

Ipswich Borough Council Final Draft Local Plan Review

Statement of Common Ground between Ipswich Borough Council and Mersea Homes

Matters relating to Red House neighbourhood (east of Westerfield Road) of the Ipswich Garden Suburb Strategic Allocation outlined in Policy CS10 of the emerging Ipswich Local Plan

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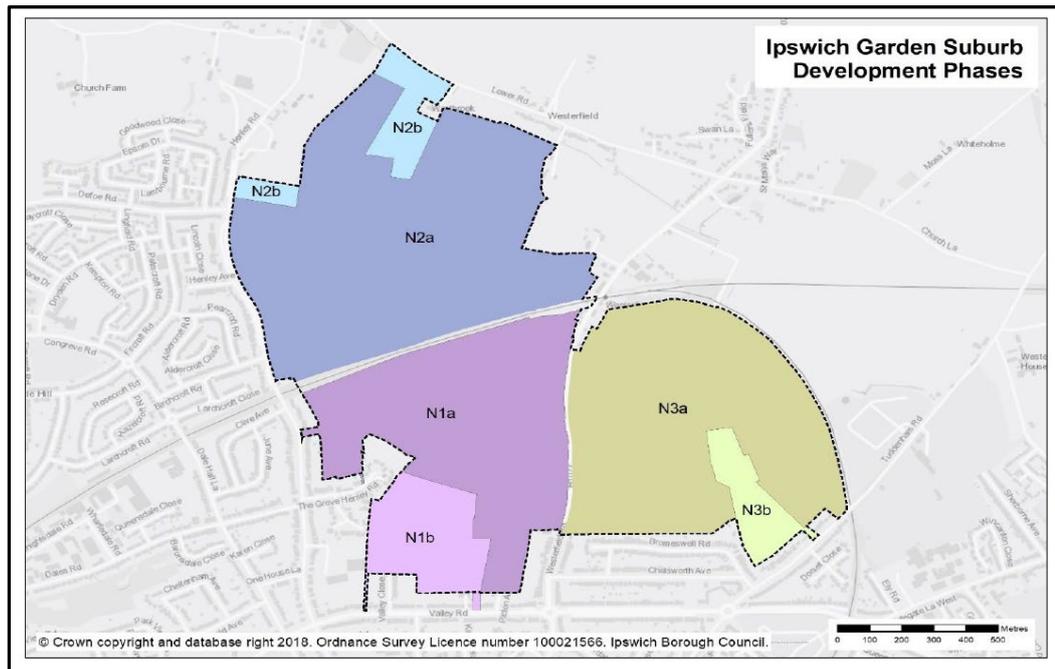
Purpose of Statement

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been produced to advise the Inspectors on the agreed position in relation to the delivery of the Red House Neighbourhood, forming one of the three neighbourhoods being created through the Ipswich Garden Suburb Strategic Allocation in CS10 of the emerging Ipswich Local Plan. This SoCG has been prepared between Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) and Mersea Homes. This SoCG has been published in response to question 12 of the Inspectors Initial Questions where it was requested that the Council agrees SoCG's with site promoters and/or developers in relation to site delivery to support the accuracy of the Housing Trajectory.

The Site Context

2. Land on the northern edge of the urban area of Ipswich Borough is known as the Northern Fringe. Policy CS10 allows for the development of part of the Northern Fringe following garden suburb principles and represents a major urban extension to the town. This is known as the Ipswich Garden Suburb (IGS) and, is allocated as a strategic proposal to be planned through the Core Strategy.
3. The site of the IGS is a key component of the supply of housing land in Ipswich during the plan period. The IGS consists of 195ha of land which will be developed comprehensively as a garden suburb of three neighbourhoods:
 - Henley Gate neighbourhood (east of Henley Road and north of the railway line);
 - Fonnereau neighbourhood (west of Westerfield Road and south of the railway line); and
 - The Red House neighbourhood (east of Westerfield Road).
4. The Red House Farm neighbourhood is controlled by two parties, with the largest area (shown as N3a on the plan overleaf) being under the control of Mersea Homes Ltd, and the smaller parcel (N3b) being under the control of the Novosad family.

