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Dear Sir/Madam

REPRESENTATION TO STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: DRAFT PLAN – PS06 THE NEW LAWN, NAILSWORTH

This representation has been prepared by Ridge and Partners on behalf of Ecotricity Group Ltd in relation to the consultation on the Stroud District Local Plan Review: Draft Plan. Ecotricity Group Ltd is the landowner of The New Lawn, Nailsworth, as proposed to be allocated under PS06 within the Draft Plan, which states the following:

'Land at New Lawn, as identified on the policies map, is allocated for a development comprising 80 dwellings and associated community and open space uses, together with enabling infrastructure, subject to the satisfactory relocation of Forest Green football club. Detailed policy criteria will be developed where necessary to highlight specific mitigation measures and infrastructure requirements. A development brief incorporating an indicative masterplan, to be approved by the District Council, will detail the way in which the land uses and infrastructure will be developed in an integrated and co-ordinated manner.'

Ecotricity Group Ltd support the allocation of the site for residential development but believe that the site has capacity for a greater number of dwellings. A greater number of dwellings has been tested through the submission of planning applications on the site, which has involved a detailed assessment with regard to the technical matters pertaining to the site. This is discussed further below, following a review of relevant planning policy.

Planning Policy Context

Draft Plan 2019

The Stroud Local Plan was adopted in November 2015. The Local Plan identifies the housing, employment, retail and community development that is required to meet local needs up until 2031.

The adoption of the Local Plan was subject to the Council undertaking an early review, and the Council is now in the process of reviewing the current Stroud District Local Plan. The Review has been through several rounds of consultation and the current consultation is the Draft Plan.

The key policy of relevance to the site is Core Policy PS06 as referenced above. In terms of other policies of relevance to the site, both Core Policy CP5 (Environmental Development Principles for Strategic Sites) and CP8 (New Housing Development) look for strategic sites, and residential development proposals more generally to *'be built at an appropriate density that is acceptable in townscape, local environment, character and amenity terms.'*

National Planning Policy Framework

In terms of Plan Making, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies at Paragraph 16 that plans should, amongst others, be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable. Paragraph 35 states that plans should be prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, to determine whether they are sound. Plans are 'sound' if they meet the following tests:

- Positively prepared
- Justified
- Effective
- Consistent with national policy

In terms of the provision of housing, Paragraph 67 identifies that strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites for years one to five of the plan period as well as specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan.

In terms of density specifically, paragraph 122 identifies that Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land. Paragraph 123 highlights that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. In these circumstances:

- a) plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible. This will be tested robustly at examination, and should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. These standards should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential development within these areas, unless it can be shown that there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate.
- b) the use of minimum density standards should also be considered for other parts of the plan area. It may be appropriate to set out a range of densities that reflect the accessibility and potential of different areas, rather than one broad density range; and
- c) local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework. In this context, when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards).

The Planning Practice Guidance has also recently released guidance relating to "Effective Use of Land". With regard to planning for higher densities, the guidance states:

"What tools are available to local planning authorities to help identify appropriate densities?"

A range of considerations should be taken into account in establishing appropriate densities on a site or in a particular area. Tools that can assist with this include:

- *accessibility measures such as distances and travel times to key facilities, including public transport stops or hubs (and taking into consideration service capacity and frequencies and destinations served). A range of tools are available to support such assessments.*

- *characterisation studies and design strategies, dealing with issues such as urban form, historic character, building typologies, prevailing sunlight and daylight levels, green infrastructure and amenity space;*
- *environmental and infrastructure assessments, such as the capacity of services and presence of environmental risks (e.g. flood risks or overheating), and the opportunities to address these; and*
- *assessments of market or site viability.*

Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 66-004-20190722

Discussion

The Local Plan Review: Draft Plan allocates the site for 80 dwellings, as well as associated community and open space uses and enabling infrastructure, subject to the satisfactory relocation of Forest Green Rovers football club. The intention is to relocate Forest Green Rovers to a new stadium on land to the north of the A419, adjacent to M5 Junction 13. This is reflected in the proposed allocation within the Draft Plan at PS20 for this purpose, as well as employment development and associated uses. The site has also been subject to a number of planning applications. The most recent application, comprising of *'a 5000-capacity football stadium and other ancillary uses (use Class D2); one full-sized grass pitch and one full-sized all-weather pitch and a goal practice area (use class D2); car parking for cars and coaches and highway improvements to A419 including a signalised site junction and combined cycle/footway'* (reference S.19/1418/OUT), was heard by the LPA's Development Control Committee on 18th December 2019. At this committee, Members resolved to grant outline planning permission subject to the recommended planning conditions and delegate authority to the Head of Development Management to complete a satisfactory legal agreement.

