

Darlington Local Plan

Statement of Common Ground: Greater Faverdale Strategic Site Allocation (Site Ref: 185) (also known as 'Burtree Garden Village')

Between:

The principal parties

1. Darlington Borough Council ('The Council')
 2. Homes and Communities Agency (trading as Homes England) (HE)
 3. Hellens Land Limited (HLL)
-

1 Summary

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been jointly prepared by Homes England (HE), Hellens Land Limited (HLL) and Darlington Borough Council (DBC) to assist the forthcoming examination of the Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016 - 2036 (DBLP).
- 1.2 The SoCG relates to the proposed Greater Faverdale Strategic Site Allocation (Site Ref: 185). This site has been identified in the Publication DBLP (December 2020) as a strategic location for the provision of housing and employment development through the delivery of a new sustainable mixed-use community.
- 1.3 Outside of the formal DBLP process the site is widely referred to as 'Burtree Garden Village' following its acceptance into the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Garden Communities Programme in June 2019.
- 1.4 HLL have acted as site promoter and lead developer with the endorsement of all landowning parties from the outset of the plan making process. More recently, in order to address a risk of land ownerships becoming fragmented HE acquired the freehold ownership of 79.3 ha of land occupying the central and eastern parts of the site, this being land envisaged to be delivered as part of early phases of development. Since March 2020 HE and HLL have worked jointly as site promoter and lead developer under a formal collaboration agreement, and with the continued engagement of all landowning parties, to advance master planning work and to develop a delivery strategy which reflects both the aspirations of the DBLP and HE's role as the Government's housing accelerator.
- 1.5 The SoCG sets out those matters which have been agreed between DBC, HE and HLL, and those that remain outstanding

2 Background and Allocation Details

- 2.1 The Greater Faverdale Strategic Site comprises 177.8 ha of agricultural land and is located at the north western edge of the town of Darlington. The site is bordered to the west by the A1(M) and the A68, to the south by Rotary Way and existing employment uses at Faverdale Industrial Estate, to the north by Burtree Lane and the east by the Bishop Line rail line. The site is currently accessed via farm accesses from Rotary Way and Burtree Lane which are associated with the existing agricultural uses of the site.

- 2.2 The site is located within walking distance of existing local facilities including convenience stores, primary and secondary schools and a bus service providing direct access to Darlington town centre and Darlington's mainline train station. The site is also well located in relation to the existing employment opportunities at Faverdale Industrial Estate, established residential areas and, with respect to employment elements of the proposed allocation, the site benefits from good connectivity to the strategic highway network via the A1(M).

Land Ownership

- 2.3 Collectively HE, HLL and DBC hold interests in 149.4ha of the 177.8 ha site. The remaining land is held in two separate private ownerships, both of which are located in the western part of the site which is anticipated to be delivered as part of the final phase of development beyond the proposed plan period. Land outside the collective ownership of HE, HLL and DBC does not require any additional strategic infrastructure over and above that required to serve the wider garden village. All landowners within the site have expressed support for the proposed allocation and emerging masterplan vision for the site through their ongoing engagement with the Greater Faverdale Site Group.

Existing planning status

- 2.4 The area covered by the proposed allocation is identified in the adopted Development Plan as providing a role in meeting the future development needs for Darlington. The western part of the site (120 ha) is allocated as a Reserve Employment site under Policy EP8 of the 1997 Darlington Local Plan and was retained following the 2001 Local Plan update.
- 2.5 The Greater Faverdale site is also located within the 'North West Urban Fringe' which is identified as a broad strategic location for employment and housing development under *Policy CS1: Darlington's Sub-Regional Role and Locational Strategy* of the Darlington Local Development Framework Core Strategy (Adopted May 2011).

Proposed Allocation

- 2.6 The site was identified as having potential for strategic scale mixed use development as part of the DBLP Issues and Scoping consultation (August 2016). In November 2016, DBC's Cabinet agreed to engage with the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS), now part of HE, to investigate how this part of the Borough could contribute to meeting the Borough's long term housing and employment needs in a planned, sustainable way.
- 2.7 The proposed allocation is supported by a high-level Masterplan Framework (Figure 6.2 in the submitted DBLP) which was created in January 2018 by the Greater Faverdale Site Group, a working group led by HLL as lead developer and consisting of landowners, DBC (both in their capacity as LPA and landowner), ATLAS/HE and consultants. Work on the Masterplan Framework started in January 2017 and included developer led public consultation in September 2017. This work, along with the feedback from consultation, informed the draft policy requirements for the strategic allocation put forward in the Draft DBLP which was issued for public consultation (Regulation 18) in June 2018.
- 2.8 Following further consultation (Regulation 19) in August 2020, DBC now propose the allocation of the site for mixed use development in the Publication DBLP under Policy H11. This policy seeks to deliver a sustainable mixed-use development comprising approximately 2,000 homes and approximately 200,000 square metres of employment space, along with associated social infrastructure required to ensure the site functions as a well-planned new

community with a sustainable degree of self-containment, whilst also being well related and functionally connected to its established surroundings.

