

# Memorandum of Understanding between Little Waltham Parish Council and Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group about Local Plan Policy SGS6 'North of Broomfield'

## 1. Background

1.1 Chelmsford Local Plan (the LP) designates this site for provision of 450 new homes (p.160/163, para.s 7.282 – 7.297).

1.2 The site lies within Broomfield and Little Waltham. The division of the site is roughly 60% in Little Waltham and 40% in Broomfield. The parish boundary passes NW/SE across the middle of the site.

1.3 Broomfield's application to carry out a neighbourhood plan (NP) was approved in June 2016. The process is well advanced and includes:

- A full assessment of local residents' views through consultation events and a questionnaire (2017)
- A professional Landscape Appraisal (Alison Farmer Associates 2018)
- A Housing Needs Assessment (AECOM 2019)

These can be accessed on the NP webpage: [www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/np](http://www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/np).

A Design Code is in preparation and a Site Allocation Assessment for the remainder of the NP area is about to be commissioned. A Views Assessment is also in preparation, linked to the Landscape Appraisal.

1.4 The NP, when approved, will guide developments in Broomfield. As it emerges and the evidence base is expanded, it should influence development as much as possible.

1.5 Little Waltham is not conducting a NP. As a statutory consultee, the Parish Council (LWPC) puts forward the views of the residents. LWPC will be a statutory consultee on the NP at the Pre-Submission consultation stage and the Submission consultation stage.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure that both Broomfield and Little Waltham have a common position, so that the developers of SGS6, their agents and others have a single clear view from the community.

The existing NP documents listed in 1.3 above have been shared with Little Waltham, which supports the principles therein as they apply to SGS6. All the forthcoming NP documents will be shared with LWPC to establish if they are also acceptable.

The memorandum does not seek to change the relevant sections of the LP. Rather, it seeks to emphasise which aspects of the LP SGS6 policy and reasoned justification are most important to the local community and, where relevant, how they might be applied. It is not exhaustive, so other aspects of LP para.s 7. 282 – 7. 297 not referred to in this memorandum may nonetheless be of some importance to the local community.

### **3. Common issues and Concerns about SGS6**

The following paragraphs set out the views of LWPC and the issues identified through the Broomfield NP process, so should be taken into account in planning for SGS6.

#### **3.1 Landscape**

It's critical that the development of SGS6 sits as comfortably as possible in the surrounding landscape. Particular care must be taken in relation to:

- Site boundaries: these should be landscaped to:
  - o provide a natural boundary to the site,
  - o provide wildlife corridors; and to
  - o protect views.
  
- Relief: the site rises from 42m in the east to 58m in the west. Care should be taken to keep the higher, more visible land free of buildings.
  
- Views: sensitive views are identified in the NP Landscape Appraisal and emerging Views Assessment – including views south from Little Waltham. These should be protected as far as possible.
  
- Woodland: the loss of woodland at Pudding Wood due to the proposed new hospital access road should be more than compensated for by a new tract of community woodland along the western boundary. This will provide a wildlife corridor between Pudding Wood and Sparrowhawk Wood and will replace the loss of the rural nature of the current north-south footpath that follows the parish boundary

#### **3.2 Strategic Gap between SGS6 and Little Waltham village.**

The gap between Little Waltham village and the linear development along Blasford Hill is already narrow. It is important that SGS6 does not erode this gap further. To this effect:

- a) SGS6 should not extend development further along the B1008 roadside
  
- b) The new junction at the intersection of the B1008 and hospital access road must not introduce an urban feel or paraphernalia, as this would diminish the effect of the gap. This point explained in more detail in the NP Landscape Appraisal (Area H, Guidance, p.40)
  
- c) As outlined in 1 above, boundary landscaping on the northern edge of SGS6 should emphasise the separation of settlements and reduce any impression of coalescence.

#### **3.3 Traffic**

The volume and impact of traffic is a key concern to both communities. This is evidenced in the Summary Report of the NP Questionnaire. These concerns are completely shared in Little Waltham, which has the added problem of east/west 'rat running' through the village between the B1008 and the A130.

Traffic surveys undertaken as part of the Local Plan evidence base (e.g. Chelmsford Traffic and Access Strategy, Essex County Council, Traffic Forecast Report) highlight the severe level of congestion on the B1008, which is already at 96% capacity. These problems are further evidenced by the TTHC Transport Report commissioned by Little Waltham, Broomfield and other parish councils (see: [www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/chelmsford-local-plan-have-your-say](http://www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/chelmsford-local-plan-have-your-say))

Therefore it is critical that all opportunities are taken to minimize the increase in traffic from SGS6; and to take the fullest advantage possible of the opportunities offered by the new hospital access road. The use of this road must be planned to reduce traffic volumes on the B1008 and should not be limited to hospital staff.

Robust and permanent measures must be taken to minimise the traffic impact of SGS6 across the wider local area. Physical measures to discourage the use of the B1008 through Broomfield village and the Street, Little Waltham could include: signposting, gateway treatment; connection to high quality cyclepaths; 'Soft' or temporary measures (e.g. public transport incentives for a limited period) would not be sufficient.