5. This current Statement of Common ground relates to the larger parcel, N3a.



6. Four Reserved Matters applications have been submitted in relation to the Henley Gate Neighbourhood. These relate to the first phase of housing and core infrastructure (two applications) and the first phase of the country park. These are currently under consideration and it is expected to be determined later this year. Outline Planning Permission for the Henley Gate Neighbourhood of 1,100 homes was granted on 31st January 2020 (outline planning permission with access considered but all other matters reserved).
7. Outline Planning Permission was also granted for the majority of the Fonnereau neighbourhood on 31st January 2020 (with all matters reserved) for 815 dwellings alongside, a new Primary School, a District Centre comprising a mix of retail and office space, green spaces and a new Community Centre. This application was resolved to grant outline planning permission by Planning and Development Committee on the 4th April 2018 and a Section 106 Legal Agreement was dated on 30th January 2020. The remaining part of Fonnereau Neighbourhood is the Ipswich School playing fields.
8. The outline planning permissions across the Henley Gate and part of the Fonnereau Neighbourhood have granted a total of 1,915 homes with supporting infrastructure.



Figure 1 – showing the proposed form of the IGS split across the three neighbourhoods.

9. The Marginal Viability - Housing Infrastructure Fund was announced in July 2017. Ipswich Borough Council submitted a bid for funding towards three pieces of strategic infrastructure associated with the Ipswich Garden Suburb; the Country Park and the two Bridges over the railway line (one pedestrian/cyclist and one for vehicles). The Council was successful in its bid for £9,868,351 and has secured the funding with Homes England.
10. A Delivery Board, as detailed in the Ipswich Garden Suburb- SPD, has been established to monitor, co-ordinate and assist where appropriate in the delivery of this strategic site. The first meeting was held on 17th June 2020 as a virtual meeting and determined the Terms of Reference and this Board meets regularly. The Terms of Reference are included in the Appendix to this SoCG.

Red House Neighbourhood

11. The Red House Neighbourhood is located south of the railway line and to the east of Westerfield Road. It is expected to provide further housing, a new Secondary School, Primary School and Local Centre. The Red House Neighbourhood proposes up to 1,100 dwellings on a site area of 53.2 hectares.
12. In 2018 Mersea Homes submitted an EIA Screening Request whereby it was concluded that an EIA for the site was required. The proposed development as set out in the Screening Request was for outline planning permission for up to 1,100 dwellings, a secondary school including sixth form, a primary school with early years provision, a local centre, formal and informal open space and associated infrastructure.

13. In October 2019 a request for a Scoping Opinion was submitted to the Council for the same parcel of land and for the same form of development. Ipswich Borough Council's ('IBC') issued its Scoping Opinion in November 2019.
14. Pre-application discussions between Mersea Homes and Ipswich Borough Council commenced in December 2019. In February 2020, revised proposals were issued to IBC on behalf of Mersea Homes, but at that time, agreement was not reached between the parties as to the scope and extent of further pre-application work required, or the associated PPA fees. Further correspondence in April 2020 between the parties went some way towards identifying the scope of pre-application advice being sought by Mersea Homes but the impact of COVID 19 at that time led to a temporary cessation of activity.
15. Whilst there is no PPA in place, Mersea Homes are continuing with the preparation of an Outline Planning Application with a view to submission towards the end of the 1st Quarter of 2021. Currently, Ipswich Borough planners are not formally engaged on the work towards submission.
16. Mersea Homes would wish to undertake additional pre-application consultation on matters relating to affordable housing and viability over the Autumn which is a reduction from the originally discussed scope for the pre-application discussion. Mersea Homes has made objection to the final draft Local Plan regarding the level of affordable housing expected in Policy CS10.
17. Mersea Homes has undertaken separate pre-application consultation with the Highway Authority Mersea Homes has also undertaken separate pre-application consultation with Suffolk County Council as the Lead local Flood Authority. on the Flood Risk Assessment that will be submitted with the Outline Planning Application.

Agreed Position

18. Mersea Homes has signed up to and attend the Delivery Board and are a party to the adopted Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1). This shows a commitment to seeing through the delivery of the site.
19. Mersea Homes are progressing towards the submission of an outline planning application at the end of the 1st Quarter of 2021, following public consultation on the draft Site Masterplan in the Winter of 2020.
20. In terms of the overall delivery planning Mersea Homes are working on the assumption of securing Reserved Matters permission for a first phase of development in 2022 and discharge of pre-start conditions by mid-2022, allowing a start on site in late 2022/early

2023. Housebuilding would start in mid-2023, allowing 42 units to be built in 2023/24, and thereafter 84 units per annum from 2024/25.

