

PRE INQUIRY STATEMENT OF CASE

Land East of Junction 11 OF THE M40, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 2BH

On behalf of Greystoke CB

Date: 25/11/2022 | Pegasus Ref: P21-3302

LPA Ref: 22/01488/OUT





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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Case has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Greystoke CB (the Appellant). It relates to land east of Junction 11 of the M40, Banbury, Oxfordshire (the appeal site).
- 1.2. The Appeal follows the failure of Cherwell District Council (the Local Planning Authority) to determine an application for outline planning permission (with all matters reserved) within the statutory 16 week period (LPA ref. 22/01488/OUT).
- 1.3. In summary, the application sought outline planning permission for up to 140,000m2 (1.5 million square feet) of B8 logistics warehousing along with other associated works and infrastructure.
- 1.4. Given that no decision notice has been issued on the planning application, it is anticipated that the LPA will take a report to the Planning Committee to request that Members consider whether or not they would have granted planning permission, had the LPA still been the determining authority.
- 1.5. In the event that Members conclude that they would have refused the planning application, then they will be asked to confirm what the Reasons for Refusal would have been. These "putative" reasons for refusal (PRfR) can then be used to identify the main issues that would need to be debated at the Public Inquiry.
- 1.6. In view of the above, this Statement of Case seeks to address the main issues that the Appellant anticipates may remain in dispute between the principal parties. However, the Appellant reserves the right to add to and/or amend its case once the LPA's position has been clarified and confirmed.
- 1.7. The Appellant will seek to engage with the LPA and other interested parties to narrow down the issues that remain in dispute through Statements of Common Ground (SoCG).



2. The Appeal Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The appeal site is located on land east of Junction 11 of the M4O, on the eastern edge of the built-up area of Banbury. The site would be accessed from the A361, which in turn provides direct access to Junction 11 of the M4O.
- 2.2. Banbury is a Market Town. It is the District's largest town with its own sub-region according to the Local Plan [paragraph C.108]. It is a focus for major retail developments, employment, housing and cultural and community uses. The Spatial Strategy requires that most of the growth in the District will be directed to locations within or immediately adjoining the main towns of Banbury and Bicester [paragraph A.11].
- 2.3. The settlement pattern of Banbury has seen employment land develop along the western side of the M4O motorway corridor and to the north of the town. This has recently been extended east of the motorway north of J.11 with the allocation and construction of the Frontier Park employment area. This expansion has logically used J.11 to create an extension to the established employment land to the north of Hennef Way and south along the western edge of the motorway.
- 2.4. The existing established employment land and areas under construction have a strong correlation with the motorway corridor and junction J.11. The geographical extent of the employment land creates robust separation between the motorway and the main civic areas of the town.
- 2.5. The appeal site itself extends to 66.15ha of greenfield land, geometric in shape, comprising a number of field parcels which are defined by mature hedgerow and trees. The internal areas of the fields consist of arable and pastoral land.
- 2.6. The site is bounded by the A422 to the south, and the A361 to the west. It adjoins open countryside to the north and east. Carrdus School, an independent day preparatory school, lies c.180m east of the Site, separated by a dense woodland copse. To the west of the A361 and opposite the Site is the recently consented commercial development of Frontier Park, with large shed buildings which are currently under construction.
- 2.7. There are no footpaths (Public Right of Way, PRoW) within the Site. Within the wider vicinity are a number of PRoW's.
- 2.8. The site itself is not covered by any current national or local landscape designations. It is not in, or adjacent to, an environmentally sensitive area, as defined by Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regulations (i.e., sites designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Parks, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and sites covered by international conservation designations), and therefore is not considered to represent an environmentally sensitive location.
- 2.9. There are no ecology designations that directly affect the site. There is a NERC Act S41 Habitat site (as per the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review-



Oxford's unmet Housing Need, September 2020) to the north east but no development is proposed in this area and there would be a substantial buffer around it, providing opportunities for habitat and biodiversity enhancements.

- 2.10. In terms of heritage, the site is not located within or adjacent to a Conservation Area and there are no Listed Buildings within the Site boundary. The nearest Listed building is Seale's Farm which lies between c. 50m and 125m to the north-east of the site.
- 2.11. The Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 which is considered to be the zone with the lowest risk of flooding by the Environment Agency.
- 2.12. The Site does not lie within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The closest AQMA is Cherwell District Council AQMA No.1, located approximately c.540m to the west of the Site. The designated area incorporates Hennef Way between the junctions with Ermont Way and Concorde Avenue.



