

THREE RIVERS SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD EXAMINATION

On behalf of Transport for London, Commercial
Development Directorate

Respondent number 6018 2/300 48/SA

Issue 4

30 September 2013

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ISSUE 4: WHETHER THE SALDD PROVIDES SATISFACTORILY FOR THE PROVISION OF NEW SCHOOLS OVER THE PLAN PERIOD.

- 1.1 CBRE Limited (CBRE) is instructed by Transport for London Commercial Development Directorate, Property (TfL Property).
- 1.2 Our response in respect of Issue 4 is informed by a number of technical studies which are included as Appendices. These are as follows:
 - Appendix 1 – Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling (Town Planning Consultant);
 - Appendix 2 –Baldwins Lane Site Feasibility Study prepared by IBI Taylor Young Architects ('Site Feasibility Study');
 - Appendix 3 –Baldwins Lane Site Scoring Assessment prepared by CBRE ('Site Scoring Assessment');
 - Appendix 4 – Vincent and Goring Site A, B, C and D Town Planning Feasibility Reports September 2012
 - Appendix 5 - Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review of Potential School Sites prepared by Barton Willmore ('LVA'); and
 - Appendix 6 - Site Plans illustrating proposed Site Allocation amendments.
- 1.3 This Statement responds to the Inspector’s Questions 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

Q4.1 : Whether the sites identified for secondary schools should be reserved exclusively for that purpose, even if they are not, in any event, required during the plan period.

- 1.4 TfL Property instructed Michael Ling to undertake a review of the HCC technical evidence base with regard to the demand for school places and supply analysis which supports TRDC’s approach to the allocation of secondary school sites. This review is provided in the Education Statement at Appendix 1 of this Statement.
- 1.5 TRDC and HCC have stated in the ‘Agreed Position’ of the Statement of Common Ground in relation to Secondary School Provision (SoCG)¹, that they agree the forecast need for Secondary School Places and the SALDD should be updated to reflect the most recent 2013 education demand forecasts.
- 1.6 The SoCG refers to a substantial increase in the forecast demand for secondary school places². This submission has been prepared based upon the TRDC/HCC agreed position on forecast demand, however, the September 2013 Statement of Educational Need Update referred to in the SoCG has not been made available for scrutiny and the conclusions in the SoCG are therefore uncertain.

¹ Statement of Common Ground in relation to Secondary School Provision, September 2013, Agreed Position, page 17

² Statement of Common Ground in relation to Secondary School Provision, September 2013, Section 1 (i), page 2-3

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- 1.7 The Education Statement³ states that it is reasonable to conclude that TRDC has not adequately complied with the requirements of the Framework for a Local Plan to be considered 'sound', in two respects.
 - HCC/ TRDC have not presented sufficient evidence to justify their position that the projected secondary school deficit represents objectively assessed infrastructure requirements. This is set out in detail in the Education Statement⁴.
 - HCC/TRDC have not demonstrated that the proposed allocation represents the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence. This is set out in detail in the Education Statement⁵.
- 1.8 It is considered that even setting aside concerns relating to the assumptions upon which the school deficit figures have been derived, the allocation of 3 secondary school sites is not necessary and therefore not appropriate.
- 1.9 The Education Statement⁶ demonstrates that there are alternative more suitable options for meeting the additional needs without the need for two new schools.
- 1.10 The table below sets out the steps proposed to reach the target of 19 FE, with the most certain provision (Reach Free School and Mill End Site S(a)) first, followed by the less certain expansions, and then if needed a contingency allocation at Baldwin's Lane Site S(d). Mill End Site S(a) can accommodate a larger school than Baldwins Lane Site S(d) providing greater flexibility in meeting secondary school needs. In addition, the potential to provide capacity through expansions of existing schools⁷ should be exhausted before resorting to developing a second new school.

Proposed build-up of secondary school capacity to meet the forecast deficit of 19FE

SOURCE OF CAPACITY	POTENTIAL CAPACITY (FE)	TARGET CAPACITY & CUMULATIVE SUPPLY (FE)
Target Capacity		19
Reach Free School	4(+)	4(+)
Allocation of Site S(a)	8-10	12-14(+)
Existing School Expansion	2(+)	14-16(+)
Allocation of Site S(d)	6	20-22(+)

Source: Table 4.1, Education Statement, Michael Ling

- 1.11 The Education Statement concludes that the most appropriate strategy and reasonable alternative to meet the 19FE requirement is:
 - The Reach Free School (4 FE);
 - A single new allocation for an 8-10FE school at Mill End Site S(a);
 - Expansion at existing schools - St Clement Danes (1FE) and Bushey Meads (1FE);

³ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, paragraph 1.2

⁴ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, paragraphs 2.1 – 2.15

⁵ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, paragraphs 3.1 – 3.11

⁶ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, paragraphs 4.1 – 4.8

⁷ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, paragraph 3.11

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- Potential expansion at existing schools - Parmiter’s School, Queen’s School and Bushey Meads could reasonably accommodate 2-5FE; and
 - A reserve site, Site S(d), could accommodate up to a 6FE⁸ school should the potential expansion not be delivered.
- 1.12 This approach provides for the 19FE requirement through the Reach Free School, Mill End Site S(a), and expansion of existing schools, and provides for contingency through the allocation of the south west part of Baldwins Lane as a reserve site should the expansion of existing schools not be delivered and the full 19FE demand materialise. Should additional capacity be secured through the expansion of existing schools sites, there may not be any requirement to bring forward a second school site. The preference should be to expand existing schools in advance of the release of a second school site.
- 1.13 Furthermore, it is considered that it may not be necessary to deliver permanent provision to meet the full 19FE requirement as this includes both capacity to address the temporary spike of 2 FE (which does not justify permanent provision) and 1 FE flexibility surplus⁹. As such there are doubts about whether the whole residual 5FE will need to be provided and it would therefore be sensible to choose the most flexible of the two school sites for the definite allocation to minimise the need to develop two school sites.¹⁰
- 1.14 For the reasons set out above and supported by the Education Statement, only Mill End Site S(a) should be allocated exclusively for a secondary school.
- 1.15 As set out above, there is uncertainty as to whether the full 19FE demand will materialise, and whether a second school site will be required to meet demand given the more appropriate alternative solutions. As such, if the south-west part of Baldwins Lane is allocated as a reserve site and should it then be demonstrated that it is not required in the plan period, we consider the south-west part of the site should be released for housing to meet the District’s housing needs, the merits of which are considered under Question 4.2. For the reasons set out under Question 4.2, the north-west part of the site should not be reserved for education but allocated for housing. As such this site should not be reserved exclusively for secondary school provision during the plan period.
- 1.16 For the reasons set out above, we do not consider it necessary to allocate 3 secondary school sites and as set out in response to Question 4.4 below, Mill End Site S(b) is not considered suitable for housing or education development. It should not be allocated or reserved for secondary school provision in the SALDD.

Q4.2 : Whether, in that context, and in the context of Issue 2 more generally, the site identified at Baldwins Lane should be supplanted by or combined with an allocation for housing, as has been suggested.

- 1.17 As set out in our Representation¹¹, Baldwins Lane is considered to be located in a highly sustainable location, directly adjacent to the Key Centre of Croxley Green, with good access to local facilities. It provides the opportunity to deliver either a housing development of 117 dwellings or alternatively, if it is demonstrated that part of the site is required for secondary

⁸ TfL Property’s Response to Inspector’s Question 4.2

⁹ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, paragraph 4.3

¹⁰ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, Executive Summary

¹¹ TfL Proposed Submission Site Allocations Development Plan Document Representation December 2012

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school provision, a mixed use development including a secondary school (6 FE) and housing development of 58 dwellings.

- 1.18 To inform the consideration of whether the site should be allocated for housing either in full or in part, a detailed review of the site has been undertaken. TfL Property commissioned their consultants to prepare a Site Feasibility Study to inform the most appropriate land use strategy for the site, Appendix 2.
- 1.19 Firstly, regard has been had to the capacity of the site to accommodate both a secondary school and the requisite playing fields. The Vincent and Gorging Report¹² and the Site Feasibility Study¹³, both acknowledge that whilst the site has capacity for an 8 FE building, due to topographical and landscape constraints, there is only capacity to accommodate playing fields required for a 6 FE school. If an 8 FE school were to be accommodated this would require off site playing field provision which is noted by HCC as not ideal from an operational perspective. The SoCG¹⁴ acknowledges the site is smaller than the optimum size for an 8FE secondary school. The Site Feasibility Study¹⁵ refers to a site of 10ha as being sufficient in size to accommodate a 6FE secondary school based upon the formula in the DfES Building Bulletin 98¹⁶.
- 1.20 The Site Feasibility Study¹⁷ highlights that the north-west part of the site is not suitable for large footprint school accommodation, which is better suited to the south-west part of the site. It also identifies that the north-west part of the site is not capable of being utilised as playing fields due to topographical constraints which make the creation of level playing fields undeliverable. The site is 12.92ha in size and a 10ha site can be achieved excluding the north-west part of the site, to accommodate a 6FE school's requirements.
- 1.21 Secondly, the approach to understanding the development potential of the site, and the acceptability of housing development, has been based upon a thorough review of the landscape character of this site¹⁸.
- 1.22 The Site Feasibility Study¹⁹ sets out detailed consideration of whether the site can be developed in a way which ensures that the relevant functions of the Green Belt²⁰ are not compromised. It concludes that there is the opportunity to accommodate development on the western part of the site, east of the central tree line, with limited loss of countryside, and without substantially increasing the encroachment of the built form physically and visually into open countryside, by virtue of the containment provided by existing woodland, trees and built form.
- 1.23 Existing site features provide a strong defensible boundary for the edge of development, provided that the eastern part of the site remains undeveloped (forming permanent public