Areas of Disagreement

21. Key areas of disagreement between the parties, are reflected in Mersea Homes' representations to the Local Plan, include the following:
 - The Policies Map – Mersea Homes considers The Policies Map specifies areas within the IGS for specific uses. However, they consider in their objection that this approach is inappropriate both because it effectively seeks to put statutory weight to the Framework Plan contained in the IGS SPD, it introduces contradiction in terms of the wording of the SPD and the wording of the Policy, and moreover as Master planning has progressed on the various neighbourhoods it has become apparent that some of the specific use allocations are not necessarily in the optimum positions (as evidence by the fact that the consents for Henley Gate and Fonnereau both differ from the SPD/Policies Map). Mersea Homes maintains that the approach taken by IBC is unjustified and is harmful to constructive Masterplan for the remaining land parcels:
 - The relationship between CS10 and the IGS SPD – Mersea Homes have drawn attention in their duly made objections to tensions between the manner in which Policy CS10 seeks to apply the IGS SPD and the manner in which the SPD says it should be applied. As per the representations by Mersea Homes, this issue potentially impacts negatively on constructive Master planning for the remaining parcels; and
 - Affordable Housing and Viability - Mersea Homes considers the evidence to date shows that the infrastructure costs for delivering development in the IGS preclude the full policy level of affordable housing, with the Henley Gate and Fonnereau neighbourhoods having been approved with affordable housing provisions of 5% and 4%, rather than the maximum of 35%. Since the policy provides that no site should deliver more than 35%, the representation by Mersea Homes explains that it is now essentially impossible to achieve 31% overall, and hence that target is meaningless. Furthermore, the viability assessment work by Aspinall Verdi does not reflect the agreed viability positions for the previously approved neighbourhoods and grossly underestimates the actual infrastructure costs. In order to produce an effective policy target for affordable housing, the viability appraisal requires revision.
22. Mersea Homes have raised additional objections in respect of certain other specific Development Management policies, as set out in their duly made representations.
23. Ipswich Borough Council will continue to work with Mersea Homes to try to resolve these outstanding matters of disagreement.

Areas not yet substantiated

24. Ipswich Borough Council is pleased to see that the site is progressing to submission of an outline planning application. However, at this time, this progress has not been evidenced to the Borough and as such, IBC cannot yet confirm that this work and pre-application discussions with the county council are at the position stated. However, it is accepted that this position is likely to change over time. For these reasons, the following elements are contained in this section.
25. In terms of site preparation work, Mersea Homes has undertaken a number of site surveys to inform any forthcoming planning application, these include:
- Archaeological Investigation – the site has already been the subject of pre-application site investigation, following pre-application consultation with Suffolk County Council. 490 trial trenches have been investigated and the findings made available to SCC. Only limited further investigation prior to commencement of development is now envisaged;
 - Arboriculture – a full tree survey for the site has been completed, so that the site Masterplan can respond to key important specimens and groups;
 - Agricultural Land Survey – completed;
 - Ecology – Site-wide Preliminary Ecological Assessment completed, and all protected species surveys are now completed or in the final stages of completion;
 - Flood Risk Assessment – prepared and in the final stages of agreement with the LLFA;
 - Geo-Environmental Report – completed and no significant construction or remediation issues identified;
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – all field work completed, and findings used to inform the Site Masterplan;
 - Noise and vibration – all site surveys completed, and findings have been used to inform the Site Masterplan;
 - Transport Assessment – Scoping with Highway Authority completed, and all survey and technical work completed. This illustrates the financial investment that Mersea Homes has already made in bringing a planning application forward.

In addition consultant reports regarding the additional matters needed for processing of applications within the IGS (including Air Quality, Heritage, Health Impact, Construction Management, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Sustainable Design etc) have either been instructed and are awaiting the final Site Masterplan or will be instructed and completed prior to the application being submitted. The EIA has been commenced and is similarly awaiting the final Site Masterplan before completion.

Signatures

Signed: 

Name: Martyn Fulcher

Position: Head of Development

Date: 29.09.2020

Ipswich Borough Council

Signed: 

Name: Stuart Cock

Position: MD

Date: 29.9.20

Mersea Homes

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference for the IGS Delivery Board

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR DELIVERY BOARD

Project: Ipswich Garden Suburb (IGS)

1. Purpose and Role of the Delivery Board:

1.1 In accordance with the Ipswich Garden Suburb Supplementary Planning Document (IGS SPD) adopted 22nd March 2017, a Delivery Board is to be formed to oversee the delivery phases of the Ipswich Garden Suburb (IGS).

