

PLAN:MK EXAMINATION

Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions

Matter 5 – Strategic Sites

Issue 3 – South East Milton Keynes (SEMK) (Policy SD13)

Examination Hearing Statement on behalf of Gladman Developments / Gallagher Estates Ltd

Introduction and Context

This Statement has been prepared to assist the Inspector with regard to Matter 5, Issue 3, South East Milton Keynes (SEMK) and its allocation under Policy SD13.

Gladman/Gallagher, along with O&H Properties, are the principal promoting developers of the site who together control some 95% of the site allocation and have been for some time working with the Council in supporting the allocation. Gladman/Gallagher support the allocation of the site and are committed to the delivery of the development and have set out some general commentary to some of the Inspectors Questions and Issues which complement their previously submitted representations to the Plan. The Statement also deals with some specific matters raised in the Inspectors Questions where there is some limited dispute on detailed issues between Gladman/Gallagher and the Council. Gladman/Gallagher's wider submitted representations and comments to a range of other policies submitted as part of the Regulation 19 Consultation still remain, but are left as written submissions.

This Statement sits alongside a Statement of Common Ground between the Council, Gladman/Gallagher and O&H Properties which is being prepared to assist the Inspector on some key principles which support the site allocation and its delivery and should further assist the Inspector in finding SEMK a sound allocation in the Plan.

Q5.18

Is the overall size of the allocation and the quantity of development proposed appropriate? Should additional land be included within the allocation to make it sound, including those areas indicated in the schedule of proposed modifications (PM39 & PM40)?

The overall size of the allocation and the quantity of development proposed is appropriate. The additional land proposed to form part of the allocation under PM39 was suggested by Gladman/Gallagher in their Regulation 19 representations and whilst may not be necessary to make the allocation sound, is a central parcel of land which does allow for a more comprehensively designed scheme to come forward.

Some additional parcels of land were also suggested for inclusion in the allocation to also logically define the extent of a site where the masterplanning of the allocation could also be more comprehensive as Figure 1 below.

