



# RIDGE

**EXAMINATION OF THE  
LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL PLAN  
MATTER 2 HEARING STATEMENT  
ON BEHALF OF PARKER  
STRATEGIC LAND**

August 2024

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## Prepared by

Ridge and Partners LLP  
Floor 3, Regent House  
65 Rodney Road  
Cheltenham  
GL50 1HX



## Contact

Guy Wakefield  
Partner



Tara Maizonnier  
Associate



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of Parker Strategic Land (PSL), in response to Matter 2 of the Leicestershire Local Plan (LLP) examination.
- 1.2 It relates specifically to PSL's interests at land north of the A46 bypass, Thurcaston, referred to as 'Strategic Site 3' (SS3), allocated under Policy SL04. We have previously submitted representations in response to the Regulation 19 public consultation stage of the LLP. This Statement responds to the Inspector's specific issues and questions of relevance to our client's land interest.

## 2. RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

### Matter 2 – Vision and Strategy

Issue 2: Is the Plan's overall vision and strategy positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in enabling the delivery of sustainable development?

#### **Strategic Sites (Policies SL02-06)**

##### **General questions about Strategic Site Allocations**

**36. In order to ensure that the plan is positively prepared and effectively achieves sustainable development, are the policies relating to strategic sites sufficiently clear and precise in terms of what is required as part of any development of these allocated sites, including any cross-boundary matters? In this regard, would a northern area wide Masterplan be effective to deliver any infrastructure and policy requirements with an associated delivery and phasing plan?**

- 1.3 Policy SL04 is generally considered positively prepared, sufficiently precise and clear and will effectively achieve sustainable development.
- 1.4 The policy and supporting text outline the requirements for SS3. Paragraph 4.30 also states that SS3 must comply with the rest of the Plan's policies. Further reiteration of other policy requirements is unnecessary in Policy SL04 in accordance with Para 16(f) of the NPPF, which advises against duplicating policies. It is not considered that there are any other specific matters or requirements for the development of SS3 that need to be addressed by Policy SL04.
- 1.5 No cross boundary matters have been raised in respect of SS3. A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has also been agreed between Leicester City Council (LCC), Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) and PSL<sup>1</sup> which does not raise any significant cross-boundary matters.
- 1.6 SS3, a greenfield site, has no significant infrastructure needs beyond those typical for such sites. The Transport Assessment Addendum (TAA)<sup>2</sup> confirms that no strategic interventions are required in respect of SS3 at Table 2 ('Proposed Infrastructure to support growth for delivery 2027 to 2031'). Where highway interventions are needed, to mitigate local issues with capacity and safety, they will be addressed through the planning application process via appropriate conditions and obligations.
- 1.7 SS3 is also not of such a scale that a phasing and delivery plan would be required. It is anticipated that the development would be built out in 1 or 2 phases, dependent on the number of housebuilders on site.
- 1.8 Overall, the proposed development is straightforward and typical of a greenfield site of this nature. Therefore, it is not considered that a northern wide phasing and delivery plan is required. Indeed, such a requirement could unnecessarily slow down the delivery of SS3 for matters that can be established and addressed as part of the planning application process.
- 1.9 However, as explained later in this Statement, SS3 could actually accommodate approximately 525 dwellings. As such, we recommend the policy is revised to allow for the delivery of approximately 525 dwellings, or at least '*a minimum of 420 dwellings*' to ensure the plan is positively prepared.

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<sup>1</sup> SCG/6

<sup>2</sup> EB/TR/2

**37. Are Policies SL02 to SL05 in respect of Strategic Sites 1 to 4 sufficiently clear and precise in terms of what is required as part of any development of these allocated sites? Would these policies be effective in guiding the preparation of a Masterplan for each site along with an associated delivery and phasing plan?**

1.10 Please see our response to Q.36.

**38. What are the timescales for the delivery of Masterplans for these strategic sites and who would be responsible for their preparation and delivery?**

1.11 The Applicant (PSL) will be responsible for preparing and refining the masterplan before submitting a planning application, in consultation with the LPA and other stakeholders.

