TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPLICATION BY PORTSMOUTH WATER LIMITED.

PROPOSED CAR PARKING AND ACCESS TO SERVE ALLOTMENTS.

LAND AT BIDBURY LANE, BEDHAMPTON, HAVANT, HAMPSHIRE.

POLICY, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1 This Statement is prepared in support of a planning application made by Portsmouth Water Limited who are to provide new car parking and access to serve new allotments on land south of Bidbury Lane, opposite the Bidbury Mead recreation ground at Bidbury Lane, Bedhampton. The site is currently used as a horse field and has one principal access on its north side just opposite the entrance to the public car park at Bidbury Mead and it is also accessed at its far eastern end where an area is separated out to provide controlled springs which are obviously utilised by Portsmouth Water Limited. This is the second planning application that has been made on this site following a refusal in February 2003 when various arguments were presented objecting to this proposal. In re-submitting this proposal I have sought to address those arguments within this statement.

1.2 Planning permission was granted under the full review of the Revised Havant Borough District Wide Local Plan during the course of its preparation. The land is now allocated for housing development on both sides of Ranelagh Road and development has been granted at the eastern end and also on the north side. Land on the south side, we have been told, would be favourably considered by Havant Borough Council subject to us resolving all outstanding matters; one of which is the relocation of the allotments on the south side of Ranelagh Road. In considering this site we maintain that this is an appropriate site for these allotments and it is our view that development of this site would not adversely affect the adjoining neighbourhood in particular the adjoining conservation area to the west and south. The issue in this case is now to determine whether or not, bearing in mind the objections that were raised previously by the Borough Council to the location of the previous allotments and our view that planning permission should now be granted for the car park and access way.

1.3 I would make the point that we have considered previously other potential sites for the allocation of allotments within the areas designated and discussed at the previous Local Plan Inquiry. Unfortunately, with the subsequent publication of documents from both the environment agency and subsequently by the Atkins

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23 SEP 2003
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Study they have identified the future sites that we would consider as being subject to within the area that was threatened by potential flooding arising especially from the seaward side. In the circumstances we would look to now find a site where this problem does not arise and having considered the flooding option with regard to land on this north side of the railway line we consider that this is an appropriate location for allotments and this site was not considered previously by the Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry.

1.4 I now set out to consider the various factors that need to be addressed in presenting this proposal.

2 THE SITE LOCATION.

2.1 The land is located south of the Bidbury Mead Recreation Ground and forms a rectangular parcel of land to the north east of the allotment. To the east of the land is Mill Lane which is an historic road which travels from Bidbury Lane into the area to the south of the railway line. Interestingly, Mill Lane rises over the railway line and seeks to enclose this parcel of land with the contained highways on the northside at Bidbury Lane, the open boundary to Mill Lane albeit that this rises from just south of the Old Granary rises up and over the railway line; and also is contained by the busy railway line. To the south of the land is an area which is potentially known to flood and also land which is within the control of the applicant company with regard to water works etc. To the east of Mill Lane there is an open parcel of land which extends westwards towards the junctions of the A27 and A3M and north of that is the contained area of the historic buildings around St. Thomas's Church which comprise, together with land to the south of the Old Bedhampton Conservation Area.

2.2 The land is in part immediately detached from neighbouring residential properties, however to the east of Kings Croft lane at the far eastern end of the site are residential properties and all along the northern part of the site is the substantial Bedhampton area which is primarily a residential location to the west of the Havant central area. Within short travel distances there are many

23 SEP 2017
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residential properties that can access this site to utilise the allotments as proposed. Given that Kings Croft Lane, Bidbury Lane and Brookside Lane are historic roads they are not well used in terms of being major thoroughfares and it would be wholly appropriate to seek and encourage use of potential cyclists to this site as an alternative to use of the private car. Buses do not travel direct to Bidbury Lane however as I have said there are numerous other residential properties within a 10 minute walk of the allotments.

