13 November 2023

Havant Borough Council
Planning
Public Service Plaza
Civic Centre Road
Havant
PO9 2AX

SLR Project Ref.: 402.064845.00001

Your Ref.: APP/22/01231

Dear Arleta,

RE: Palk Road – flood risk sequential test letter

I write further to our recent correspondence on the sequential test scope, which within our letter of 29th June 2023 we set out the reasoning for an area of search based on brownfield sites within walking distance of Havant Town Centre. As you'll appreciate this follows on from previous liaison, supported by Counsel Opinion dated 28th March 2023 that a sequential test is not required. This is a position that we still stand by, albeit have agreed on a without prejudice basis to undertake a sequential assessment in order to progress the matter, with a view to working together to facilitate the delivery of this much needed development of new homes at the earliest opportunity.

You noted in your email of 10th August that a borough-wide sequential test would be required and as such, this has been undertaken in accordance with our letter of 31st August.

A completed sequential test spreadsheet accompanies this letter along with a flood risk assessment spreadsheet prepared by Ardent (Drainage Consultant Engineers), as well as site location plans.

As we did not receive a response to our letter dated 31st August 2023, we have undertaken a process looking at comparable brownfield sites across Havant Borough. To identify such sites, we have referred to the following Council documents and sources:

- Brownfield Register
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (March 2021)
- Call for Sites Submissions (2022)
- Adopted Local Plan (Allocations) (July 2014)
- Housing Delivery Position Statement (March 2022)
- Draft Local Plan Pre-Submission version (now withdrawn)
- Extant planning permissions within the last three years using the Council's 'Public Access' online search.

Methodology and Assessment

The methodology included identifying all brownfield sites in the Borough from the above sources, which were then listed in a spreadsheet and assessed by Ardent in terms of potential flood risk, including tidal, fluvial, surface water, groundwater, artificial sources and historic flooding. Each site was then assessed for overall flood risk and categorised as low, medium or high.

This overall flood risk information was then copied across to a separate spreadsheet, and all those sites classed as high flood risk were automatically discounted, as indicated in the 'Assessment' column in sheet 1 of the spreadsheet, given they fall within the same overall category of flood risk as the site at Palk Road and therefore would not be better alternatives. Secondly, the sites in the list which have either been developed or are currently under construction were also discounted. This then resulted in 10 sites left to be assessed, which were copied across to sheet 2 of the spreadsheet ('Remaining sites').

Sheet 2 includes more information on these sites, including whether or not they are allocated sites, their approximate development capacity and any constraints that may affect development potential. This is then pulled together to form an assessment of each site, as set out in the final column. Of the 10 sites, 8 of them have been assessed as unsuitable alternatives as they are unable to accommodate the quantum of development proposed at the Palk Road site either due to the fact they are physically too small and would not be practical or viable to build across multiple sites to make up the proposed 90 units and/or they are constrained for other reasons as set out in the spreadsheet. There are also question marks over the deliverability of many of the sites in terms of them not being marketed and/or being allocated in the Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations) DPD back in July 2014, almost ten years ago, but have yet to come forwards. There are also question marks over the deliverability of site ID 18: Goodwillies Timber Yard, for this reason, resulting in 9 of the 10 sites being assessed as unsuitable alternatives. This is in line with the NPPF definition of 'deliverable', which makes clear that *"where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it* ***should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years".***

Site ID 15: Former Scottish and Southern Energy Offices, Bartons Road had an application refused at planning committee in September 2022 for 175 apartments, with one of the reasons being due to overdevelopment and density. This number is around double the number of units included within the Local Plan allocation (80-90 units). While it is accepted that 90 units could potentially be delivered at this site, otherwise there are no other better brownfield sites within the Borough in terms of flood risk than the application site at Palk Road.

It is also important to note that Havant Borough Council are currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS), with an appeal decision dated 16th May 2023[1] confirming a 5YHLS of just 1.8 years, which equates to a severe shortfall of approximately 1,977 homes. As such, even if all of the

[1] Appeal ref. APP/X1735/W/22/3305704

identified brownfield sites were to come forwards for development, there would still be a large housing deficit.

The Palk Road Site

In terms of the Palk Road site itself, as set out fully within previous correspondence the sequential test has already been carried out as part of adopted the local plan, through the allocation of the northern part of the site under policy H19 of the Site Allocations DPD (July 2014). In addition, while the plan was subsequently withdrawn, the sequential test was also addressed through the continued allocation under policy H24 of the more recent Havant Borough Local Plan in 2021. Furthermore, had the whole site been available previously (part of the site was still in use by Portsmouth Water at the time), it is likely that the whole site would have been allocated in the Local Plan and therefore the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment would have been undertaken for the entire site, meaning the Council would have considered a sequential test would not be required.

There are also other allocated sites in the Site Allocations DPD, such as Coldharbour Farm in Emsworth (Policy EM1, ref. UE37) which is within flood zone 2 but has been deemed acceptable as it was demonstrated that the site could be safely developed. The same has been demonstrated with this application and it is very important to note that no objections on flood risk grounds have been received from either the Environment Agency (EA) or Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).

The exception test has also been carried out through the site-specific flood risk assessment (FRA) submitted with the application and demonstrates that the site provides sustainable benefits and can be developed safely without increased flood risk elsewhere, reducing flood risk overall and providing wider sustainability benefits to the community, as per NPPF paragraph 164. The submitted FRA demonstrates that the proposed development and future residents would be safe from flooding for the lifetime of the development and would not increase flooding elsewhere. The benefits of the scheme include:

- The proposal makes efficient use of an underused brownfield site, a key government objective which is reiterated most recently in Michael Gove's 'Long Term Plan for Housing' letter to Council Leaders and Chief Executives dated 8th September 2023, which highlights that *"better use should be made of small pockets of brownfield land by being more permissive, so more homes can be built more quickly…"*;
- The site is in a highly sustainable location, within walking distance of Havant town centre (the main settlement in the Borough) and adjacent to Bedhampton railway station. Havant town centre can be accessed by foot, bicycle, train, or bus. Havant has a wide range of amenities including food shops, other retail opportunities, schools, GP surgeries and many more. It is also considered a hub for employment opportunities, with many industrial, commercial and retail units as well as a good network connecting to larger towns and cities;
- Provision of 90 homes to add to the much-needed housing stock of the Borough at a time when Havant has a severe housing land supply shortfall;
- Affordable housing provision;

- Generous amounts of public open space and play provision;
- Ecological enhancements and a significant net gain in biodiversity;
- Economic benefits through employment during the construction phase, long-term local expenditure and support for shops and services, as well as CIL and S106 contributions;
- The scheme proposes a riverside walk and landscaping beside the Hermitage Stream to enhance this area and create a meaningful improvement to the existing situation. This is a Havant Borough Council priority, with local plan policy AL7 supporting schemes that positively contribute to the improvement of the Hermitage Stream; and
- Removal of a noise-generating, unsightly and unneighbourly use and replace it with 90 high-quality much needed homes.

The proposed scheme represents a highly sustainable form of development, which accords with the overarching principles of the NPPF and Local Planning Policy as well as both Government and local objectives (including Core Strategy Policy CS17) to prioritise development of previously developed land.

We look forward to working with you to progress matters and trust this addresses the Council's comments. We also look forward to further engagement with you in due course relating to the other comments raised.

Regards,

Dr Chris Lyons
BSc (Hons); Dip. TP; MPhil; PhD (LSE); MRTPI
Technical Director – Residential Lead UK – Planning & ESIA
SLR Consulting Limited