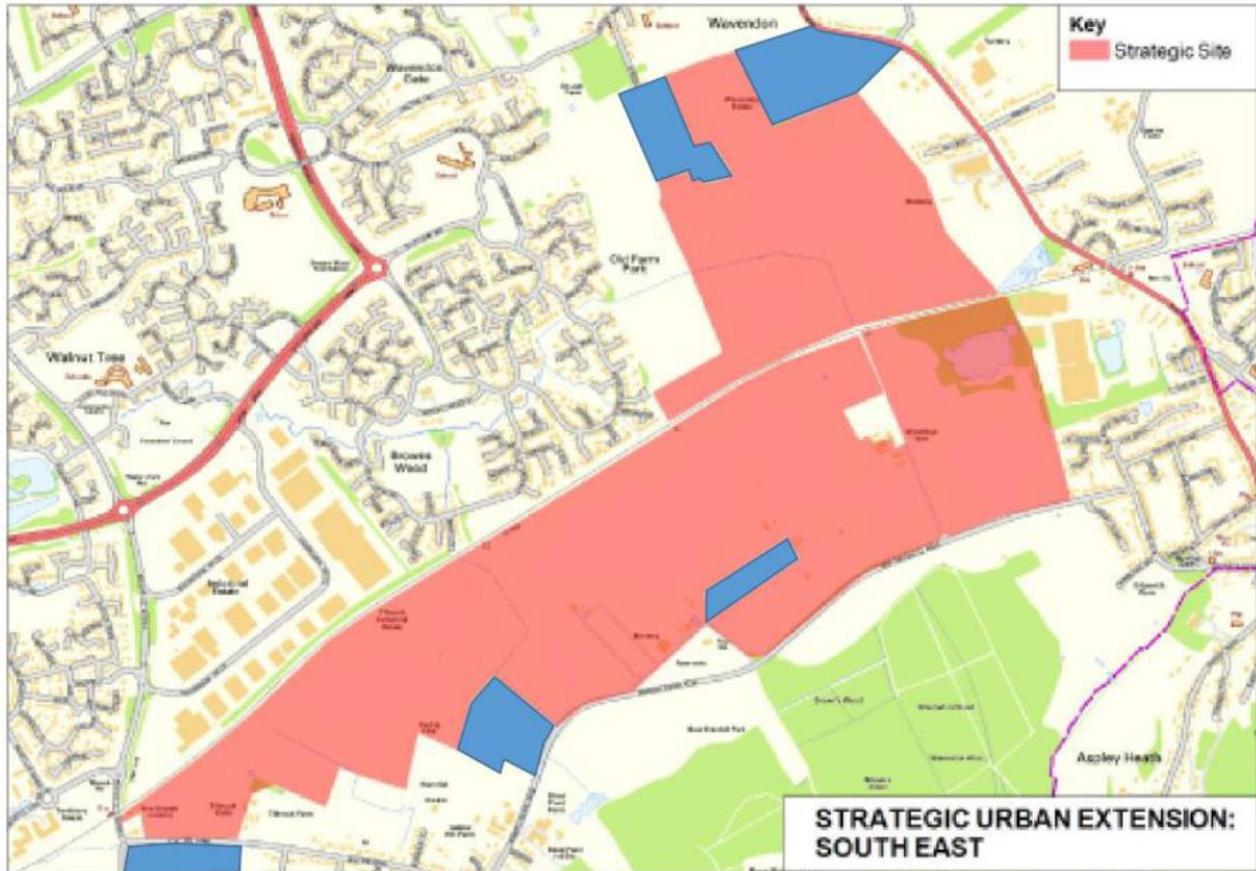


Figure 1. Additional land to be included in the South East Milton Keynes Urban Extension

Q5.19

Is the trajectory for completions at SEMK over the plan period realistic? Does it take account of any necessary comprehensive development framework approach and is there in-built flexibility to resolve any barriers to delivery? Are lead-in times and delivery rates reasonable?

The trajectory for the delivery of the allocation is reasonable and realistic. It has been prepared by the Council but discussed and agreed with Gladman/Gallagher and the annual rates of delivery are supportable in the Milton Keynes market and whilst higher than some other markets, are appropriate in the developers experience of delivery on their other large scale developments in Milton Keynes.

The trajectory envisages delivery from 2022/23 increasing completions to around 400 annually from 2025/26 onwards. The trajectory inevitably envisages the involvement of a number of housebuilders on the site operating from numerous outlets. The scale of the site, range of housebuilders and products would mean this level of annual delivery could be supported on this site in the more buoyant Milton Keynes market.

The trajectory inevitably has an interrelationship with consideration of the Oxford Cambridge Expressway (OCE) and this is considered in 5.20 below. It is Gladman/Gallagher's view the trajectory also necessarily requires progress to be made quickly in 2019 in the completion of the Comprehensive Framework for the site, Outline Planning Applications granted in 19/20, Reserved Matters for early phases and infrastructure in 20/21 and Section Agreements and implementation enabling works in 21/22. Gladman/Gallagher are committed to an early planning application to procure delivery of the development in line with the Comprehensive Framework.

Q5.20

What degree of certainty can be given to the capacity of the site having regard to the route options for the proposed Expressway and necessary safeguarding and buffer of a possible route? Is it correct that route options B and C for the Expressway would both affect SEMK?

It is not yet known whether or to what extent the Expressway will directly affect this site and the wider area. A preferred 'corridor' for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway (as defined in the plans within the MKC response to the Inspector dated 3 June 2018) will be announced in either July or August 2018. However, in respect of SEMK, this announcement will not result in any further clarification as all three HE broad 'corridors' encompass land within the allocation.

Consultation will not move from 'corridors' to 'routes' until the consultation on route options is to take place during 2019/20 with a preferred route to be decided in 2020.

The Council has attempted an analysis of how the Expressway might route through the site and the impact on land take that such a route would have. Based on an assumption that a 100m wide corridor would be required to accommodate the highway infrastructure, drainage and buffers to adjacent land uses, this analysis indicates that an area of approximately 30 hectares within the site would be needed to accommodate this infrastructure, leaving c. 170 hectares for development. On this basis, the Council's assumptions are that the site could accommodate around 3,000 homes with the assumed Expressway running through it, and potentially around 3,500 homes without the assumed Expressway.

The promoters of the development have undertaken a similar exercise which concluded similar impacts of the potential OCE.