3 THE APPLICATION SITE.

3.1 The application site is a rectangular area of land adjoining to the east an area of some 55 x 50 metres of land has been removed to utilise the area in connection with the immediate local water works activities. The resulting land has dimensions of approximately 65 metres across its northern boundary and has a depth of 12 meters. Along the northern boundary there is an existing brick wall which travels from the far eastern end of Bidbury Lane to a position some 95 metres west of there and thereafter the northern boundary is contained by the existing hawthorn hedgerow. A narrow access is cut towards the western end where an access is provided on to the land albeit without any internal car parking provided. The position of this access is approximately some 35 metres east of the junction with Mill Lane. Along the western boundary of the allotments the planting is now somewhat lost and this is effectively an open facade along this boundary. Clearly in the context of the adjoining properties there are direct views across from the neighbouring three dwellings of Bidbury house, the Old Granary and also the adjoining property to the south which would overlook on to the land. This is something that needs to be dealt with in consideration of the wider proposals that I feel need to be implemented to bring this use forward.

3.2 Also within the site there are substantial electricity cables which run across the allotments to the south-western element of the site which will have some effect on the proposed use of the land as allotments. In the circumstances of this case I have highlighted this matter and will seek to ensure that allotments are not included within this area in the consideration of the details that follow with regard

23 SEP 2013
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to the proposed development on this site. Sadly because the ground levels start to rise in this position it would be impossible to screen this area because of the position of Mill Lane giving views over the top into the application site. Nevertheless I would otherwise propose landscaping along this boundary to contain it particularly at its more northern end where there are views from the Old Granary and Bidbury house directly into the site.

4. LOCAL PLAN POLICIES.

4.1 The Development Plan for this Area comprises the South East Plan and also the Havant Borough District Wide Local Plan. I do not believe that there are policies that are directly relevant within the South East Plan to this proposal and therefore seek solely to focus on the policies within the current Local Plan. In addition to this there are some guidance contained within relevant central government advice and I would refer in particular to the historic documents regarding the Allotments and also documents relating to the impact of development within designated Conservation Areas (PPS15).

4.2 In considering the principle of the policies contained within the HBDWLP the first consideration is with regard to the setting of the site and its location within the defined countryside outside of the defined urban area. Policy C1 of the local plan seeks to restrict development to that form of development that would be permissible within the countryside area and this includes six criteria within the opening to policy C1 which clearly includes development for agriculture, forestry and mineral extraction but also includes outdoor sports, recreation and tourist uses; other employment users appropriate for the location; cemeteries and utility installations requiring a rural location. In addition to this new development is permitted that would permit buildings that are applicable to these uses albeit on the basis that this is development within the countryside where there would be a general presumption against such development particularly where it has an adverse impact on the designation of the countryside area. In addition to the application of policy C1 the area is also protected by policy UF1 in that the site falls within a strategic gap. The purpose of the strategic gap, under the older

23 SEP 2009
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policy, is to prevent development which would diminish the importance of the strategic gap physically or visually. In assessing this policy there are two matters that I need to raise. Firstly under the provisions of the South East Plan the concept of strategic and local gaps has been removed and secondly this site is otherwise enclosed on its north and west boundaries by existing development and I have already highlighted the fact that the rising ground that rises up to the bridge over the railway line seeks to contain this land from the neighbouring land to the west of the site.

4.3 The second policy to consider is set out at policy R23 which is the specific policy towards allotments. This policy seeks to protect existing allotments and requires that if land is to be redeveloped then new provision should be made to accommodate the loss of the allotment land. That of course is the purpose behind the relocation of these allotments. Unfortunately within the policy and associated text guidance is not given as to where future land could be made available for potential allotment sites. Reference is made to development on Hayling Island for allotments where there is a known shortage however in assessing that Plan no land is allocated within the defined urban area that could be given up to allotments. The expectation therefore is that should land become available for allotment use there is every likelihood that this land will be found within the countryside as opposed to within the defined urban area. It is of course a matter of judgement as to whether or not the issue of allotments should be considered under policy C1 particularly given that reference is made to the provision of outdoor sports and recreational facilities and also to the provision of cemeteries.

4.4 The third policy matter to consider is the impact of development upon the designated conservation area both with regard to policy HE10 and also policy DE3. Interestingly within that policy, although not within one of the existing policies there is a requirement within the text that where a design and access statement is presented regard should be paid to the impact of this development upon adjoining buildings where they are near or visible from development within the conservation area and also from within a source of potential impact on a Listed Building. Bidbury House in this case is a listed building and clearly we

COUNCIL
23 SEP 2011
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need to have regard to the potential of development in this case upon the outlook from Bidbury House. Policy HE10 refers to the setting of listed buildings and advises in the adjoining paragraph that in assessing the impact of development one may have to have consideration to the effect of development on wider areas rather than just the immediate setting of the listed building; for example regard should also be paid to the adjoining street scene and clearly that would have some impact involving this site upon the potential setting of the neighbouring Bidbury House and perhaps The Old Granary as well.