¹² Vincent and Gorging Site D Town Planning Feasibility Report September 2011

¹³ IBI Taylor Young Site Feasibility Study page 16

¹⁴ Statement of Common Ground between TRDC and HCC September 2013

¹⁵ IBI Taylor Young Site Feasibility Study page 16

¹⁶ DfES Building Bulletin 98 Appendix 3

¹⁷ IBI Taylor Young Site Feasibility Study page 16

¹⁸ IBI Taylor Young Site Feasibility Study Section 3

¹⁹ IBI Taylor Young Site Feasibility Study page 10

²⁰ Framework, paragraph 80

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open space and/or playing fields) the long-term openness of the Green Belt in this location will be secured and prevent any further encroachment into the countryside. The Site Feasibility Study²¹ sets out the capacity of the site to accommodate development appropriately responding to the constraints and opportunities of the site. It demonstrates that housing development is deliverable, either as a standalone housing scheme or as part of a mixed use development.

- 1.24 The benefits of the site for residential development are set out in Section 5 of our Representation²².
- 1.25 Finally, TRDC has not undertaken a Site Score for the site based upon the Core Strategy Appendix 2 criteria. CBRE has therefore undertaken an assessment applying the Core Strategy criteria, to understand how the site performs against the alternative sites reviewed through the site selection process. A copy of the Site Scoring can be found in Appendix 3.
- 1.26 The scoring exercise has been informed by TRDC approach to similar sites and sites within the immediate locality to ensure a robust and justified review was undertaken. The scoring exercise concluded that a housing only scheme on the site would score 918 and would, if included in the ranking list, have been ranked 10th out of 108 sites. If combined with a secondary school, housing development on the site would score 927, and would have ranked 7th. Given this, it is unclear why TRDC has not considered it for housing and by not doing so has failed to consider reasonable alternatives. TRDC's letter²³ does however indicate that the intention is to use the SALDD to suppress land value which is clearly not a material planning consideration.
- 1.27 Our submission under Issue 6 demonstrates that a number of sites allocated in the SALDD for housing do not represent the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives and identifies a shortfall in housing provision during the plan period of 316 dwellings. Our submission under Issue 2 demonstrates the need for additional sites to be identified as safeguarded land, capable of delivering between 426 and 710 dwellings, to ensure the longevity of the Green Belt is achieved.
- 1.28 Baldwins Lane has been demonstrated to be deliverable for housing and it has been shown to score well against TRDC's own scoring criteria and is ranked higher than the majority of the allocated Green Belt sites. The north-west part of the site is capable of being brought forward at the earliest opportunity necessary to meet the District's housing needs. This part of the site can be delivered without prejudicing the future delivery of the south-west part of the site either for a secondary school or as a later phase of a larger residential development.
- 1.29 The site benefits from being located directly adjacent to Croxley Green settlement boundary and is capable of achieving a clear defensible Green Belt boundary. Given the merits of the site, it is considered to be appropriate to meet housing needs within this plan period.
- 1.30 Should the south-west part of the site be reserved for a secondary school and it be demonstrated during the plan period that it is not required to meet secondary education need, this part of the site should be released for housing to meet the needs of this plan period if required or alternatively the next plan period through the review of the Local Plan.

²¹ IBI Taylor Young Site Feasibility Study, Section 4

²² TfL Property Proposed Submission Site Allocations Development Plan Document Representation December 2012

²³ TRDC Letter 31 July 2013

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Q4.3 : Whether, as has also been suggested, the need for the school in the area would be better served by an alternative site.

- 1.31 If the Inspector agrees that a second secondary school site should be reserved in the east of the District, we concur with HCC and TRDC's view²⁴ insofar as it relates to the suitability of Site S(d), compared to Site S(c). However, for the reasons set out above only part of the site should be reserved for education.
- 1.32 The principal reason for this is that, as recognised in the SoCG²⁵ and supported by the LVA²⁶ at Appendix 4, the development of Site S(c) would result in extended development beyond the natural boundary of Croxley Green into sensitive open countryside, compromising the objectives of the Green Belt. As such, we agree that Site (d) is less sensitive than Site S(c) for development for a secondary school in the Croxley Green area, should a need for this become apparent during the plan period.

Q4.4 : Whether one of the two sites identified in the west of the District has decisive advantages which should lead to a firmer stance on the question of which should be taken forward.