In this context, Ecotricity Group Ltd are confident on the delivery of a new stadium for Forest Green Rovers in a timely manner, which will free up the site at New Lawn for the housing in line with the allocation.

Planning History

The New Lawn Site has also been the subject of 2 planning applications. Firstly, application reference S.17/0850/OUT was submitted for *'the demolition of The New Lawn Football Stadium (Forest Green Rovers FC) and re-development to provide the erection of up to 95 dwellings, up to 0.11 hectares of community uses (which may include D1/D2/A3/B1 uses), landscaping, open space, associated access, parking and infrastructure.'* This was withdrawn in November 2017 whilst discussions progressed on the new Stadium application. This application was resubmitted in April 2018 (application reference S.18/0815/OUT for 95 dwellings), and this application is still awaiting determination; this is primarily due to the delays to the stadium application as above but it is anticipated that the application will be determined once the Decision Notice for the stadium has been issued,

For the above applications, a suite of technical documentation was prepared and submitted, including the following:

- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- Arboricultural Statement including Tree Protection Plan
- Ecology Report
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Heritage Desk Based Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Sustainability and Energy Strategy
- Transport Assessment
- Travel Plan
- Utilities Report

Furthermore, as part of the original application submission, an illustrative masterplan was prepared which shows how 95 dwellings could be accommodated on the site. This illustrative masterplan is enclosed with this letter.

The above reports conclude that the site is well located to the existing local services, free of technical constraints, and can be effectively integrated with the existing built form and surrounding countryside. The following provides a summary of the key technical assessments, but the full assessments can be accessed through the Council if required.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The proposed site falls outside any areas identified as being at risk from flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy highlights the proposed strategy for surface water drainage which includes the use of SUDS features, which will also deliver biodiversity enhancements, as well as setting finished floor levels 150mm above the surrounding ground. The report concludes that the proposal will manage the risk of flooding and conform to the requirements of the NPPF in terms of flood risk.

Landscape and Visual Considerations

The site contains a number of mature trees and hedgerows around the periphery of the site as shown within the Arboricultural Statement. The proposals have been sensitively designed to ensure that they do not result in the removal of any mature trees. If any limited removal of hedgerows or scrub does take place then these will be more than compensated for by the proposed landscaping scheme. In respect of trees, the Council's Arboricultural Officer has raised no objection to the scheme. A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has also been undertaken to demonstrate that the proposals will not have an impact on the openness or setting of the surrounding landscape. Given the topography of the land and the existing built form at the top of the ridgeline the masterplan has carefully considered the interaction with the town and the surrounding landscape setting. Given the nature of the site and its existing use, the LVIA concludes that there will be a neutral to slight beneficial impact on landscape fabric and landscape character. It also concludes that there will be no significant effects or harm to the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and, in certain instances, enhanced at a localised level. Key mitigation and enhancement measures include:

- Retention of existing landscape features including existing shrub and tree vegetation to the boundaries of the Site (including species rich hedgerow to the western side)
- New tree and shrub planting would further reinforce existing levels of vegetation
- Replacement of the larger block form of the stadium and hardstanding areas with a more varied pattern of buildings interspersed with gardens, planting and multi-functional spaces across the Site.
- The maximum height of the proposed development would be comparable to existing buildings and considerably lower than some vertical elements on the site at present (e.g. floodlights).
- Whilst footpaths adjacent to the Site would not be effected directly, proposed landscape improvement to the Site boundary areas, adjacent to the paths (including improved accessibility) would be likely to provide a physical and visual enhancement.
- Creation of publicly accessible open space and species rich/biodiverse areas would provide enhancement of and connection with GI networks across the Site and beyond
- Features within the immediate surroundings such as the adjacent woodland that is characteristic of the Cotswolds AONB would remain unaffected by the Proposed Development.

Ground Conditions

The Ground Conditions Desk Study highlights that based on historic land uses and its current operational use, the overall risk from land contamination at the site is considered to be low, and low to moderate for a re-developed site,

but would need to be confirmed by appropriate intrusive investigation, testing and assessment of the results of the investigation. It is considered unlikely that the site would be classified as Contaminated Land under Part 2A of the EPA 1990.