4.5 The fourth matter to consider is the potential provision of car parking to serve this development and also the provision of new access ways into the site. In assessing the potential for car parking to serve this development the obvious location of the proposed car park would be across the north side of the development within the contained screened boundary which runs along the northern edge. The difficulty is presenting a number of car parking spaces to serve this development together with provision of cycle spaces as well to encourage would-be cyclists to the site. The other issue that I need to raise is that ground levels rise travelling from west to east along Bidbury lane and clearly this change in levels is something that needs to be taken into account in assessing the potential location for access to the proposed car park. In assessing the existing access to the west this fails on visibility terms and I shall be looking at the potential to relocate the position of the access some 20 to 30 metres to be east where there is better visibility into the site albeit that some provision will need to be made because of the change in access arrangements down to the existing ground level.

4.6 The final matter to consider is the potential risk of flooding to this site. I have already referred to this in part in the introduction to this site in seeking to promote this site for this allotment development. I have assessed the risk of flooding under policies both F1 and F3 in respect of potential flooding from the coast and also fluvial flooding arising. From the plans published by the Environment Agency and also most recently from a publication published last year by Atkins there would appear to be no risk of flooding to this site albeit that land on the other side of the railway line lies within a potential flood risk area. This is re-emphasised by

23 SEP 2013
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my own initial assessment of the area in looking to determine those areas that are flooding and the higher ground levels around and I would suggest that this site falls within the higher ground level and that there is no apparent risk of flooding to this site from the information that is currently available.

5. THE PROPOSAL.

5.1 In this section of the Statement I seek to address the relevant matters regarding this site and its development as an allotment area. There are a number of matters that arise from the previous refusal of planning permission regarding this development and also in respect of the potential risk of flooding given recent publications since the consideration of the objections made to the original Local Plan.

5.2 To deal firstly with the flooding issue, at the end of 2002 my clients were considering and promoting this site for its use of allotments and when the matter was considered before the Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry we pointed out to him that there were other grounds that may be suitable for allotments within land owned by the company which may not require us to come to this land at Bidbury Lane. Subsequent to that date publications have been produced by the Environment Agency and also by Atkins who have considered and addressed the potential flooding issues around and through Havant. As a consequence of the most recent findings by Atkins we are now of the opinion that some of the land which we had previously considered would be likely to flood and we consider that this would be inappropriate use of land for allotments bearing in mind that the land must of course be available throughout the whole of the year to allotment holders. In the circumstances we are now obliged to consider the other limited areas of space available held by the company within the central area of Havant and Bedhampton and that is why this land is now being promoted. I have addressed the policies within the extant Local Plan and consider that this land is unlikely to flood against the published Atkins report and it is on that basis that this land is now to be developed as allotments.

23 SEP 2011
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5.3 In the context of the previous planning application planning permission was refused for grounds that its development would result in an unacceptable change to the rural character of the land within the strategic gap; its remoteness from residential catchments and areas of public transport access and parking; the impact of the development upon the adjoining character and appearance of the Old Bedhampton Conservation Area and also the allegation of harm to the setting of an adjacent listed building. To deal firstly with the arguments that the site would result in an unacceptable change to the rural character of the land which falls within the strategic gap, this land is otherwise separated from the adjoining land by the housing on the north-west side of Mill Lane and then also on the southern side where the public highway rises from the lower ground level up to the bridge over the level crossing. It is my opinion that this land seeks to contain and separate this land from the adjoining undeveloped land to the west thereof and whilst this land is designated as being within the countryside it is completely separated by the introduction of Mill Lane and the development thereto and also the introduction of the railway line which crosses from southwest to northeast to the effective south the land. Whilst planning permission may have been refused on these grounds I believe that there are strong arguments to maintain that this land is separated and therefore the distinct from the adjoining open space land to the west of Mill Lane. With regard to the land south of the railway line this also only adjoins in part and in any event is land within the defined conservation area and also land which is subject to water works as identified on the extant ordnance survey sheet for the area. I maintain that this is a separate parcel of land and in my opinion I do not consider that the impact of allotment use, which would maintain its open appearance and contribution towards the strategic gap, whether or not that policy is maintained in the light of the provisions of the South East Plan, and I do not see this as an objection to this development.