### **3.4 Proposed Neighbourhood Centre**

The draft LP requires SGS6 to provide community facilities (para 7.286):

'including a new nursery school, open spaces, recreation facilities and neighbourhood centre... These services and facilities should be of an appropriate scale to serve the new communities and located where they will be easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport to the majority of residents in the development and the wider area, reflecting the fact that this development is an extension of the existing village rather than a stand-alone settlement.'

SGS6 sits between 2 existing centres:

- Broomfield Hospital ( 250 m south) which contains high quality retail outlets;
- Little Waltham (1km north) which contains a primary school, nursery schools, pub, GP surgery and pharmacy, village hall, sports and social club, cricket club, playing fields, children play area, allotments, churches and community activities based around various organisations using the community assets

Broomfield village centre (pubs, primary school, small retail outlets, village hall) is also close by (2km south).

The parties are concerned about the viability of a new on-site neighbourhood centre so close to the existing village facilities. It could result in reduced viability for all, so careful consideration needs to be given to the best form and location of a 'centre'.

Their preferred approach would be to re-inforce existing facilities (and potentially create new ones) by investing in the existing neighbourhood centres and creating improved walking and cycle routes to them from SGS6. In particular pedestrian crossings across the B1008 to allow walking and cycling access to the Little Waltham village.

### **3.5 Mix of housing types and tenures**

The NP Questionnaire showed that, if new development is required through the LP, the following types are preferred by the community:

- small family homes,
- affordable (i.e. rented or shared equity)
- starter homes,
- homes for the active retired and bungalows.

The NP Housing Needs Assessment demonstrates:

- the existence of affordability pressures within the Parish, resulting in a high need for affordable housing. Prices for market tenures are well above the means of households earning the average income.
- The current most significant net need is for two bedroom units, followed by one-bedroom units
- Starter Homes (a Government scheme that offers first-time buyers a 20% discount on a new-build home) are out-of-reach of the group they are intended for, first time buyers. This particular product should consequently be excluded from the tenure mix as every type built effectively reduces the provision of more useful Affordable Homes.
- 25% of new residential units should be social or affordable rent, mostly with one to two bedrooms.
- 10% of homes in a new development should be for affordable home ownership. Most of these dwellings should be 25% and 50% shared ownership.
- Private renting in Broomfield has increased by 178% between 2001 and 2011. This is an affordable alternative to homeownership and AECOM recommend for more homes in this tenure.
- The recommended housing mix in new developments is:

16%	1 bedroom homes
18%	2 bedroom homes
50%	3 bedroom homes
9%	4 bedroom homes
8%	5 bedroom homes

AECOM notes that this mix should be applied flexibly. Both parties would prefer a slightly greater element of 1 and 2 bedroom homes and slightly less 4 and 5 bedroom homes.

- The type of home to be provided (detached, semi-detached, terraced or flat) is of secondary importance in the context of a HNA. Notwithstanding this, the housing types most likely to meet assessed needs, based on recent transactions in the current stock, are (smaller) detached and semi-detached homes.
- Additionally, bungalows appeal to an elderly population and this particular type should be promoted to support the needs of the growing elderly population.

This preference for affordable housing with smaller size homes is shared by LWPC. Both parties would like preference for social affordable rent homes to be given to people who have ties to either Little Waltham or Broomfield. In terms of allocation between these two areas, that should be along the lines of the proportion of the site within that parish, i.e. 60% to those with a connection to Little Waltham and 40% to those with a connection to Broomfield. If however one parish cannot take up its full allocation, it should be transferred to the other party.

### 3.6 Design Issues

The NP Questionnaire showed support for the following statements (compared to alternative suggestions) about how new homes and other buildings should be designed and planned:

- New buildings should fit in with surrounding buildings, provided the surrounding buildings look attractive
- Generally, I prefer new buildings to have a traditional design
- New houses should be spread out, with plenty of space in between
- Generally, new houses and buildings should be limited to 2 storeys
- Blocks of apartments are not acceptable
- Smaller gardens (less than 80 sq. m) are okay, provided there is communal open space within 2 minutes' walk
- New houses should generally be built in small cul-de-sacs, with a maximum of around 25 houses in each (as opposed to alongside through roads).

Broomfield residents' preference for traditional design is shared by LWPC. The design of the houses and the whole development should be sympathetic and in keeping with the rural environment and the existing buildings on Blasford Hill (some of which are mentioned in the Domesday Book). The rural vernacular should also be reflected in the design and layout of the development, in particular gardens should be grassed; and instead of urban type high fences there should be hedging. There should be a minimal use of hard impervious materials on driveways and the like, to limit the amount of run-off. Hedging in particular should be considered along the through road leading to the hospital to reduce noise and CO2 emissions from the traffic.

The NP Design Code is in preparation. Priority will be given to completion of the section dealing with SGS6. An early draft will be shared with LWPC to establish if it is also acceptable to them.

Signed: John Blake

Broomfield NP

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Signed:



Little Waltham PC

Date:

23rd October 2019.