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Woking Borough Council

VIA E-MAIL

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Dear Sir/ Madam

**Emerging Woking Site Allocations DPD
Main Modifications Consultation**

1. I write with respect of the emerging Woking Borough Site Allocations DPD (the 'emerging Plan'), on behalf of our client, Goldev Ltd. As you know Goldev Ltd has a contractual agreement to pursue the redevelopment of the Woking Football Club site, emerging site allocation UA44 ('the site').
2. We made representations on the emerging Plan in 2018, and our position remains that the emerging Plan is legally compliant and addresses the duty to cooperate. The thrust of our representations was to seek a positively prepared plan which recognised the site capacity for a new stadium and associated residential / commercial development, as enabling of that objective. Our suggested modifications were also made to appropriately link the allocation of UA44 with the enabling site at Egley Road, GB7.
3. Goldev does not object to the principle of the development that the emerging policy UA44 seeks to achieve. The site was subject to a planning application, refused in July 2020 (ref PLAN/2019/1176), which proposed a comprehensive redevelopment of the site, to enable a replacement football stadium (circa 9,000 capacity), associated retail/ parking and 1,048 residential dwellings. The application was enabling, and proposed a development quantum, which alongside the proposal on emerging allocation GB7 at Egley Road, would have facilitated the relocation of the David Lloyd leisure facility, and the development value, to enable 45% affordable housing provision on UA44, and 100% on Egley Road, alongside a completely new (and re-sited) football stadium. Despite officers' recommendation to approve, both applications were refused by the Council. These will be subject to a planning appeal ('the appeal scheme'), which will be lodged shortly.
4. In the event the appeal is unsuccessful, an alternative proposition of the site is required, and this will be guided by UA44. As worded, the main modifications to the policy seeks to restrict the residential development to 93 dwellings, and refers to a number of scenarios with respect of the football stadium as either a) 'a football stadium with enhanced facilities', b) 'retain a football stadium', or c) 'replacement football stadium'. This is ambiguous.
5. The draft policy wording creates three issues. Firstly on plan effectiveness, as worded it is unclear how the policy will operate. Questions remain as to whether the objective is an enhanced, retained or replacement stadium. If the stadium is to be replaced, as is proposed in the appeal scheme, this will require enabling development, and the Egley Road site. If however, the stadium is either enhanced or retained in-situ, this could occur with more modest alternative development propositions or via some alternative means proposed, and promoted by the Football Club. Goldev is not aware that such a proposition exists at this time, or that there is any evidence before the Inspector.

6. Secondly on whether the plan is positively prepared. The site has the capacity for far more than only 93 dwellings. Goldev is unclear what evidence has been prepared to support this site capacity assumption. The masterplanning and technical evidence base which exists is largely (if not entirely) that which supports a comprehensive development, as included in the appeal scheme of circa 1,000 dwellings. There is also no viability or feasibility evidence which Goldev is aware of, that would support the complete redevelopment of the football stadium without any associated regeneration.
7. Thirdly, Goldev questions the overall basis of the policy and hence whether it is justified. UA44 is already within the urban area of Woking, and hence the other policies of the Core Strategy, and those relevant in the emerging Plan would apply, and this formed the basis of the planning decision on the appeal scheme. Should the site capacity be restricted to 93 dwellings, then there will clearly be insufficient development value for this to enable a comprehensive redevelopment of the football stadium. There are no other immediate, or known propositions to redevelop the football club. NPPF paragraph 69 makes clear that larger sites can be sub-divided to speed up the delivery of homes, and the site, as Brownfield, clearly has the potential to remain on the Brownfield Land Register, and enable homes, either as allocated, or as windfall.
8. In these circumstances, Goldev considers there are broadly two approaches available to ensure the emerging Plan is sound: Either: -
 - a. Policy UA44 is modified, to include an approximation of the potential housing delivery yield, based on site capacity and masterplanning evidence, which is approximately [100] dwellings, on the basis that such development does not preclude any future enhancement to the football stadium in-situ, or a greater housing yield where justified via a robust consultation, design review and masterplanning process, in order to specifically enable the comprehensive redevelopment of the football club on the site (as linked to emerging policy GB7), or;
 - b. Policy UA44 is deleted, as there is no alternative justification for the redevelopment of the football stadium nor evidence to support it. Any future proposals are considered as windfall in the context of the Core Strategy.
9. Proposition a. is justified by the masterplanning and technical evidence for the appeal scheme, and is effective as there is a positively prepared enabling element to the policy, which creates change. Proposition a. also provides for the scenario whereby a reduced amount of development is proposed, ensuring that the football stadium may still be enhanced in-situ via a separate future process. This would ensure the policy is effective.
10. Proposition b. is suggested, where the Inspector is not satisfied that sufficient reason, nor evidence, exists to justify any policy on the site. This scenario may still enable sustainable development, as guided by the Core Strategy. This would be effective and justified in these circumstances.
11. We trust these representations will be provided due consideration, and more evidence can be provided should a further Hearing Session be convened.

Yours faithfully,



Charles Collins
Director - Planning

Cc:

- Wayne Gold, Goldev Ltd