5.4 The second matter to consider is the argument of its remoteness from residential catchment areas which would also include its impact from public transport access and parking. Having considered this site and its relationship to adjoining residential areas there are houses obviously adjoining the site to the west and

23 SEP 2010
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northwest and also to the northeast. Within a short travel distance by cycle many other houses are within immediate distance of the site and there is accordingly direct access by cyclists within a very short area to many other houses including the houses around the area to the north of the existing allotments at Ranelagh Road. I have highlighted the fact that local roads are not particularly well used and in this respect the site is well located to provide immediate access by cyclists. In addition there are also footpaths across the adjoining Bidbury Mead recreation ground which could also be utilised to bring people direct to the site in crossing the Bidbury Mead recreation ground to the north. In the circumstances, and having particular regard to the important planning advice contained within PPS3 and PPS13, regarding suitable travel distances by cyclists, I would suggest that this site is well located for use, by alternative means of transport, to gain access to local residential areas. It would be completely inappropriate in my view to promote new housing development which requires the provision of cycle facilities if one was to refuse this development on being inadequately located in relation to the new houses that one is actually promoting where cycle facilities must now be provided. Clearly a great deal has changed since 2002/3 and these are all factors which need to be borne and taken into account in the assessment now of this promotion of this site as allotments.

5.5 The next matter to consider is the impact of this development upon the adjoining Old Bedhampton Conservation Area and the impact of the development upon the adjoining listed building. In assessing this site quite clearly the boundary to Mill Lane is not well defined with occasional trees planted along the boundary. This is something that clearly needs to be addressed and I would promote as part of this application the provision of a new hedgerow within the site but adjoining this common western boundary of the site. It would be appropriate to take the provision of planting down to below the boundary to the property immediately south of the Old Granary to contain all of the western boundary of the site. In addition to this, with allotments provided to the eastern side of the site I would consider and promote a second row of hedgerow planting adjoining the area of the allotments also running from north to south. This would seek to contain the area where the allotments are proposed whilst at the same time providing a second alternative barrier for views from the conservation area across the site.

23 SEP 2010
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This has also been illustrated on the attached *location plan*. My expectation would be that this would be hawthorn planting to ensure continuity with the boundary on the northern side of the recreation ground and also to ensure a period of growth to the planting to encourage its development to heights in the order of 2 to 2.5 metres as soon as is practicable. In the context of the provision of these two layers of planting to the east of the conservation area I believe that this should seek to ensure both the appearance of the Conservation Area and also the impact upon any adjacent listed building and its outlook across the land. Accordingly I consider that the introduction of the car park and the new access can be provided without adverse impact on the character of the area.

5.6 Within the potential breakdown of the site the area to the east is to be used for allotments and whilst it is the intention of the applicants to promote the western half to be similarly used adequate provision is made to cover the loss of allotments at Ranelagh Road within the provisions that have now been made. To this effect an access is retained adjoining the car park at the western end of the car parking area where access could be provided into this field from the existing car park. This would leave approximately half of the land now available to be used for the keeping of horses with more than ample car parking provided for the remainder and visitors to the horses.

5.7 With regard to the access itself this is to achieve adequate visibility in both directions and over the period of time will require only upkeep for the hedge to maintain it. There is no footway on this side so additional splays to cater for pedestrians are not required. The wider access itself will be "screened" by the retention of the hedgerow and cars parked to the east behind the existing thick hedge there should be no adverse impact arising from the appearance of the access in itself to the wider area.

5.8 I feel I have now addressed the matters arising from the previous planning application where planning permission was refused some seven years ago and I have addressed each of the comments that have been raised showing how we can effectively address and overcome those matters. The access to the site to the car parking area which complies with the policies and provisions of the extant

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Plan. In the circumstances I would now ask the Members of the Havant Borough Council to now consider and support this application bearing in mind both the changes that have taken place in the last seven years which have been referred to within this Statement and also sound development control policy framework in promoting and developing this site now for the purposes of allotments with these additional matters provided. I now invite the Members to agree with me that this proposal is wholly acceptable and accordingly to grant planning permission for the development now proposed.

R.L.STUBBS MRTPI
Chartered Town Planner
September 2010

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