

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

### MATTER 30 – BARKWAY AND SITE BK3

#### STATEMENT OF HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE UNIT) IN RELATION TO BARKWAY (BK3)

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This matters statement from the Growth and Infrastructure Unit (GIU) at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) covers matters relating to Children’s Services in respect of Site BK3.
- 1.2. This Statement responds to the Inspector’s questions on site BK3. The document is structured with the questions set out in ***bold italics underlined***, with HCCs response below.

#### 2. Inspector’s question – The justification for allocating Site BK3 for housing

**Question 30.1 Should the site be allocated for housing, either with or without the land reserved for education purposes?**

- 2.1. HCC can confirm that the BK3 site allocation (for up to 140 dwellings) will yield pupils in need of school places. Therefore, HCC requires that an appropriate education mitigation strategy is identified to support the housing allocation. HCC reiterates its previous position, which was set out in its response under Matter 11: Category A villages (of January 2018). In the response to Matter 11: Category A villages HCC stated that:

*Current demographic analysis shows that the yield from the proposed new housing is likely to be able to be accommodated within the existing school capacity. However, the existing reserve school site needs to be retained in Barkway to ensure flexibility in the future should demand fluctuate from either the existing population or from new housing. As the proposed developments come forward the County Council will work with Barkway and Barley First Schools to ensure that local need can be met.*

- 2.2. Barkway and Barley First Schools are Voluntary Aided Church of England schools and their own admitting authorities, outside Local Authority control. Previously all first school provision was provided at both first schools (e.g. both schools provided the full range of first school provision from Nursery to Year 4). This was the position at the time that the response to Matter 11: Category A villages was provided. However, since then, in autumn 2018, the two schools have federated and now first school provision is split across the two sites, with early education provision up to Year 1 provided in one school (Barkway First School) and provision for children in Years 2, 3 and 4 provided in the other school (Barley First School). Therefore, given this situation, when considering existing education capacity and the implications of increased demand on first education provision HCC needs to consider the provision across both Barkway and Barley First Schools.
- 2.3. Given this position, once occupied, the BK3 housing allocation will generate increased demand for places at both the Barkway and Barley First Schools. HCC can confirm that in

school planning terms the previous position, that “...the yield from the proposed new housing is likely to be able to be accommodated within the existing school capacity”, remains true and that currently there is still sufficient capacity across both Barkway and Barley First Schools to accommodate the yield likely to arise from the proposed BK3 development.

- 2.4. Whilst there is currently sufficient capacity across both Barkway and Barley First Schools HCC cannot provide certainty of capacity or level of local demand in the latter years of the plan period to 2031. Therefore, to ensure flexibility and to enable prudent education planning, should existing capacity not be sufficient in later years of the plan period, HCC considers that the reserve school site allocation should remain.

**If so: A) is there a reasonable likelihood that the land identified for primary education will be needed for that purpose during the plan period?**

- 2.5. As set out in paragraph 2.4 above, HCC cannot provide certainty of capacity or level of local demand in the latter years of the plan period to 2031 and it is therefore difficult to comment definitively on the likelihood that the land identified for primary education will be needed for that purpose during the plan period. However, HCC considers that to ensure flexibility and to enable prudent education planning, should existing capacity not be sufficient in later years of the plan period, that the reserve school site allocation should remain.

**B) If the identified land were not to be developed for primary education purposes, is there a reasonable likelihood that housing on the remainder of Site BK3 would be capable of visually integrating into the existing village?**

- 2.6. As per paragraph 2.4 above, HCC maintains that in the interest of prudent education planning sufficient land in Barkway should be retained for a new school. The currently identified land is of sufficient size and characteristics to accommodate the current specification of a 2FE first school. The landowner has recently approached HCC offering to swap the identified land for a suitable alternative site within a combined site. However, at present HCC are unable to commit to a land swap. Should BK3 be developed in isolation, the identified land will be retained as a school reserve site.

**C) If not, would the deletion of Site BK3 be necessary for soundness, or would there be a more appropriate course of action?**

- 2.7. HCC has no comments on this question.

**Question 30.2 If the site is allocated for housing, should the land identified also be allocated for primary education purposes?**

- 2.8. As per paragraph 2.4 above, HCC maintains that it would be in the interest of prudent education planning for the land identified to also be allocated for primary education

purposes. This will ensure flexibility in the available options for education mitigation strategies in the future in order to meet local demand.

**3. Inspector's question – The spatial strategy and Barkway's place within the settlement hierarchy**

**Question 30.3 Depending on the preceding questions, what tier of the settlement hierarchy should Barkway be categorised as, and why?**

3.1. HCC has no comments on this question.

**Question 30.4 If it were necessary for soundness to delete Site BK3 from the Local Plan and no alternative land were proposed to replace it:**

**A) would this affect or undermine the Local Plan's spatial strategy and the aim of directing new housing development to the most sustainable locations?**

3.2. HCC has no comments on this question.

**B) would it be necessary for soundness to reject MM010 such that Barkway would remain a 'Category A village'?**

3.3. HCC has no comments on this question.

**C) would this affect or undermine the demonstration of the exceptional circumstances required to 'release' land from the Green Belt around other settlements for new housing?**

3.4. HCC has no comments on this question.

**4. Inspector's question – The supply of land for housing**

**Question 30.5 What bearing, if any, does this have on the supply of land for housing?**

4.1. HCC has no comments on this question.

**Question 30.6 If it were necessary for soundness to delete Site BK3 from the Local Plan, would it also be necessary for soundness to allocate alternative land for housing, either in Barkway or elsewhere? If so, how much land, where and why?**

4.2. HCC has no comments on this question.