It should be noted that Gladman/Gallagher strongly contest that the Expressway preferred route would be through any part of the Policy Area SD13. To date there has been no suggestion from Highways England or the Department for Transport (DfT) imposing a road reserve corridor in this location at any point in the preparation or submission of Plan MK. The SD13 allocation has been public knowledge since January 2016¹.

¹ Plan:MK Strategic Development Directions Consultation
planningprospects
planning and development consultancy

In further support of this view the Promoters would bring to the attention of the Inspector the following key points

At the Expressway Stakeholders Meeting held in May 2018 it was confirmed, although originally the announcement of the preferred corridor was to be early summer 2018, that this has been delayed until 2019; a date of which will be substantially after the hearing sessions.

Highway England Presentation² confirms the Strategic fit for the Expressway is focused on the Growth Potential of the Corridor (slide 4) and Strategic Transformation Intervention Objectives (Slide 9) including ***“Alignment with known and aspirational development”***. Development south of Milton Keynes of Policy Area SD13 is not even an aspiration but must be considered as a known commitment.

Within the NIC Overarching Objective (p4) the challenge given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer includes ***“make recommendations to maximise the potential of the Corridor.....and securing the homes and jobs needed.”*** It is interesting to note that as Milton Keynes is not a defined area for meeting growth by a new settlement (*New Places -p4*) the only way growth can be maximised is expansion of the existing settlement. It would not be logical to limit growth as promoted by Milton Keynes in respect of the two major allocations by potentially reducing land for both housing (Policy SD13) and employment (Policy Area SD16)

This is further supported by the Conclusions and Recommendations (p96-98) of the NIC study which points out within Key Factor 1 how the current non-joined up approach between the nationally significant infrastructure as against plan making to provide the required growth needs to be addressed. It further recognises that local economic and urban development should allow and influence the national infrastructure projects so that this agenda is supported **alongside** the DfT broader objectives.

Gladman/Gallagher therefore conclude that whichever broad corridor is preferred there does not appear a logical reason as to why the final alignment would indeed pass through Policy SD13.

Nonetheless, it is Gladman/Gallagher’s understanding that should the broad corridor options B or C of the Expressway be selected this *could* impact on the site. Assessments on all potential constraints within Policy SD13 have been ongoing for some time and a potential route of the Expressway alignment has been assessed in this process. As the actual route is not known we have made a number of broad assumptions using data from our transport consultants as to the likely width of such a road, junction conditions and any environmental buffers.

This analysis demonstrates that although there will be an inevitable reduction from a starting point this is far greater than the capacity envisaged by Policy SD13. It is therefore concluded that Policy SD13 would remain

² Ox-Cam Key Milestones & Project Strategic Objectives 27 March 2018 Presentation

as a significant and necessary allocation required for to the delivery of Plan Mk, albeit there may be a consequential, but not significant, reduction in the number that could be achieved should the Expressway pass through the site.

Q5.21

Are there other infrastructure interdependencies, how do they relate to the phasing of development, are they made clear in the Plan and have they been adequately taken into account?

It is of course fully expected that a development of this scale will need to be appropriately phased in order to ensure that new housing is delivered alongside appropriate and necessary infrastructure and the development as a whole delivers the key requirements for the development set out in policy. Such an approach is common practice and can be appropriately addressed in development management through the planning application process and the promoters are working with the Council in order to effectively deliver the development in Phases.

Q5.23

How will uncertainty about deliverability of the SEMK allocation be addressed and mitigated if necessary? Is there evidence to support SEMK being able to sustainably come forward in two distinct sites, north and south of the railway?

The masterplanning of the site will evolve through the comprehensive Development Framework Document in order to appropriately provide for a distribution of uses and site layout which addresses site constraints and opportunities including the key development parameters and site requirements set out in Policy SD 13. With and without the OCE Expressway can be explored further, but progress in the development can and should continue until clarification on the OCE route is known.

