

Winchester District Local Plan (2020-2040)

Hearing Statement Relating to Matter 8 On Behalf of Bellway Strategic Land

April 2025

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Client

Bellway Strategic Land

Date of Issue

4th 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 8 – Development Allocations the Market Towns and Rural Areas (MTRAs)

Issue: Whether the proposed housing site allocations in MTRAs would be justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Market towns

Bishop's Waltham

Policy BW1 The Vineyard/Tangier Lane

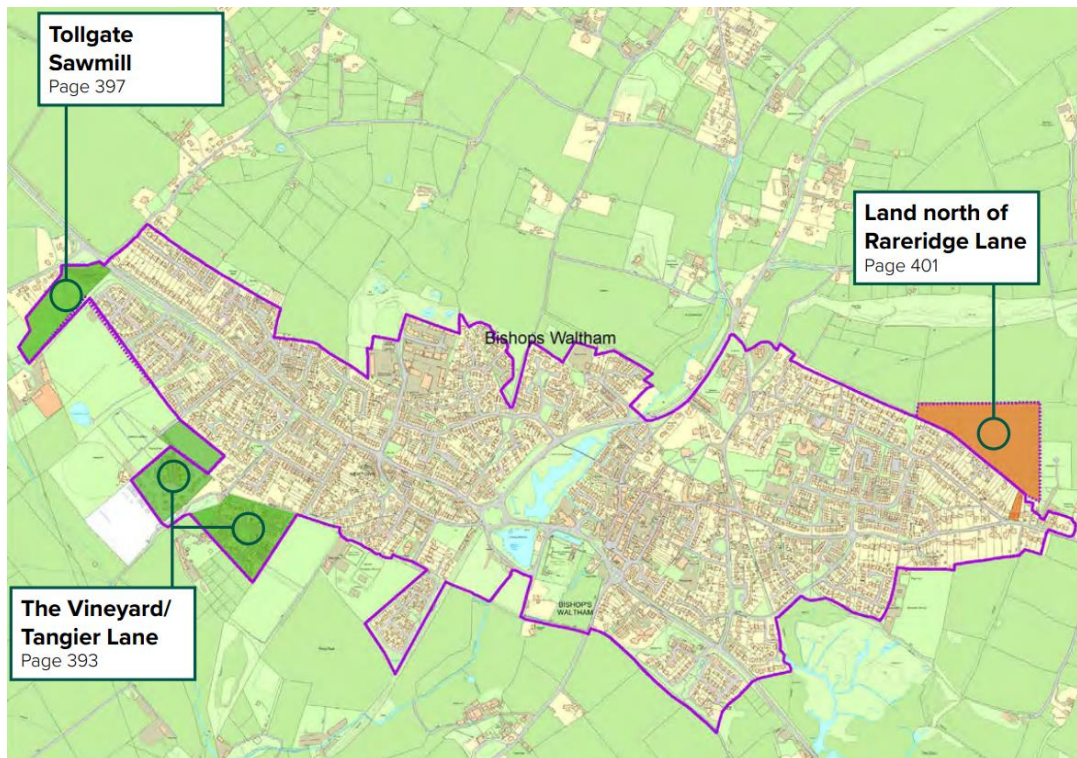
Q1. Would policy BW1i, in requiring a masterplan with each application for development be effective? Would the policy be clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals? Would Policy BW1 iii be clear in its intent?

- 2.1 As we understand it, the development of the site has been completed. It is only the Albany Farm SINC that is undeveloped, and we have assumed that this will remain the case. Policy BW1 does rather illustrate the point that the Plan includes built out development sites as allocations to give the illusion that the Plan is delivering new homes in Bishop's Waltham whereas in fact, they have already been delivered.

Policy BW4 Land North of Rareridge Lane

Q1. Would policy BW4 accord with the NPPF paragraph 182, which requires great weight to be attached to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks?

- 2.2 No, in our opinion the allocation of Land North of Rareridge Lane could bring about substantial impacts upon the South Downs National Park and on the basis that there are more preferable sites around Bishop's Waltham that can deliver the required number of new homes with less predicted impacts on the South Downs National Park leads us to conclude that great weight has not been attached to the requirement to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park. As such, the allocation does not accord with the paragraph 182 of the NPPF.
- 2.3 Even just a quick glance at the BW4 allocation in the context of the settlement pattern shows that the allocation appears alien and juts out towards the National Park awkwardly. See below.



Q2. Given the existing use of the site, along with other site constraints, including ecological constraints, what is the evidence to justify the indicative site capacity and generation of required Biodiversity Net Gain?

2.4 We will not repeat the concerns we have cited in our Regulation 19 stage representations regarding the site's extensive vegetation and the impacts this will have on the quantum of development that the site can realistically achieve. Needless to say, we remain of the view that the site will not deliver anywhere close to 100 dwellings and this provision should be made elsewhere.

Q4. Policy BW4i would require a landscape led masterplan. Policy BW4 ix and x provide additional requirements that could be covered by that masterplan. Paragraphs 14.20 and 14.24 set out requirements of a landscape led masterplan also, some of which are excluded from the policy text. In so doing, would the policy be effective? In this regard, would the policy be clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals?

2.5 As stated from paragraph 5.49 onwards in our Regulation 19 representations, we have many concerns with the capacity assigned to Site Allocation BW4 'Rareridge Lane'. The fact that there is no master plan for the site in the public domain suggests that it has either not been prepared, or it shows something that the Council does not wish to be

seen. Both scenarios demonstrate that there is no robust evidence that the site can deliver the Council's Plan expectations.

- 2.6 As set out in our Regulation 19 representations, and not repeated here, we have expressed concerns that there were many reasonable alternatives available to the Council to consider, including the allocation of omission sites such as Bellway Homes' site which is located in a more sustainable location for new homes, and has fewer constraints.