

## **Bourn Airfield New Settlement Major Development Site Boundary Council's Assessment of Evidence Policy SS/6**

As reported to the Planning Portfolio Holder meeting 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and Council 17<sup>th</sup> November 2016 with amended cross references. Land parcel 3 was not approved for inclusion in the major Development Site.

1. The site promoters, Countryside Properties, have asked the Council to consider a number of revisions to the eastern boundary of the Major Development Site included in the submitted Local Plan. They have undertaken a range of design-led work since the plan was submitted and have provided a document to the Council that sets out a number of parcels of land where they consider the Major Development Site boundary could be extended to make better use of this brownfield site, enable the creation of a better designed place and maintain an appropriate relationship with Highfields Caldecote. It is contained in RD/FM/013 Appendices 1-4.
2. Officers have considered the proposed boundary changes and broken them down into a number of parcels so that Members can consider the merits of each parcel, as set out below and shown on the parcel map. The aerial photograph on the cover of Appendix 1 to the promoter's evidence is helpful to visualise the character of the area and the nature of the changes proposed. The assessment of these parcels is as follows:
  - **Parcels 1 and 2** - The boundary in the submitted Local Plan included wide buffers within the body of the Airfield site either side of the existing employment area, recognising that its existing and permitted uses would not be compatible with residential development. However, there are merits in including the buffers in the Major Development Site boundary to provide flexibility to respond to the potential for the land with permission to be incorporated into the development and planned comprehensively through the SPD preparation and then through a planning application to ensure the best use is made of this brownfield site. These areas lie within the body of the site and would not extend the overall extent of built development and would have considerable advantages to the good planning of the development.
  - **Parcel 3** - The parcel of land at the entrance to the new settlement is put forward by the promoters as a consequence of the integration of the employment area into the development. They say it could create a better entrance and gateway to the development compared with the boundary in the submitted Local Plan. This would take the Major Development Site closer to the northern edge of Highfields Caldecote - 111 metres at one corner – with the nature of any development and its height, scale and associated landscaping subject to masterplanning.

The proposed modifications to Policy SS/6 require that the design of the edges of the new village will have particular regard to ensuring an appropriate relationship with Cambourne and Highfields Caldecote. If Parcel 1 is included in the Major Development Site this would help with

the creation of a gateway to the development and reduce the corridor effect of the submitted boundary, and with sensitive design Parcel 3 would provide further opportunity and flexibility to create an enhanced gateway to the new settlement that provides an appropriate relationship with Highfields Caldecote.

Officers have noted the positive impact that the proposal would have on the presentation of the new settlement at this key access gateway. The assessment of harm to landscape interests and separation from Highfields Caldecote is also considered capable of being mitigated with careful masterplanning. The overall positive impacts argued are accordingly recognised by officers but this remains a matter of judgement for members.

- **Parcel 4** - The promoters propose that the eastern boundary could be extended towards Highfields Caldecote to be bounded by a substantial tree belt along the full length of the boundary. They propose to widen the existing tree belt that exists along much of this boundary and fill in the current gap half way down this boundary. This would keep the boundary at the employment site as it is in the submitted Local Plan, which is 40 metres from the edge of the site and 214 metres from the village framework of Highfields Caldecote, much of which is heavily wooded. Much of the eastern boundary of the Major Development Site would be between 65 and 85 metres from the edge of the site compared with 118 to 136 metres in the submitted plan. This proposed built development line would be between 200 metres and 390 metres from the village framework as the framework boundary line changes from the northern part of the village to the southern part of the village.

If these changes were made, the Major Development Site would overall be approximately 50 metres closer to Highfields Caldecote although separated from it by open land as currently and screened from it by thick woodland. These distances are shown on pages 59 and 60 of Appendix 1 to the promoter's evidence (Appendix C). Officers have considered the impact of these changes on the wider landscape and are satisfied that the physical impact upon separation and appreciation of space around the settlement would be maintained. For that reason, officers consider that the modification would not undermine the policy objectives of the submitted plan for the site.

- **Parcel 5** – The promoters propose a modest extension to the boundary of the Major Development Site boundary to reflect a mature tree belt. This would help make best use of the brownfield site without impacting on the wider landscape or neighbouring communities.

## Conclusions

3. Officers' overall conclusions are that the proposals would contribute positively to the policy objectives for the site set out in the submitted plan and therefore to the soundness of the plan.