3. The Appeal Proposals

3.1. The Appellant seeks outline planning permission, with all matters reserved, for a large scale logistics development. The description of development reads as follows:-

Job Creation and Economic Growth

- 3.2. The most important aspect of this proposal is the potential for job creation and economic growth.
- 3.3. The proposal has the potential to deliver up to 140,000sqm of logistics floorspace which would meet modern day requirements, and which could directly facilitate up to 1,915 full-time equivalent jobs (FTEs) on-site once the scheme is built and operational. There would also be further jobs in the wider supply chain and would make a significant contribution to the local economy.

Layout, Landscaping and Open Space

- 3.4. Whilst layout is a reserved matter, a Parameter Plan is submitted for approval to demonstrate how this scale and form of development could be accommodated. This is accompanied by an Illustrative Site Layout Plan which shows one way in which the site could be laid out and landscaped with individual buildings and a framework of green infrastructure.
- 3.5. The Parameter Plan identifies the location and extent of the development parcels and how they would be serviced. It allows for the creation of development parcels which can accommodate modern shed style logistics buildings in different arrangements that can be tailored to meet current market demand at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 3.6. The development would complement the adjacent employment allocation at Frontier Park and the broader range of existing commercial development west of the M4O at Banbury.
- 3.7. The Proposed Development also seeks to retain and enhance existing landscape features (including the more important trees and hedgerows) and areas of wildlife value where possible. Land to the east will be left undeveloped and will provide strategic landscaping and opportunities for biodiversity gain for the area.
- 3.8. There are five small waterbodies within the site. Of relatively greater interest in terms of features on the site are the field boundaries with associated mature tree lines, hedgerows, and some woodland copses. The design of the proposed development seeks to safeguard and retain many of these features as part of the scheme. Supplementary tree and shrub planting throughout the site will further improve the biodiversity. Native plant species will be chosen to complement the existing flora of the site and respect any local provenance, as well as providing habitats beneficial for wildlife.



Access

- 3.9. The site will be served by a new 3-arm roundabout junction off the A361 at the western boundary and a priority junction further to the north. The internal road structure would then allow for a loop road to be created which would link the two access junctions. Individual parcels within the site would then be served off the internal loop road.
- 3.10. Pedestrian and cycle linkages are also designed into the Illustrative Site Layout Plan to improve connectivity and to ensure there is appropriate permeability through the new development and connectivity with Banbury.

Drainage

3.11. As explained in the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, the proposals will incorporate on-site SUDs features which will attenuate the surface water as well as acting as an opportunity for biodiversity enhancements and contributing towards the visual amenity of the site.

Huscote Farm

- 3.12. The abandoned and derelict farmhouse at Huscote Farm is to be demolished. The other buildings associated with Huscote Farm were excluded from the application. There will be a separate application for the conversion of the outbuildings into ancillary offices/site facilities in due course.
- 3.13. However, given that this will require detailed plans and elevations as part of a change of use application this will be dealt with separately. The likely impacts have however been considered as part of the wider site assessments including the ES for completeness.



4. Planning History

4.1. The planning history that is of most relevance to this appeal will be set out in the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).



6. Planning Policy

6.1. The planning policies and guidance that are of most relevance to this appeal are set out in the SoCG. It is anticipated that the main planning policy issues will be agreed with the LPA prior to the opening of the Public Inquiry.

National Guidance

6.2. The Appellant will refer to relevant national guidance set out in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

The Development Plan

- 6.3. The Appellant will explain that the Development Plan for the area currently comprises the following:-
 - Cherwell District Local Plan 2011–2031 Part 1 (CDLP) first adopted July 2015,
 - The Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review Oxford's Unmet Housing Need (September 2020), and
 - 'Saved' policies of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996.

Emerging Development Plan Policies

- 6.4. The Appellant will also refer to the following emerging Development Plan documents:-
 - Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040

Supplementary Planning Guidance

6.5. Where relevant, reference will be made to supplementary planning guidance, documents and advice.



7. Appeal Procedure and Presentation of Evidence

- 7.1. The Appellant considers that a <u>Public Inquiry</u> would be the most appropriate appeal procedure in this case.
- 7.2. It is hoped that the issues in dispute can be narrowed down through Statements of Common Ground (SoCG). However, given the nature of the development proposals, there could be a number of complex issues that remain in dispute.
- 7.3. These could include amongst other things, the need for the development, traffic and transportation as well as landscape and visual impact that will require detailed evidence.
- 7.4. There are also complex planning policy considerations which will inform the overall planning balance. The weight to be given to the policies in the development plan will require detailed scrutiny.
- 7.5. The issues can only be properly tested through formal questioning of Expert Witnesses by an Advocate, which would not be permissible under the Informal Hearing procedure. It is also anticipated that there will be a need to make legal submissions which again are best dealt with through the Inquiry procedure.
- 7.6. The level of public interest is a further reason for requesting a public inquiry.
- 7.7. It is highly likely that this appeal will take more than 2 days to be heard (which exceeds normal practice for an informal Hearing).
- 7.8. The Appellant considers that up to <u>8 days</u> would be required, depending upon the number of putative Reasons for Refusal that are advanced by the LPA and the extent to which matters can be agreed between parties before the inquiry is heard.