Highways

The Transport Assessment highlights that the site is in a location where, in travel terms, a sustainable development can be achieved. To assess the traffic impact of the proposed development, detailed capacity analysis has been undertaken of the site access roundabout junction between Another Way and Nymphsfield Road, the mini-roundabout between Spring Hill and the A46, and the A46 / B4014 priority junction during the weekday AM and PM peak hours when the demand for travel is greatest. The traffic generated by the proposed development is expected to have no significant effect on the operation of these junctions. It is considered that the proposed development accords with national and local policy, in that it will provide a sustainable development with safe and suitable access for all people. It will have access to existing facilities without the need for car travel, thus enabling travel by sustainable modes. There is therefore no reason in transport terms why the proposed development for 95 dwellings should not be permitted. As part of the application, Gloucestershire County Council has confirmed that the proposed 95 dwellings meet the criteria of the NPPF and recommended no highways objection be raised subject to conditions.

Heritage and Archaeology

The Heritage Desk Based Assessment confirms that the site has been subject of an archaeological evaluation in 2004 which identified no archaeological remains. Following that, the site was developed for the football stadium and attendant infrastructure. On this basis, there is considered to be no potential for archaeological remains within the site. Detailed assessment of the 'setting' of heritage assets in the wider vicinity of the site has been carried out. Due to the undulating topography, tree cover and post-war residential development, which greatly restricts inter-visibility with the site, no adverse effects upon heritage assets have been identified with regard to removing the current football stadium and constructing housing. The hedgerow defining the western boundary of the site comprises an 'important' hedgerow under the criteria for archaeology and history of the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations, as it is illustrated on the c. 1840 Tithe maps. The Regulations require notification to be given to the Council prior to removal of stretches of the hedgerow. The proposals currently seek to retain this hedgerow.

Ecology

An Ecology Survey has been undertaken by Ecotricity. This concludes that the redevelopment of the site for housing will have no significant effect on statutory designated sites, particularly Rodborough Common SAC. The main ecological receptors on site were an historic hedgerow along the western boundary combined with a verge of species-rich grassland, and protected species identified were slow worms, bats, birds and badgers. The historic hedgerow will be retained along with the associated grass verge so that any effect of the proposed development will be not significant. The main protected species affected by the development is the slow worm, and mitigation during construction will ensure that the effect of the Proposed Development will not be significant. Any significant effect on bats using the site will be mitigated by sensitive construction methods and appropriate lighting regimes such that there will be no significant effect. The effects on birds will be mitigated to not significant by sensitive timing of construction to avoid the bird breeding season. Enhancement measures include newly created grassland, additional tree planting, bat and bird boxes and the provision of SUDs features.

Proposed Allocation

As set out above, the site is allocated for 80 dwellings. Ecotricity Group Ltd support the allocation of the site for residential development but believe that the site has capacity for a greater number of dwellings. Up to 95 dwellings has been tested through the submission of planning applications on the site, which has involved assessment in respect of detailed technical matters. The above assessment identifies that the site is free from constraints and there is no reason why further development could not be accommodated on the site. The illustrative masterplan

prepared for the application has taken into account the surrounding context and demonstrates how 95 dwellings can be accommodated whilst also providing a community hub, and open space across the site for community use and for ecological benefits.

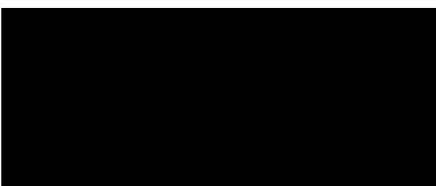
In this context, it is clear from the NPPF that the Government is looking for development to make the most efficient use of land, and looks for plans to increase density where possible. As set out above, the PPG identifies a number of tools which can assist in establishing appropriate densities. The work undertaken as part of the application addresses the factors identified in this regard.

Given the work undertaken to date, there is no reason why the site cannot deliver further housing in line with this aim, and has the potential to deliver a greater number than 95 in this case. In this context, it is considered that the allocation of the site for 100 dwellings would be appropriate. This greater number would ensure a viable mix of housing sizes can be delivered, including a greater proportion of smaller 2-3 bedroom starter homes rather than more larger 4 bedroom properties.

Summary and Conclusion

Ecotricity Group Ltd support the allocation of the site at PS06 for residential development but believe that the site has capacity for a greater number of dwellings. The site has been subject to a host of technical assessments that accompanied the application for the redevelopment of the site for 95 dwellings, up to 0.11 hectares of community uses (which may include D1/D2/A3/B1 uses), landscaping, open space, associated access, parking and infrastructure. The detailed work undertaken as part of this application reinforces the suitability and achievability of the site to deliver housing, and copies of the application documents can be provided to give more detail if required. The site is reasonably unconstrained in terms of factors affecting the potential layout and density of development and the NPPF is clear that in this context, density should be increased where possible. As such, in line with the NPPF, and the aim of making efficient use of land, it is requested that the Council revisit the capacity of the site and it is suggested that the site is allocated for 100 dwellings.

Yours faithfully,



For Ridge and Partners LLP