

**The Town Clerk**

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28<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

**Representations to the Review of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan  
On behalf of Hollins Strategic Land**

**Land to the West of Priors Hill, Wroughton**

We are pleased to submit, on behalf of our client Hollins Strategic Land, representations to the Review of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan. These representations focus on land at Priors Hill, Wroughton (location plan attached) which is considered to present an appropriate and sustainable location for residential development.

The site is capable of accommodating around 30 new homes which will comprise affordable homes including a mix of bungalows and new starter homes alongside the delivery of new public open space

This representation respectfully requests that the review process seek to 'future-proof' the plan against unplanned development and identify some smaller housing allocations in and around Wroughton. Additional housing allocations identified as part of the review of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan will ensure any identified housing need arising from the review process of the Swindon Borough Local is objectively met and planned for over the next plan period.

## **Land at Priors Hill**

The site is located immediately to the south of Wroughton, in a location well related to the existing settlement area. The Settlement Boundary of Wroughton forms the northern and eastern boundaries of the site.

The site is set back from Priors Hill, with access to the site achieved from a farm gate at the north-eastern corner of the site and is currently used for grazing. The site rises to the north but is contained by existing residential properties along Priors Hill, Manor Close and Badgers Brook. To the south and west the site is bounded by mature hedgerows and trees. As such it can be considered that the site benefits from strong defensible boundaries and there are limited views both into and out of the site.

To the immediate east of the site is the Priors Hill Conservation Area and further west of the site is Clouts Wood End, defined by the Local Plan as public open space. The site itself is located at the far north-eastern corner of the North Wessex Downs AONB. A public right of way currently runs across the site.

The site is well related and within walking distance to key facilities and services in Wroughton, with Ellendune Shopping Centre and Wroughton Infant School being located approximately 600 metres to the north of the site.

## **Housing Need in Wroughton**

The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 (adopted March 2015) identifies Wroughton as a Primary Rural Settlement, where 'rural development will be located primarily' as the Settlement is 'the most accessible' and maintains 'the largest range of facilities'. Policy SD2 of the Local Plan defines a 'Rural Settlement Boundary', the site at Priors Hill being located immediately beyond this boundary. However, in locations such as this development will be permitted where, amongst other criteria, 'local needs have been identified and allocated through a Neighbourhood Plan'.

Policy SD2 of the Local Plan states that Wroughton, as a 'Primary Rural Settlement', will be expected to accommodate 'at least 150' new dwellings through the plan period to 2026 and is a 'main focus for development within the rural area'. Policy RH6 of the Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for housing for a 'minimum' of 150 dwellings over the Plan period. HSL support the wording of this policy that expresses the proposed level of housing as a 'minimum', as it provides the required flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and accord with the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework ('the NPPF').

We acknowledge the parish has made allocations and supported some development. However, the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan Review presents an opportunity to review the approach to delivering new housing in suitable locations throughout the Settlement, and ensuring it enables the housing needs of Wroughton to be met over the remaining plan period and beyond. This is particularly critical given the upcoming review of the Swindon Borough Local Plan and the potential shift to distribute a higher proportion of housing to settlements outside Swindon town.

The 'Three Year Review' identifies at Paragraph 2.2 that 'The Plan allocated 5 sites, which in total could accommodate at least 173 dwellings' and that, since the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan, full or outline permission has been secured for 171 dwellings. Given the difficulties of delivering suitable sites around the Swindon urban area together with the emerging policy shift to deliver growth in the higher order settlements of Highworth and Wroughton, the review process should seek to identify new housing sites and associated infrastructure in Wroughton.

This is especially pertinent in light of two successful appeal decisions that have occurred within Wroughton since the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan. In both instances, the inability of Swindon Borough Council to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply was crucial and resulted in approvals for development that was not necessarily in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, with Swindon reviewing their Local Plan in an attempt to improve their housing land supply, the expectation is that future housing growth will be

directed towards existing communities such as Wroughton, and a number of sites in Wroughton have been considered in the 2019 Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment.

Therefore as part of this review, a crucial element should be the allocation of additional sites that are well-related to the existing settlement area that will allow both Swindon Borough Council, but more critically Wroughton Parish Council, the opportunity to demonstrate a supply of available, suitable and achievable sites over the remaining Plan period.

The land at Priors Hill, Wroughton constitutes such a circumstance, where residential development will assist in meeting identified housing needs and assist in delivering local infrastructure needs, ensuring the continuing vitality of Wroughton through development of a site located immediately adjacent to the 'Rural Settlement Boundary'.

## **Conclusions**

Given the size and sustainable nature of Wroughton, Hollins Strategic Land support the ambitions of the Neighbourhood Plan in identifying a number of housing allocations suitable to deliver a minimum of 150 new dwellings over the Plan period and indeed commend the Parish Council on delivering housing and local infrastructure. As a result of the evident progress made towards meeting this target to date, and in light of recent appeal decisions permitting substantial development on unallocated sites outside of the defined 'Primary Rural Settlement' boundary, Hollins Strategic Land consider that additional allocations are required in order to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan maintains a sufficient degree of flexibility to meet housing needs over the remaining Plan period. This is especially crucial due to Swindon being currently unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and that further growth is expected to be directed towards existing communities such as Wroughton as part of the Local Plan review.

These representations confirm that land at Priors Hill is available, suitable, achievable and therefore deliverable in line with the definition in Annex 2 of the NPPF:

- Available – The landowner is keen to see the site brought forward for residential development and our client has an agreement with the landowner to promote the site for this use through the Neighbourhood Plan Review;
- Suitable – The site is located in a highly sustainable location for residential development owing to its location near essential local services, including primary schools and various local amenities, all of which are located within 600 metres of the site. In addition bus stops within 350 metres of the site boundary provide access to Swindon, Trowbridge and Devizes. Locating new homes within such minimal walking distances of everyday facilities will ensure residents are not reliant on the private car, thereby reducing the traffic generated as a result of new development in Wroughton.
- Achievable – The site has very limited technical constraints and is located in an area which is of strong interest to the market. It is considered that if allocated in the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan, the site would be fully built out within five years.

The site presents a logical opportunity to deliver new market and affordable housing and opportunities for open space in a sustainable location that will integrate fully with the existing settlement. HSL is committed to delivering local homes for all which include bungalows and starter homes for younger families. The site also represents an opportunity to secure benefits for the wider community, through potential inclusion of facilities for play, leisure and sport or through creation of a connected system of cycle paths, in accordance with Appendix A of the 'Three Year Review' document published by Wroughton Parish Council. The exact detail of this will be confirmed through detailed masterplanning of the site. We envisage delivering parkland to the north of the site where the land rises.

The allocation of the site through the Review of the Neighbourhood Plan will help to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirement for Wroughton to accommodate a proportion of additional housing growth over the Plan period as required by Policy SD2 of the Local Plan and has sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.

We trust these representations will be taken into account during the review of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan. HSL would be pleased to meet with the Parish Council to discuss the Site and this representation in further detail.

Yours sincerely,

**Peter Tooher**

Executive Director

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