8. Proofs Of Evidence

- 8.1. On the basis that the Planning Inspectorate agrees to the appeal being dealt with under the Public Inquiry procedure, the Appellant will prepare written evidence in advance of the Inquiry to address any Putative Reasons for Refusal.
- 8.2. The evidence will also consider any other valid issues raised by Third Party objectors or by statutory consultees.
- 8.3. At this stage it is anticipated that evidence will be presented as follows:-

The need and demand for the development and its economic benefits

Richard Cook

Landscape and Visual Impact

Paul Harris

<u>Traffic and Transportation</u>

Simon Tucker

Planning Policy

- David Hutchison
- 8.4. The Appellant reserves the right to substitute witnesses or introduce additional witnesses as necessary to address any other issues that may be raised by the LPA and/or any other Third Parties.



9. The Case For The Appellant

- 9.1. A draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been submitted as part of the appeal to help narrow down the issues that are likely to remain in dispute.
- 9.2. It is anticipated that the final SoCG will record that the Appellant and the LPA are in agreement on various issues under the following headings:-
 - Format of Planning Application and Supporting Material
 - Environmental Impact Assessment
 - Development Plan Designations
 - The Principle of Development
 - Need and Demand for the development
 - Prematurity
 - Highways and Access
 - Landscape and Visual Impact
 - Master Planning
 - Impact on Residential Amenity
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Ecology
 - Trees and hedgerows
 - Built Heritage
 - Archaeology
 - Contamination
 - Infrastructure
 - Flood Risk and Drainage
 - Foul Water
 - Air Quality



- Noise
- Agricultural Land Quality
- Public Benefits

The Main Issues

9.3. The Appellant anticipates that the main issues will be as follows:-

Issue 1	The need and demand for the development and the economic benefits
Issue 2	The principle of development in this location
Issue 3	Traffic and Transportation
Issue 4	Landscape and Visual Impact

The Overall Planning Balance

Issue 1 - The need and demand for the development and the economic benefits

- 9.4. The Appellant will set the context for this appeal by outlining the economic trends which indicate that the country is heading into a recession and how Government is focused on delivering economic growth, consistent with NPPF paragraph 81.
- 9.5. The planning system is seen as a key tool in economic policy and it has the potential to remove barriers to investment and growth. The evidence will identify and explain the range of important long term economic benefits that the appeal proposals would bring, if this appeal was to be allowed.
- 9.6. It will be explained that demand for warehousing space in the UK has increased dramatically in recent years. It accelerated in the last two years with changes in shopping habits as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. This increase is repeated nationally, regionally and locally and the analysis will show that the increase in demand for warehousing space is likely to continue. Set against this increase in demand, warehouse space is decreasing in availability. The evidence will demonstrate the demand for prime, logistics space.
- 9.7. It will be explained that the PPG now includes guidance specifically in relation to logistics development, recognising its critical role for consumers and businesses. It recognises the particular set of requirements for such developments including location, land take, access to strategic transport networks and access to skilled local labour.



- 9.8. The Cherwell Economic Needs Assessment (2021) provides evidence of the need/demand for logistics development. Stakeholders reported numerous enquiries from occupiers looking for units of 100,000-200,000 sq ft around J11 of the M40 which were not able to be met in the area currently.
- 9.9. The M40 in Cherwell is an attractive location due to its relative proximity to London and lack of designation such as Green Belt or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The local workforce is also a positive factor, particularly with regards to J11 at Banbury.
- 9.10. The site is also located within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc which aims to amongst other things support long-run sustainable economic growth across the area.
- 9.11. A review of the existing sources of supply suggests that there is insufficient warehouse space on committed sites to meet current and projected needs. The Experian-based sensitivity scenario identified a total need for B8 land of 107 hectares between 2021 and 2040.
- 9.12. The adopted Development Plan has failed to keep pace with and reflect national policy in NPPF paragraphs 81–83 and the guidance in the NPPG. Furthermore, the emerging Local Plan is still only at a very early stage and therefore it is necessary for developers to bring sites forward now through the Development Management process to meet needs now.

