

**Local Allocation LA4 land at Hanburys, Shootersway,
Berkhamsted
Main Hall, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted**

Minutes - Draft

Meeting Date

7 May 2013

Attendees

Present: Francis Whittaker (DBC Strategic Planning & Regeneration)
Laura Wood (DBC Strategic Planning & Regeneration)
Laura Badham (DBC Strategic Planning & Regeneration)
Sally Peeters (DBC Development Management)
Douglas Brightman (Hanburys)
Andy Wilkins (Lone Star Land Ltd)
Chris Ball (The Old Orchard)
Derek Bromley (Bidwells)
Cllr Ian Reay (DBC and Berkhamsted Town Council)
Cllr Julie Laws (DBC and Berkhamsted Town Council)
Cllr David Collins (DBC and Berkhamsted Town Council)
Cllr Penella Warren (Berkhamsted Town Council)
Susan Johnson (Berkhamsted Citizens Association)
Peter Brown (Berkhamsted Residents Action Group)
Hugh Siegle (Berkhamsted Residents Action Group)
Nick Jones (Save Your Berkhamsted Residents Association)
Richard Sears (British Film Institute)
Robert Pearson (on behalf of British Film Institute)
David Steadman (Berkhamsted Chamber of Commerce)
James Holmes (on behalf of the Berkhamsted Chamber of Commerce)

Apologies: None

Discussion	Action
<p>1. Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>FW welcomed attendees and highlighted the purpose of the meeting which was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a basic set of design principles for the development of the site.• Hear a variety of opinions and ideas / tap into local knowledge.• Identify key concerns, opportunities and potential solutions.• Find consensus and common ground over proposal LA4. <p>These principles would be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• help guide the planning requirements for the allocation of the site in the Site Allocations document; and• inform the more detailed delivery and planning of the development through the supporting Master Plan. <p>JL asked if the issue of timing could be discussed. FW suggested this item be picked up as part of discussions under point 4 of the agenda.</p>	

Discussion	Action
<p>2. Context for Master Plan</p> <p>FW set out the context for the development principles and master planning process. The Core Strategy (CS) was at an advanced stage (awaiting the Inspector's final report), it was nearing adoption and that the broad principles of allocating the site for housing were established. The allocation needed to be progressed through the Site Allocations document which would provide greater detail over the timing, form and layout of the development and will establish a new Green Belt (GB) boundary. Each allocation is to be supported by a detailed master plan.</p> <p>Participants queried the need for carrying out this work now when they understood that the site was not available for development until 2021 onwards. They were also concerned that the master plan would not be relevant in the longer term.</p> <p>FW/LW explained that it was important to progress work on the master plan in order to inform the Site Allocations document and to support each allocation through this process. It did not imply that the Council was intending an early release of the site. The master plan would be sufficiently flexible to deal with changes in the future.</p> <p>3. Site Context</p> <p>AW provided a context for the site, its character and setting. Key points being:</p> <p><u>Landscape Character</u> The site falls within the Green Belt (GB). It comprised of two residential properties and adjoining meadow land in a mature landscaping setting (extensive tree cover). It was bounded to the east by the British Film Institute (BFI) site and to the west by a large electrical sub-station (the land being crossed by overhead electrical cables).</p> <p><u>Ecology</u> Initial appraisal pointed to the site not being of major nature conservation value, although a further survey (Phase 1 Habitat survey) will take place in the early summer.</p> <p><u>Heritage</u> There are no designated heritage assets within the site, but an archaeological survey is under way to confirm what the position is.</p> <p>AW highlighted the site's constraints (including existing trees on the site, its ecology, the need to create strong defensible Green Belt boundaries, and access arrangements, etc.) and opportunities (e.g. its mature landscaping, the ability to create two clusters of housing, opportunity to improve local connectivity, etc.).</p> <p>AW stated that highways issues had been discussed with and agreed with the Highways Authority. IR raised concerns over the cumulative impact on the highway of developing the Egerton Rothesay School site. LW explained that this matter came up during the examination of the CS and that the Inspector appeared to be satisfied that it could be satisfactorily addressed.</p> <p>A number of attendees were also very concerned that developing land at Hanburys would set a precedent for future development on the south side of Berkhamsted up to the A41 i.e. it would not provide for a long term, defensible boundary to the GB. FW felt that this was a small and compact release that could be defended. LW confirmed that if GB sites that were not within the Core Strategy were to come forward as applications, they would be treated differently in policy terms from the local allocations. She added that the wider area would however be assessed as part of work on a borough-wide GB review looking at its quality and role. This work will inform the early partial review of the Core Strategy, as required by the Inspector.</p>	