- 1.33 It is considered that there is clear evidence to recommend the allocation of Site S(a) over Site S(b). The SoCG²⁷ in relation to Secondary School Provision (informed by the Vincent and Gorbing reports²⁸) sets out the relative merits of the two sites in Mill End.
- 1.34 The LVA²⁹ concludes that development of Site S(b) would significantly impact on the objectives of the Green Belt, and potentially reduce the ability of the neighbouring Green Belt to meet the purposes of the designation. Site S(b) is considered unsuitable to accommodate school development, due to the landscape constraints of the site.
- 1.35 HCC set out in the SoCG, that Site S (a) does not have any significant constraints which would preclude development for a secondary school.
- 1.36 The Mill End: Technical Note³⁰, explored whether Site S(a) is capable of accommodating a larger 10FE school. The study concludes that the site can accommodate a single large school of at least 10FE. This demonstrates that Site S(a) provides flexibility to meet HCC's school place requirements, acknowledging that Site S(d) is more appropriate for a 6FE school. Given our response to Question 4.1, this flexibility is considered a fundamental component in meeting the secondary education needs identified.
- 1.37 The LVA³¹ has identified that Site S(a) has no significant landscape constraints and is capable of achieving a clear defensible Green Belt boundary being identified along the lines of the A405 and A412.

²⁴ Statement of Common Ground between TRDC and HCC September 2013, Page 10

²⁵ Statement of Common Ground between TRDC and HCC September 2013, Page 11

²⁶ LVA paragraph 4.19

²⁷ Statement of Common Ground between TRDC and HCC September 2013

²⁸ Vincent and Gorbing Site A and Site B Town Planning Feasibility Report September 2011

²⁹ LVA paragraph 4.13

³⁰ Education Statement prepared by Michael Ling, Annex 4

³¹ LVA, paragraph 4.7

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- 1.38 Given the above, Site S(a) is considered to have decisive advantages compared to Site S(b):
- It is less visually sensitive site and has no significant constraints to development;
 - A clear defensible Green Belt boundary can be established; and
 - The site provides flexibility to deliver school provision over the plan period.

Concluding Statement

- 1.39 We consider that TRDC/HCC have not presented sufficient evidence to justify their position that the projected secondary school deficit represents objectively assessed infrastructure requirements and the SALDD as currently prepared does not represent the most appropriate strategy, when considered against reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence. The SALDD as currently prepared is therefore not considered to be sound.
- 1.40 It is considered that secondary education needs could be met through a more appropriate alternative strategy which does not require the delivery of two secondary schools. However, taking a conservative approach it is prudent to allocate one 8-10FE school at Mill End (Site S(a)) and allocate a reserve site at the south-west part of Site S(d) for a 6FE school, to be released should the expansion potential of existing sites not be realised.
- 1.41 Due to landscape and visual impact constraints, we do not consider that the allocation of either Sites S(b) or Site S(c) for a secondary school should be pursued.
- 1.42 As the north-west part of the site cannot be used for education buildings or playing fields, an allocation for education of this part of the site is not justified or consistent with the Framework. We consider that Baldwins Lane Site S(d) has specific merits for residential development, as set out in response to Question 4.2. It has been demonstrated to be suitable, available and viable for housing and the north-west part of the site is capable of being brought forward at the earliest opportunity necessary to meet the District’s housing needs without prejudicing the future delivery of the south-west part of the site either for a secondary school or as a later phase of a larger residential development.
- 1.43 We therefore seek the following changes to the SALDD:
- Policy SA3 should be amended.

‘To meet the identified secondary educational needs both Site S(a) and the south-west part of Site S(d) are allocated for secondary school development, Site S(a) being prioritised for early release and the south-west part of Site S(d) being held as a reserve site, should need be established. This is to be reviewed during the plan period and if established that it is not required, this part of the site will be released for housing subject to the phasing provisions of Policy SA1. For the avoidance of doubt, both sites are removed from the Green Belt. Expansion of existing schools will be supported in advance of the release of the reserve site, including expansion of St Clement Danes School and Parmiter’s School which have been removed from the Green Belt.’
 - Amend Secondary School Site Allocation - Site S(a) to specify provision up to 10FE and remove from the Green Belt.
 - Delete Secondary School Site Allocation S(b).
 - Site S(d) Baldwins Lane (south-west) to be removed from the Green Belt and allocated as a reserve site for secondary school provision up to 6FE. Proposed plan identifying the developable area in south-west part of the site is at Appendix 6.

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- Site S(d) Baldwins Lane (north-west) to be removed from the Green Belt and allocated for housing (58 dwellings) to be delivered within this plan period. Proposed plan identifying the developable area in the north-west part of the site is at Appendix 6.
- Should the Inspector determine there is sufficient supply of more sustainable sites to meet the housing need for this plan period, both the north-west and the south-west should be safeguarded for housing for the next plan period (refer to our submission to Issue 2).