Issue 2 - The principle of development in this location

- 9.13. The planning policy evidence will explain that this is the right development, in the right location at the right time.
- 9.14. Securing the economic future of the District is the main priority of the adopted Local Plan and the proposals obviously align with this. They also align with the latest thinking in Government policy. Economic growth is the front and centre of national policy.
- 9.15. It will be explained that the appeal proposals are in general accordance with the Spatial Strategy which requires most of the growth in the District to be directed to locations within or immediately adjoining the main towns of Banbury and Bicester. The site adjoins the Policy Banbury 15 site allocation which was planned to deliver a similar type of development. The appeal proposals can similarly ensure that the economic strengths of Banbury in logistics can be maintained.
- 9.16. Likewise, the strategic road network can be readily accessed from this area and be done so avoiding lorry movements through residential areas. Whilst officers have suggested that this is an unsustainable location, that is in contradiction to the fact that the neighbouring Policy Banbury 15 site considered a "highly sustainable location" in the Development Plan and the same conclusion should apply to the appeal site.
- 9.17. Even if it is alleged by the LPA or other parties that the proposals conflict with employment policy SLE 1, it will be explained that it is out of date and inconsistent with national policy. It fails to recognise the specific locational requirements of logistics development and fails to



- provide the flexibility that is required to respond to changed economic circumstances [NPPF paragraphs 81-83].
- 9.18. If a broader interpretation is followed then the proposals are in in general accordance with Policy SLE 1. They direct employment to Banbury, avoid land in the Green Belt, have good access, can meet high design standards, respect the character of its surroundings and not have an adverse effect on the surrounding land uses and the historic and natural environment.
- 9.19. The Appellant will explain that saved Policy C8 from the 1996 Local Plan should have very little bearing on the outcome of this appeal. The policy is also out of date and inconsistent with the NPPF. Precluding logistics development at motorway junctions is counter intuitive to current day thinking with logistics development and the policy fails to reflect the more nuanced approach of the NPPF with regards to development beyond built up areas.

Issue 3 - Traffic and Transportation

- 9.20. The key issues for any development in respect of Traffic and Transport are set out in Chapter 9 of the NPPF. This confirms the need to locate development in areas which can be make best use of existing infrastructure and promote sustainable transport modes (at Para 104 and 105).
- 9.21. This development strikes a balance between providing accessible local employment opportunities for residents within the (Cherwell) District and, the need for efficient freight operations where businesses have access to their markets within the M40 corridor, and access to the Strategic Road Network (SRN), intermodal freight facilities and international gateways (ports and airports). This reflects the fact that travel demands generated by the development are broader than simply the journey to work trips of employees.
- 9.22. NPPF paragraphs 110 113 set out the key tests that should be met in any development proposal and requires that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport measures are taken up, that safe and secure access can be achieved, that there are no unacceptable highway safety impacts and that there is no residual severe impact in terms of traffic capacity or congestion.
- 9.23. The Appellant will explain that the primary vehicle access to the site will be taken from the A361 and will involve the creation of a primary site access roundabout and a secondary standard priority junction. This coupled with localised improvements to M40 J11 will result in a safe and appropriate access arrangement for vehicles.
- 9.24. The development site will be designed to prioritise foot and cycle movements along desire lines through the development, linking to the external access points which have recently been found acceptable and constructed on the adjacent site.
- 9.25. The County Council have considered the requirements for public transport access to the site and their proposals to achieve an appropriate level of access are agreed and accepted by the Appellant.



- 9.26. In terms of highway safety, a review of the latest five-year personal injury collision data for the surrounding area has been undertaken and does not indicate any existing highway safety issues within the study area. It will be shown there are no unacceptable highway safety impacts.
- 9.27. In terms of traffic capacity, the traffic impact of the scheme has been tested using agreed parameters with OCC and National Highways. The results of that modelling confirm that there are peak hour congestion issues within Banbury and these are tidal (ie into Banbury in the morning and out of Banbury in the evening). The modelling of the development however confirms that the principle increase in flows will be counter tidal and therefore can be accommodated without significant mitigation.
- 9.28. The improvements proposed to the access and J11 will result in a net improvement in future years over the currently consented and committed schemes. This will mitigate development impact.
- 9.29. Notwithstanding this, if deemed CIL compliant the Appellant is willing to make the contributions requested by OCC towards the Hennef Way Corridor.
- 9.30. It will be demonstrated that with mitigation, the traffic impact of the proposed development will not be severe.
- 9.31. Overall, the proposed development, subject to the proposed mitigation, will have no material residual adverse impact on the safe operation of the local highway network. As such, highways matters should not feature as a reason for refusal.