Discussion	Action
<p>4. Master Plan – Questions and Discussion</p> <p>The following issues were discussed:</p> <p>Green Belt Boundary</p> <p>FW considered that the existing boundaries to LA4 provided a logical future boundary to the GB. However, participants continued to voice concerns over future boundary creep. IR wanted the boundary strengthened to prevent outward expansion of the GB at the western boundary into the adjoining Haslam Field. LW added that future sites would have to accord with national GB policy. The wider GB review referred to above will consider the function of the GB in this area, but any implications for sites will not be taken forward until at least 2017/18 i.e. as part of the early partial review process.</p> <p>SJ enquired as to how the trees within the site would be protected in the future. SP explained that this would be considered in detail at the planning application stage (e.g. as a condition to the planning permission protecting the trees or through the location of buildings). She would investigate the appropriateness of a future Tree Preservation Order with the Trees and Woodlands Team.</p> <p>RP was concerned that development should not be located close to the boundary with the BFI site. His preference was for houses backing onto the site. FW thought that this boundary could be reinforced to help maintain the security of the BFI. RP also suggested that the GB boundary should be extended to exclude the BFI site given its developed character. FW pointed out that this was not an issue for the master planning process, but it could be considered through the GB review and future review of the CS.</p> <p>Some participants asked whether there was a safety issue for LA4 given that the BFI stores nitrate-based film material. RS commented that this was well managed by the BFI in a safe environment. LW confirmed that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had raised no objections to the LA4 site.</p> <p>Design / Layout / Housing Mix</p> <p>Attendees asked what percentages of affordable housing will apply. FW replied that (as a GB site) a higher level would be sought of around 40%. However, it could be negotiated as part of bringing forward any scheme.</p> <p>Many felt a higher density housing scheme would be in conflict with the generally lower density character of Shootersway. FW explained that if a site is released from the GB the Council needs to ensure that effective use is made of it i.e. the level of housing is optimised and that it delivers a range of community benefits (e.g. delivery of affordable housing and family homes). Too low a density would undermine this aim. Generally, the greater the number of units developed on the local allocations the better the contribution to the Borough's housing targets, thus minimizing the need for further greenfield releases.</p> <p>However, the capacity would be considered carefully through the master plan, and could be reviewed in the future (notwithstanding current upward pressure to deliver more housing). LW suggested that the master plan might be able to show different layouts for the site that could be considered through consultation on the Site Allocations document.</p> <p>Attendees were concerned over the possibility of the layout allowing entry to adjoining land for future development. It was suggested that the layout would not allow for any road to end at or near the boundaries. AW agreed in principle that this would not be their intention. SP did not want to be drawn on the issue at this early stage.</p>	SP

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<p>Most participants did not appear to support tall buildings on the site and were worried that any 2½ storey properties would only lead to 3 storey ones. LW felt that some 2 ½ -storey units might be acceptable in design terms if the scheme was predominantly 2-storey in height. This would be considered through the master plan and again at the detailed planning application stage.</p> <p>Attendees wanted affordable housing to be mixed with the open market housing. LW stressed that affordable housing should be indistinguishable from the market housing as it would be designed to the same standard.</p> <p>Attendees supported the use of good quality materials and respect for vernacular architecture e.g. provision of gables, use of clay tiles and local bricks. Sufficient parking for residents and visitors should also be provided. They wanted to avoid the cluttered appearance caused by under-provision. The recent Stag Lane development was given as an example of this.</p> <p>Alternatively, flats were not considered appropriate. LW explained that if properties were in multiple-occupancy then they could be designed to look like individual houses rather than as a block of flats.</p> <p>Timing</p> <p>FW explained that it was the Site Allocations document that would set out the phasing of LA4. It was intended for release from 2021 onwards (either 2021-26 or 2026-31), although the landowners were keen to secure an earlier release. However, Policy CS3 could allow for an earlier release of local allocations subject to meeting a range of criteria (particularly around maintaining housing supply, infrastructure and need). The development of the Durrants Lane / Shootersway site was seen as meeting much of the town's housing demand in the short to medium-term.</p> <p>Landscaping, open space and ecology</p> <p>Participants were supportive of open space provision provided it was well managed. Landscaping should be designed to allow views out of the site while ensuring secure boundaries. RP was particularly keen to ensure a secure boundary with the BFI site. SP pointed out that, in respect of crime and security, Development Management work closely with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer.</p> <p>Access and Movement</p> <p>Participants were concerned over the existing type and level of traffic using Shootersway, the impact of future school expansion, and the proposed access arrangement and signalised junction, all of which were seen as worsening local congestion problems.</p> <p>A suggestion was made to explore an alternative four way junction arrangement i.e. the potential for a new access from the Kingshill Way junction. AW pointed out that this could involve third party land, is constrained by existing buildings, and its delivery would be at odds with the proposed later timing of LA4. FW suggested that the feasibility of this arrangement could be explored through the master plan and in conjunction with the Highway Authority.</p> <p>Some attendees were of the view that the southern end of Kings Road was totally unusable by children or parents with children, given the lack of pavements. A suggestion was also made to relocate the bus stop.</p>	FW

Discussion	Action
<p>Community Facilities Infrastructure & Contributions</p> <p>LW stated that the site will come forward after adoption of the CIL and contributions would therefore usually be through this mechanism, apart from affordable housing. However, this arrangement is being looked at by consultants advising the Council on its CIL work, and they may advise that the local allocations should be paid via S.106 agreement instead. The CIL will also look at wider community contributions. The Durrants Lane / Shootersway site is seen as contributing to additional leisure space in the town.</p> <p>5. Summary and Next Steps</p> <p>FW thanked everybody for their contributions and set out the next steps. The meeting notes will be written up and circulated amongst the participants. The Council will liaise with the landowners/agents in order to begin drafting the master plan, although there was still a need to consider the implications of the archaeological and ecological studies once they are completed. The development principles and draft master plan will be made available for comments when the Council consults on the Pre-Submission Site Allocations document in the autumn / winter of 2013. (<i>Post meeting note: due to unexpected delays in the receipt of the Inspector's Report into the Core Strategy, consultation on the Site Allocations document is now not expected until early 2014</i>). This process could involve a local exhibition in the town.</p>	FW / DB / AW
<p>6. A.O.B</p> <p>None.</p>	