has any planning permission been granted for residential development and if so, what are the details?

Planning permission has not been granted for the site's development. However, as referred to above, an outline planning application submission is imminent. That demonstrates the site's suitability,

deliverability and capacity to accommodate 220 dwellings, a primary school and an area for its potential expansion, the relocated farmstead and associated infrastructure.

HA48 – Land off Willow Road, Barrow upon Soar: Are the site boundaries appropriate?

As highlighted above, the boundaries of the allocation site should be modified to reflect the full extent and logical boundaries of the site. That is required to ensure that, in accordance with the NPPF, a well-designed scheme can be delivered that makes the most efficient use of the site and incorporates the required infrastructure.

Vehicular access to the site will be provided from Cotes Road via a new three-armed roundabout, which will form a new entrance threshold into the village from the north. Therefore, the boundary with Cotes Road is the logical western boundary of the site. The watercourse that travels along the northern boundary of BHL’s land control forms the site’s logical northern boundary. The extension north will also provide space required for the delivery of the primary school and additional land for its expansion if that is required in the future.

The site currently includes a farmstead on the Cotes Road frontage. That will need to be relocated to facilitate the delivery of the site’s access and allow the landowners to reside on site and manage the remainder of their landholding post-development. Significant thought has been given to the most appropriate location for that and the field to the north-east of the PSLP’s allocation boundary has been identified.

Taking account of these matters, therefore, the site allocation boundary should be extended to reflect the boundary edged in red in Figure 1 of the Masterplan Report that was submitted alongside BHL’s Reg19 representations (see PSLP/570). That area will facilitate the delivery of 220 dwellings, a primary school (and a site for its potential expansion), the relocated farmstead and the associated infrastructure, all set within an extensive green and blue infrastructure network.