Issue 4 - Landscape and Visual Impact

- 9.32. The Appellant will explain that the application was supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared by MHP Design Ltd Chartered Landscape Architects.
- 9.33. It will be explained that the site does not carry any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. The land has no rare or valuable attributes and does not form part of a valued landscape with reference to NPPF paragraph 174. The site creates a transitional area of land between the present urban edge and this more deeply rural landscape to the east.
- 9.34. The evidence will show that the settlement pattern of Banbury has seen employment land develop along the western side of the M4O motorway corridor and to the north of the town. This has recently been extended east of the motorway north of J.11 with the allocation and construction of Frontier Park.
- 9.35. The existing established employment land and areas under construction have a strong correlation with the motorway corridor and junction J.11. The geographical extent of the employment land creates robust separation between the motorway and the main civic areas



of the town. It is therefore a character area in its own right which does influence the character and setting of the site.

- 9.36. It will be explained that the introduction of the Frontier Park employment land development has reduced potential views from the wider Banbury area and limited views towards the site from the motorway. Existing highway infrastructure and the urban edge similarly inform the local landscape character. Views from the east are also identified to be limited by the nature of the rising landform which provides containment of the wider site. Existing established hedgerows and vegetation including along adjoining highway boundaries also contribute to limiting views into the site from the south.
- 9.37. The sensitivity of the site has been assessed in the Cherwell District Council Banbury Landscape Sensitivity Assessment prior to the construction of the Frontier Park employment land to the immediate west of the site. The assessment identified a generally medium sensitivity to the landscape and medium high sensitivity to the visual sensitivity.
- 9.38. This baseline has now been changed due to the influence of the adjoining employment development. Even without this change in baseline, the assessment found capacity for employment development. This published assessment has been confirmed by the LVIA.
- 9.39. It will be acknowledged that there would be an adverse landscape effect on the site character itself due to the high magnitude of change that development would cause. However, with embedded and new mitigation measures established this landscape harm is reduced to moderate. Overall, the residual landscape and visual harm arising from the development is assessed to be less than significant due to the landscape strategy for mitigation and its potential to contain detrimental effects to the site.
- 9.40. The proposals are assessed to give rise to harm which is localised and contained. As such landscape and visual harm does not conflict with national and local policies but must be considered in the overall planning balance.



10. The Overall Planning Balance

- 10.1. The Appellant will acknowledge and accept that planning law and guidance requires that planning applications and appeals should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the proposals would be in general accordance with the Development Plan. They should therefore be approved without delay in accordance with NPPF paragraph 11c.
- 10.2. Even if the LPA was to disagree and was to find that there would be a material conflict with the Development Plan when read as a whole, then the Appellant will explain that the most important policies are out of date, and in any event the substantial benefits would still outweigh the limited harms that would arise from this development.
- 10.3. The positive social and economic benefits of the proposals are substantial in terms of investment, job creation, upskilling and diversification of the local economy. There would also be environmental benefits meaning that the proposals would contribute towards all three objectives of sustainable development. This would represent an important material consideration that would outweigh any Development Plan conflict. If the tilted balance is engaged then the case becomes even more compelling.
- 10.4. The Appellant will conclude that the proposals represent sustainable development and that planning permission should be granted subject to the imposition of any necessary conditions and planning obligations.



11. Documentation

- 11.1. A set of Core Documents will be agreed with the LPA in advance of the Public Inquiry.
- 11.2. In addition to the application documents, planning history and consultation responses, it is anticipated that the following will be referred to.

National Documents

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
- CIL Regulations

Local Documents

- Cherwell District Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (CDLP) first adopted July 2015,
- The Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review Oxford's Unmet Housing Need (September 2020), and
- 'Saved' policies of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996.
- Emerging Development Plan Policies
- Emerging Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040
- Emerging Local Plan Evidence Base

Relevant Appeal Decisions and Legal Cases

- Various appeal decisions
- Various legal judgements
- 11.3. The Appellant reserves the right to refer to additional documents to those outlined above in preparation of its case and in support of the proposals.



12. Planning Conditions and Obligations

12.1. In the event that the appeal is allowed it is to be expected that it would be subject to conditions and planning obligations.

Planning Conditions

12.2. An agreed set of Conditions will be provided to the Inspector before the start of the Public Inquiry.

Planning Obligations

12.3. The Appellant will also present deeds pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act which will secure any planning obligations that are deemed necessary to make the development proposals acceptable.



Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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