The expectation is that parcels north and south of the railway line can be delivered as two distinct sustainable neighbourhoods, following the pattern of development established in the planning of Milton Keynes, where local facilities and services are provided in local centres within each neighbourhood but walking and cycling links are provided between adjacent neighbourhoods to access higher order or neighbouring/ complementary facilities. Thus, it is anticipated that primary school provision will be provided in each neighbourhood (north and south) as part of local centre/community facility provision, with secondary school provision (with opportunities for dual use sports provision) provided on-site in a location which takes into account the wider distribution of secondary education facilities in the south east of the new city and planned provision in adjacent administrative districts.

Q5.24

Are the specific policy requirements in Policy SD13 justified and deliverable? Are the infrastructure requirements clearly set out (particularly education and health) and having regard to the LIP is it clear what developers are expected to provide to overcome constraints? Would the proposed modifications (including PM38) be necessary for soundness?

General infrastructure requirements for the development are appropriately covered in Policy generally within the Plan. Health provision will be provided in accordance with the requirements of Policy EH5 and specifically having regard to a Health Impact Assessment which will measure the wider impact on healthy living and the demands that are placed upon the capacity of health services and facilities arising from the development.

In respect of public open space provision, the proposed development will meet the requirements of policy EH7 including its requirements for the delivery of adequate provision of playing pitches, parks and open space, as well as sports and active recreation provision.

With regards to Education, the necessity for such provision is of course appropriate in principle however the extent to which the precise education requirement as set out in PM38 can be justified at this stage when the precise number, mix and types of housing are not precisely known is not appropriate and is objected to by Gallagher/Gladman. The development will need to make appropriate provision for education needs at the time any application is submitted and in accordance with needs of the development having regard to existing capacity for places in existing schools. This could be expressed in the policy in these terms.

Q5.25

Will the separate identities of Bow Brickhill, Wavendon and Woburn Sands and settlement fringe sensitivities in general be adequately protected through the Plan's policies?

A landscape-led approach to masterplanning and provision of new or reinforced green buffers would avoid coalescence with Bow Brickhill, Wavendon and Woburn Sands and maintain the sense of separation between these settlements and Milton Keynes.

New development would be set within an extensive framework of green infrastructure comprising retained pastoral fields and paddocks and new areas of semi-natural and public open space. Combined with new woodland planting and reinforcement of existing hedgerows, this approach would conserve the open landscape setting of surrounding settlements and create clearly defined areas of separation between these settlements and new development.

In addition, new green infrastructure would represent an opportunity to deliver a range of landscape enhancements at the settlement fringes through enhanced management of existing landscape features, new native species tree and hedgerow planting and improved access to the countryside.

Q5.26

What will be the impact on the landscape character of the Greensand Ridge, the function of the site as part of the green infrastructure, openness & tranquillity of this part of the Borough, biodiversity and the special interests of Bow Brickhill church and Danesborough Iron Age Fort? Can any potentially adverse impacts be satisfactorily addressed?

The Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (MKLCA) (2016) provides a detailed review of the landscape character of rural areas in Milton Keynes Borough. The Site is located entirely within the 'Clay Lowland Farmland' Landscape Character Type (LCT 4) and 'Wavendon Clay Lowland Farmland' Landscape Character Area (LCA 4b). The key characteristics for the LCT include the following:

- Low-lying and generally flat landscape on the urban edge of Milton Keynes;
- Large scale arable fields with overgrown hedges and smaller areas of pasture for horses and stabling;
- Wide range of urban fringe activities and uses including garden centres, allotments, individual industrial premises to the south-east of Milton Keynes;
- Extensive and open views to the clay plateau, wooded Greensand Ridge and towards Milton Keynes;
- The open agricultural landscape of LCA 4b provides a visually important setting for the Greensand Ridge.

The 'Brickhill Greensand Ridge' LCA is located to the south of the Site. The elevated landform is a major topographical landmark and can be seen from many parts of the Borough. The slopes are heavily wooded with a mix of both ancient deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations. To the fringes of the woodland on the lower slopes there are areas of small to medium scale permanent pasture.

Whilst new development would extend the settlement edge further south towards the Greensand Ridge, the provision of a landscape buffer along Bow Brickhill Road combined with reinforcement of the existing landscape structure would ensure the contrast between the lowland farmland to the north and Greensand Ridge to the south is maintained.

