

Briefing Note

Our ref 41497/08/SPM/MG
Date August 2019
To Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
From Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners
Copy Redrow Homes Limited & The Owners

Subject East Halewood SUE: Statement of Community Involvement (Plots 1 & 3)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement [SCI] has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Redrow Homes Limited and the Owners and relates to the proposed residential development of Plots 1 and 3 within the East Halewood Sustainable Urban Extension [SUE] which is allocated for residential development within the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy [KLPCS]. The draft Masterplan associated with the site provides a bespoke validation checklist which includes the provision of a SCI.
- 1.2 Set out in this SCI is a description of the pre-application consultation undertaken by Redrow in relation to their development proposals within the East Halewood SUE. It should be read in conjunction with the other reports and documentation that accompany the application submission.

2.0 Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 Engagement is a key part of the planning process and Government guidance clearly encourages consultation to be undertaken as part of development projects.
- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework [the Framework] states that Local Planning Authorities [LPAs] should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible and encourage proactive working with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
- 2.3 The Framework recognises the importance of early engagement to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Indeed, paragraph 39 states, *“good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community”*. It goes on to explain in Paragraph 41 that *“The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits.”*
- 2.4 As set out in paragraphs 40 and 44, LPAs have a key role in encouraging applicants to take up any pre-application services which are offered and where beneficial, encourage engagement with the local community before applications are submitted.
- 2.5 At the local level Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council [the Council] adopted their Statement of Community Involvement Document in April 2017. The SCI sets out how the Council will engage with local communities and stakeholders in the development of planning policy documents and in the determination of planning applications.

3.0 Pre-Application Consultation

- 3.1 Redrow has participated in an extensive programme of pre-application engagement with the Council and other statutory consultees, both in conjunction with developers of the wider SUE as part of the Masterplan/SPD process, and individually in respect of their specific application proposals.
- 3.2 This provided an important opportunity to engage with the Council and key stakeholders to ensure that Redrow's proposals were consistent with the emerging Masterplan/SPD and to gather feedback, enabling issues and concerns to be addressed prior to the submission of the planning application where reasonably possible.

EIA Scoping

- 3.3 Redrow's application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA]. The EIA was jointly commissioned by the developers of the wider SUE and therefore relates to their collective development proposals of Plots 1-5. A request for an EIA Screening Opinion was not submitted as it was assumed that the proposals represented EIA development.
- 3.4 On 18th April 2018, Lichfields, on behalf of the developers formally requested KMBC to provide an EIA Scoping Opinion under Regulation 13 of the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulation 2011 (as amended 2017) [EIA Regulations] with respect to the wider application sites and KMBC provided their formal Scoping Opinion on 26th July 2018. There were a number of areas where clarification was required, and the Council subsequently issues a Scoping Clarification Letter on 19th December 2018 which should be read in conjunction with the original Scoping Opinion.
- 3.5 A range of statutory consultees were consulted in relation to the EIA Scoping exercise and the agreed scope reflects their comments made during this process.

Request for Pre-Application Advice

- 3.6 Redrow submitted a formal request for pre-application advice to the Council on 15th March 2019. They have since attended two pre-application meetings in relation to their specific proposals for Plots 1 and 3 which took place on 11th April and 18th July 2019. The meetings covered an extensive range of topics including discussions around the proposed layouts, compliance with the draft Masterplan/SPD and the proposed flood storage area. The validation checklist for the planning application was also agreed. Comments from statutory consultees were shared and these have been reflected in the final proposals.
- 3.7 In addition to the formal meetings, Redrow has maintained a regular dialogue with the Council in respect of their emerging proposals for Plots 1 and 3 within the East Halewood SUE.

Masterplan/SPD Engagement

- 3.8 Lichfields previously promoted the site through the Local Plan process and have engaged with the Council on behalf of the developers since 2013. The site was formally released from the Green Belt and allocated for housing through the adoption of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy [KLPCS] in January 2016. Policy SUE2 of the KLPCS requires proposals for development within the allocated SUE sites to be consistent with a single detailed Masterplan for the entire SUE site which is approved by the Council.

- 3.9 A Masterplan (and associated Supplementary Planning Document) is being prepared by the Council, with assistance from consultants Optimised Environments Ltd [OPEN], WSP and Mott MacDonald. The developers, including Redrow, have been engaging with the Council on this process since April 2018 when the preparation of the document commenced. It was agreed that OPEN would work closely with the developers to ensure that the proposals set out within the Masterplan were realistic, reasonable and deliverable, whilst at the same time ensuring that they responded to the requirements of the KLPCS. It was also agreed that the developers would share baseline technical evidence with OPEN which could underpin the Masterplan process. The developers upheld this agreement and shared their technical evidence base with OPEN in order to inform the Masterplan.
- 3.10 The developers have participated in several workshops where draft Masterplan options, and subsequently a Preferred Option were presented by the Council at workshop meetings with the developers in attendance. Following this, both the draft Masterplan and SPD were published for consultation in March 2019. Lichfields, on behalf of the developers submitted joint representations to the document. These representations set out the developers fundamental concerns with the documents and in particular the draft Masterplan. These concerns are well documented elsewhere and in particular within the representations to the Masterplan which are also appended to Redrow's Planning Statement.
- 3.11 At this stage, the Masterplan remains in draft and the process continues to evolve. The Housebuilders continue to engage with the Council in a proactive manner and welcome the publication of a revised document in due course.
- 3.12 As well as participating in considerable workshops, the Managing Directors from each Housebuilder participated in a coach tour with locally elected members. The purpose of the tour was to visit exemplar developments from each respective developer in the Merseyside area. Redrow's exemplar site was Summerhill Park which is located in Liverpool, albeit just within Knowsley's administrative area. The development received a number of awards in 2014/15 which recognised Redrow's commitment to delivering high quality residential development. The purpose of the site visit was to provide members with an insight into the type of development Redrow will provide at East Halewood.

Community Consultation

- 3.13 In terms of Community Consultation, the Council held two public consultation events during the draft Masterplan /SPD consultation. The events took place on 13th March 2019 (between 3pm and 7pm), and 16th March 2019 (between 10am and 2pm) at Halewood Leisure Centre on Baileys Lane which is located adjacent to the SUE's western boundary. The consultation event provided local residents with an opportunity to comment on and influence the Masterplan process. The Council requested that the Housebuilders did not attend these consultation events.
- 3.14 Historically, local residents were also consulted extensively during the Local Plan process when the site was allocated for residential development.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Redrow has undertaken a comprehensive consultation programme in relation to its proposals for residential development on land within the East Halewood SUE.

- 4.2 The consultation undertaken is in accordance with the requirements of Knowsley's Statement of Community Involvement, as well as the guidance set out in the Framework and Practice Guidance.
- 4.3 Support for the proposals is generally positive and Redrow is confident that they have and continue to be able to address any issues raised.
- 4.4 Redrow will continue to work closely with the other main developers within the SUE (Bellway Homes and Miller Homes) and the Council whilst continuing to consult with the key statutory stakeholders and local residents as the Masterplan process continues to evolve and throughout the planning application process.