
**FOREST HEATH DISTRICT COUNCIL – DISTRICT PLAN 2011-2033 –
EXAMINATION**

**EXAMINATION HEARING STATEMENT – MATTERS AND ISSUES
PART 1**

**Prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Garnham Properties (ID 24901 and
24902)**

October 2017

Introduction

1. Strutt & Parker is instructed by Garnham Properties to submit this Hearing Statement to the Examination for the Forest Heath Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP). Previous submissions on behalf of our clients have been made to Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) throughout the emerging Plan process.
2. This Hearing Statement addresses issues raised by the Inspector in the Matters 5 and specifically concerns Policies SA9 and SA10 of the Submission Plan. It does not seek to repeat information submitted to Forest Heath District Council as part of the representations to the recent Proposed Submission (reg. 19) consultation, but to add clarity to and respond to the specific questions posed by the inspector in her Schedule of Matters and Issues for the Examination paper.
3. Our previous representations raised specific concerns about the Local Plan's failure to include land at the Carrops for residential development. They also stated, in relation to the Coopers Yard site, that while my client has a willingness to work constructively with the owners on the adjacent land that forms part of proposed Site Allocation SA9(a), the Council's policy approach to withhold planning permission until a development brief has been prepared places an unnecessary burden on the delivery of the land, and is currently preventing an otherwise suitable scheme from being granted planning permission.
4. My client and I previously engaged in pre-application discussions with Forest Heath District Council's planners in which both Coopers Yard (which forms part of Site SA9(a)), and the Carrops (which the Council is now proposing to remove from the settlement boundary) were given support for residential development. On the basis of this advice, planning applications were subsequently pursued on both sites and are currently being considered.
5. It is only subsequently and since the inclusion of the larger parcel of land adjacent to Coopers Yard that the Council has decided to remove a brownfield site at the Carrops. The Carrops is currently located within the settlement framework from the settlement boundary, and has local community support for its development, which would help to enhance the southern gateway into this important Key Service Centre. The Council's approach is contrary to national planning policy, which seeks to focus development on brownfield sites within the settlement framework.

Matter 5 – Housing in the Key Service Centres – Lakenheath and Red Lodge

6. Question 5.2 of the Schedule of Matter and Issues for the Examination states that there '*appears to be an issue concerning the deliverability of site SA9(a)*' and that this has been allocated in the Red Lodge masterplan since 1998. It is understood that the Red Lodge masterplan is a material

consideration but one that carries relative limited weight given its age, and the significant changes that have taken place in national planning policy since its publication.

7. The Coopers Yard element of proposed site allocation SA9(a), has been used operationally for several decades as a haulage depot and yard. It was operational as a haulage yard in 1998 and has been used for such purposes until 31st December, 2017, since which the land has been vacant.
8. It is only in the past couple of years that the landowner has been exploring opportunities to develop the site for residential development and this is a proposed use that has widespread support among the local community, as it will remove an incompatible use from a primarily residential area, thus improving the residential amenity of local residents. It should therefore be clear that while there may be uncertainty about the delivery of the adjacent site (that forms part of Site Allocation SA9(a), my client's site is deliverable and has already seen developer interest.
9. The Coopers Yard site is now available for residential development, and a planning application was submitted for 55 residential dwellings earlier this year. Forest Heath District Council's planners have, however, stated that this application cannot be determined until a development brief for the whole site has been prepared. It is therefore recommended that the two sites form separate allocations to enable my client's land to come forward more quickly, with conditions attached to enable it to link into a future phase on the adjacent land.
10. It can therefore be concluded that Coopers Yard is available, developable and deliverable and should be allocated as a stand-alone site for housing. It will still be required to ensure that it respects and reflects its surroundings and provides links and connectivity to adjoining land.
11. In relation to the Carrops, it is considered that the Site Allocations Local Plan because it fails to take account of national planning policy, which seeks to focus development on brownfield land and is currently used for storage use and has been for several decades.
12. It is recommended that in order to make the Local Plan sound, the settlement framework should be amended to reflect the existing adopted Local Plan and the Carrops should be identified as a housing site to help deliver much needed new housing and improve this important gateway to the village. Given Red Lodge's position in the settlement hierarchy, together with the site's brownfield nature, the lack of constraints, the community support for its development, and its location within the current settlement boundary, it is strongly recommended that the Carrops be included as a housing site. In order to do this the settlement framework should be consistent with that set out in the current adopted Local Plan.