Delivery

- 2.9 For the purposes of the Examination of the DBLP, the delivery strategy for the site outlined in the DBLP represents a baseline delivery position whereby the site will be delivered in a linear south to north direction with development starting adjacent to the established settlement boundary at Rotary Way and with the link road being delivered incrementally as phases of development come forward.
- 2.10 The delivery trajectory included at Appendix A of the DBLP identifies that in order to contribute to meeting identified needs, as a minimum the site will deliver 750 homes within the plan period with the first 30 homes to be delivered in 2024 and with output increasing to 60 homes per year from 2025 onwards throughout the plan period to 2036. However, subject to local market conditions, absorption rates and the completion of detailed master planning work which is aligned with an accelerated delivery strategy, in its capacity as the Government's housing accelerator and in line with the Government's aspiration to significantly increase the pace of housing delivery, HE intend to increase the pace of delivery over and above the baseline delivery scenario identified in the DBLP through the deployment of a 'master developer' delivery strategy. The aspiration is that this strategy will maximise opportunities for acceleration of housing delivery through the simultaneous delivery of multiple complimentary outlets, through the diversification of both tenure and product types and through the incorporation of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC).
- 2.11 HE/HLL are not yet in a position whereby their accelerated delivery strategy can be put forward for the purposes of the Local Plan Examination. However, in order to open up the wider site for development; embed design quality and place making principles and maximise opportunities for accelerated delivery , HE/HLL intend to submit a phase one hybrid application which is to include fully detailed proposals for the new link road across the site between Rotary Way and Burtree Lane along with associated SuDS, structural landscaping and sustainable movement infrastructure. Subject to detailed consideration at the planning application stage, this master developer approach would deliver acceleration over and above the baseline delivery trajectory outlined in the DBLP but would not introduce any fundamental deviation from the master planning principles set out in the Masterplan Framework which accompanies Policy H11.

3 Areas of Common Ground

- 3.1 The parties are in broad agreement that the level and distribution of growth set out within the DBLP are appropriate and that the Council's approach to delivering housing represents an appropriate strategy. Indeed, the Greater Faverdale site will play an important role in delivering the strategy of the DBLP.
- 3.2 Having considered reasonable alternatives and the assessment of relevant evidence, and following consultation with stakeholders and the public, the parties agree that the site represents a significant opportunity to plan for housing and employment development at scale which will contribute to meeting development needs within the plan period, whilst also identifying land which will contribute to meeting long term development needs beyond the plan period, thus securing a long term vision for the growth of Darlington whilst also providing flexibility to ensure housing delivery rates are maintained should other sites fail to come forward as envisaged.

3.3 The parties also have a shared aspiration to deliver a high-quality sustainable development which is guided by a comprehensive masterplan and a Strategic Design Code, both of which are underpinned by Garden Village principles.

3.4 A comprehensive masterplan for the entire Greater Faverdale site will provide the overarching framework and spatial layout that will be used to structure and guide development character, functionality and high-level design. It will also set out the broad distribution of quantum and types of development. The masterplan will accompany the first planning application, and once approved, subsequent developments will be required to come forward in line with the principles established in the approved masterplan.

4 Conclusion

4.1 HE and HLL support the allocation of the Greater Faverdale site in the DBLP and the parties agree the full extent of the site is suitable, available and achievable for housing, employment and supporting development in line with the delivery trajectory put forward in the DBLP.

4.2 Significant cooperation between the parties has taken place and will continue to do so in terms of the Local Plan examination, the preparation of the masterplan and the submission of planning applications to achieve the shared ambition of the parties to deliver a high quality mixed use development.

Signed

On behalf of Darlington Borough Council



Name: Ian Williams

Position: Director Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services Date: 29/04/21

On behalf of Homes and Communities Agency (trading as Homes England)

Name:  M Harris C42407

Position: Manager

Date: 04/05/2021

On behalf of Hellens Land Ltd.



Name: Gavin Cordwell-Smith

Position: Director

Date: 29/04/2021