Existing Public Rights of Way and associated views towards the Greensand Ridge would be retained within broad green corridors and areas of public open space. Provision of new informal recreational routes across

the Site and sympathetic orientation of residential streets would provide new publicly accessible locations from which the ridge could be appreciated. Views from the Greensand Ridge itself are largely screened by dense woodland cover and new development would not result in any noticeable effects upon the more peaceful character of this LCA.

A landscape-led approach to masterplanning would ensure that existing green infrastructure is protected and enhanced as an integral part of the new development. The MKLCA assesses the condition of the 'Wavendon Clay Lowland Farmland' LCA as "poor due to the presence of busy A roads, large scale distribution centres and on-going development on the urban edge of Milton Keynes". It also notes a lack of visual cohesiveness, a fragmented landscape pattern and the replacement of native hedgerows with coniferous hedges and shelter belts. Extensive new green infrastructure would therefore represent an opportunity to contribute to the guidelines for landscape management of the LCA through provision of enhanced recreational opportunities, habitat improvements, the creation of new woodland and the restoration of hedgerows.

The visual envelope of the Site is very limited due to the enclosure provided by existing hedgerows and trees, areas of built development and the relatively flat topography. Retention and reinforcement of existing hedgerows with new structural planting would largely restrict views of new development to localised and on-site views.

The Grade II* Listed Church of All Saints lies c. 700m south of the site. The site is located in the wider setting of the Church of All Saints, to the north of the main settlement at Bow Brickhill. The agricultural land within the site does not have a clear historical or functional relationship with the church, however on the basis of the size of the site and the potential for views towards the church tower from within the site the scheme design could mitigate any harm by including view corridors and overall the Church of All Saints is not considered to present an overriding constraint to the development of the site.

The Danesborough Camp Scheduled Monument (also referred to as Danesborough Camp: a slight univallate hillfort 420m north of The Knoll and Danesborough Iron Age Fort by the Inspector) lies c. 655m south of the site. The hillfort is located in the woodland to the west of Aspley Heath. A public right of way crosses the north-western area of the hillfort. The remainder of the Scheduled Monument is not publicly accessible, although another public right of way passes in close proximity to the southern area of the asset.

The site is located in the wider setting of the Scheduled Monument. The agricultural land within the site does not have a clear historical or functional relationship with the Danesborough Camp Scheduled Monument, and has itself experienced much change in character since the construction of the hillfort. Due to the large size of the site and potentially very limited intervisibility during the winter months (in directions where much modern built form is already present), any harm could be mitigated through appropriate planting and land uses within the development to soften the edges of the development. Overall the

Danesborough Camp Scheduled Monument does not present an overriding constraint to the development of the site.

Therefore, in summary, the impact on the landscape character of the Greensand Ridge will be minimal and can be appropriately be mitigated through the design of the development. Equally, the special interests of Bow Brickhill church and Danesborough Iron Age Fort are not considered to present an overriding constraint to the development of the site and can likewise be mitigated.

Q5.27

Is the proposed allocation of 7 permanent gypsy/travellers pitches as part of this strategic site soundly based? How will this provision be delivered?

The Council is required by the national planning policy as part of its requirement to understand and meet full housing needs to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers within Milton Keynes.

Government policy is set out in “Planning Policy for Traveller Sites” (August 2015) which seeks to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites. It requires LPA’s to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply and to reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities in plan-making and planning decisions.

Plan:MK states that “the overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life while respecting the interests of the settled community.”

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing in Milton Keynes over the 15-year period 2016-31, and also incorporates a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) which provides an assessment of current and future need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Milton Keynes over the same period.

Gladman/Gallagher have no evidence to suggest that the identified need is not sound. There are currently two public Gypsy and Traveller sites within Milton Keynes which provide a total of 18 pitches (Calverton Lane: 12 pitches and Willen Road: 6 pitches). None are understood to be currently vacant. The GTAA suggests there is a requirement for 19 additional pitches with 5 additional pitches to be provided to account for the need of gypsies and travellers; 13 pitches to account for the need of Non-Travelling Gypsies and Travellers and an additional pitch for ‘unknown’ Gypsies and Travellers; those whose status under the new definition could not be determined.