1.2 The purpose and role of the Delivery Board will be:

- To assist and facilitate a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of strategic infrastructure, and to identify any issues that would impede the delivery of such infrastructure which is required to be delivered by specified triggers;
- To assist and facilitate the delivery of a high-quality form of development in this garden suburb in accordance with the guidance set out in the IGS SPD;
- To assist and facilitate, where appropriate, securing of external funding to help deliver IGS;
- To assist and facilitate agreement and the delivery of long-term management and governance arrangements for the phases of IGS;
- To monitor progress of the delivery of the IGS and inform the Authority Monitoring Report (as detailed in Paragraph 7.32 of the IGS SPD);
- To receive updates from Members of the Delivery Board on progress of the phases of IGS and any engagement with other landowners and those with third party interests;
- To identify and discuss possible solutions to issues which arise that may stall the delivery and progress of the high quality development of IGS.

2. Membership of the Delivery Board:

2.1 The Delivery Board would include key stakeholders who have an interest or knowledge in aspects of the delivery of the IGS

2.2 The core membership would include:

- Chair – IBC Chief Executive;
- Deputy Chair – IBC Head of Development;
- Developers (Master Developers) - S106 includes obligations for involvement;
- IGS Landowners;
- IBC – appropriate Officers to include those from Special Projects, Housing, Economic Development, Parks and Legal Teams; and
- SCC – appropriate Officers to include those from Planning, Education, Libraries, Highways and Flood and Water Management.

2.3 Members will be encouraged to nominate suitable deputies and suggest relevant guests to attend appropriate for the agenda items being discussed. Based on these recommendations and nominations, IBC will invite attendees for each meeting. Depending on the agenda, additional representation may be sought from a range of organisations, including: -

- Councillors (IBC and SCC)
- Home England

Network Rail

- IBC Technical Consultants (e.g. Ecologist)
- Utility Companies
- Suffolk Constabulary
- NHS
- East Suffolk Council
- Natural England
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local Enterprise Partnership

2.4 Membership will be reviewed and refreshed annually.

3. Terms of Reference:

3.1 IBC will establish the delivery board within three months of the first permission (including outline) being granted on any part of the IGS.

3.2 The Delivery Board will meet on a quarterly basis in an appropriate location for Members, with additional meetings convened as required.

3.3 Members of the Delivery Board will provide relevant information relating to their areas of interest and as may be reasonably requested by the Delivery Board.

3.4 Members of the Delivery Board will respect the views of other Members.

3.5 Where such items are highlighted as confidential, Members of the Delivery Board will respect the sensitive and confidential nature of the issues raised and discussed by the Delivery Board.

3.6 The content of meetings shall be topic-based matters derived from objectives of the IGS SPD such as:

- Housing delivery and site updates;
- Public realm, Open Space and Country Park (including Visitor Centre);
- Community development and services;
- District and Local Centres;
- Highways;
- Rail;
- Education;
- Infrastructure including bridges, health provision, police facilities, library etc.;

- Housing Infrastructure Fund and other external funding; and
- Conditions and S106 Obligations including Monitoring.

3.7 Project teams or task groups will be arranged by the Delivery Board to work on individual project plans for certain issues and topics where considered necessary.

3.8 Agenda and supporting papers for each meeting will be circulated at least 5 working days prior to the meeting by IBC.

3.9 Minutes of meetings covering the main points discussed and actions will be circulated to Members, subject to commercial sensitivity, by IBC.

3.10 Members will agree a rolling forward work programme.

3.11 A review of the operation of the Delivery Board will take place after first year.

4. Decisions

4.1 The Delivery Board is to support the coordinated delivery of the IGS and assist with project management. The remit of the Delivery Board is not to make decisions regarding the delivery and implementation of IGS but to identify, discuss and work on any issues and their potential solutions. As such there will be no voting arrangements required to be put in place for the Delivery Board membership.

4.2 Commitments to participation in the Delivery Board for Developers, Landowners and IBC are drafted into the relevant S106 Obligations.

5. Financial

5.1 The Delivery Board will not have any direct financial responsibilities.