Plan:MK seeks to identify locations for these 19 pitches highlighting that there currently remains a total of 12 further pitches already allocated but yet to be provided, consisting of 8 pitches on a new site at Newton Leys and 4 additional pitches to be provided as part of an extension to the Calverton Lane site. Retaining these

existing allocations, the balance of a further 7 pitches are directed to the allocated South East Milton Keynes strategic site under Policy SD 13.

Gladman/Gallagher object to the additionally required 7 pitches to be direct to the SD13 allocation at South East Milton Keynes on the basis that;

- There has been no evidence to suggest why locationally the SEMK allocation is the appropriate location to accommodate the identified need. Moreover the Council's own research³ and survey of the existing Gypsy and Traveller community in Milton Keynes actually highlighted that there was a strong desire within their community to live on sites with other travellers and close to family members, keeping their children free from other cultural influences and supporting each other as a community. Regarding new sites, the Council's research identified that the traveller community favoured finding and building their own sites or funding greater control of their existing sites. The potential for existing sites to be expanded further represents the most logical location to accommodate further needs. The SEMK site is poorly related to and detached from the existing traveller sites in Milton Keynes by some distance. No evidence of specific localised need to South East Milton Keynes exists which would suggest any sound reason for directing the allocation of the additional pitches to the south of Milton Keynes.
- There has been no consideration of reasonable alternatives, either through a call for sites, or through identification and assessment of a range of different sites. Other opportunities for sites could arise not only through opportunities to expand existing sites, but also through other allocations in the Plan, using sites with unimplemented permission already for housing or other uses, other sites suggested through the SHLAA process, land within the Council's control or other public sector land opportunities, or vacant or brownfield sites.
- The Sustainability Assessment process does not appear to have considered a range of reasonable alternatives to appropriately meet the need.
- No consideration has been given to the spatial planning of the SD13 allocation and the specific introduction of the proposed traveller pitches or identifies a specific location within the site such that the existing communities surround the allocation are clearly aware of the proposed gypsy and traveller allocation.

³ Engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller Community in Milton Keynes, July 2014

In summary, Gladman/Gallagher have no reason to question the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller Sites as set out within the Plan and SHMA, but the approach set out in the Plan which directs 7 pitches specifically to the SD13 allocation at South East Milton Keynes is without justification, is not supported by any meaningful assessment in the Plan's Sustainability Assessment, particularly in respect of reasonable alternatives which may be better placed, in more appropriate locations to meet the travelling community's needs.

Q5.28

Does Policy SD13 provide sufficient content to inform the preparation of a comprehensive development framework as required Policy SD12?

The Comprehensive Framework will set out a more detailed approach to the spatial development of the site and inform the site's development and future planning applications such that the development can be delivered in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. The parameters for the development are already set out within Policy SD13 as modified. We do not see the need for any further detail on the principles of the development beyond what is set out in the policy in order to allow for the Comprehensive Framework to move forward.

Q5.29

Taking into account physical and planning constraints, infrastructure and land ownership, is SEMK capable of being delivered in a manner envisaged by Plan:MK? Is the allocation viable?

The site comprises some 188 hectares of land to the north and south of the East West railway line to the South East of Milton Keynes adjoining the existing urban area to the north and west at Old Farm Park and Browns Wood and extending south and east towards Woburn Sands, Wavendon and north of Bow Brickhill.

The land is almost entirely controlled (95%) by Gladman/Gallagher or O&H Properties, either by freehold ownership, option or promotional agreement. O&H's land ownership is focused to the land to the north of the railway line with additional land south of the railway at the eastern extent of the site closest to Woburn Sands. Gallagher/Gladman own and control land south of the railway line, extending from its western extent adjoining Station Road, north of Bow Brickhill and eastward to conjoin with the O&H land. Of the balance of land not under control, none is critical to the delivery of the development or its comprehensive and co-ordinated development.

The site is a greenfield Site. There are no known contamination or significant *abnormal* development costs associated with the development. The nature, scale, size, topography and location of the site makes it suited to the proposed development. There is no expectation at this stage that the site could not delivery a policy compliant level of affordable housing and other necessary development mitigation costs.

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There are inevitably some significant development costs associated with the delivery of a sustainable urban extension of this scale, but nothing in the overall assessment of the development suggests at this stage that there is any impediment to delivery due to 'abnormal' development costs which would adversely impact viability.