**39. Are the Strategic Sites policies clear in respect of what is required for each in terms of infrastructure provision and delivery, including services and facilities, public open space, education, transport etc?**

1.12 The below comments relate to Policy SL04.

Services and facilities

1.13 As mentioned in our response to Q.36, SS3 is greenfield with no significant infrastructure needs beyond standard contributions which will be addressed during the planning application process. Policy SL04 doesn't need to specify these requirements, as they are already covered by Policies DI01, T06, and DI02.

Public open space

1.14 Policy SL04 requires open space, along with environmental and biodiversity enhancements, to be defined through the masterplanning process. Paragraph 4.30 reaffirms the requirement. Policy OSSR03 further details the open space requirements for new developments, and the supporting text at paragraph 14.15 provides additional guidance.

Education

1.15 A SoCG between LCC, CBC, and PSL<sup>3</sup> confirms that no new primary or secondary school is required for SS3. Any required education contributions will be addressed during the planning application process.

Summary

1.16 Policy SL04 is deemed sufficient and clear. There are no significant or abnormal infrastructure requirements beyond what is required for a typical greenfield site of this nature, and these are covered by the other policies of the plan.

**40. Are the cumulative and cross-boundary impacts of the strategic sites in the north-western part of the Leicester Urban Area on infrastructure understood and effectively addressed in Policies SL01 to SL06?**

1.17 As per our response to Q.36, there are no cumulative or cross-boundary impacts that need addressing in Policy SL04.

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<sup>3</sup> SCG/6

1.18 SS3's impacts on the local highway network have been fully assessed within LCC's strategic highway model. This model, which is owned and operated by the County Council, includes all committed and planned development within the County and identifies junctions where the traffic associated with the development has an impact of over 5% increase, and 30 vehicles. These junctions are then subject to detailed assessment, and where necessary suitable mitigation is provided.

**41. Are the Strategic Site allocations justified, effective and consistent with national policy in respect of their impact upon the Green Wedge?**

1.19 As discussed in response to Q.56 & 57, balancing the de-designation of some Green Wedge land with the need to provide sufficient deliverable housing and employment sites is necessary, given the limited strategic site opportunities within LCC's boundary. This is also noted at paragraph 3.11 of the Green Wedge Review Addendum Report (2020)<sup>4</sup>.

1.20 The SA tested alternative spatial strategies, including protecting all greenfield land and building only on brownfield sites. It concluded that these alternative strategies could not accommodate the housing and employment needs. Indeed, even with the sites that have been identified as housing allocations in the LLP, the LPA is still reliant on an unmet need of 18,694 dwellings to be accommodated in neighbouring districts.

1.21 Section 6.2 of the SA sets out the balance and trade-offs between types of land use and development including providing more housing, and protection of open/green space versus making land available for development. It concluded that Alternative B (allow redevelopment or reuse of OSSRGW land on only poorest quality land) was the preferred option.

1.22 The Green Wedge Review (2017)<sup>5</sup> studied nine areas of green wedges/strategic gaps around Leicester. An average was calculated for each green wedge sub area. The Castle Hill area, where SS3 is located, is identified as the third weakest scoring of the nine assessed areas.

1.23 5 sub areas were subsequently identified, with SS3 falling within 'Area E'. Area E was considered to perform 'moderately' in all four functions on the green wedge. Areas A, B, C performed more strongly against some of the functions of the green wedge than Area E. The Green Wedge Review Addendum Report February 2020<sup>6</sup> further reviews the sub areas and identifies the average strength of each area, reaffirming that Area E performs the second most poorly out of the 5 sub-areas.

1.24 Therefore, the removal of SS3 from the Green Wedge is justified, effective, and consistent with national policy.

**Policy SL04 – Land north of A46 Bypass**

**57. Is the land north of the A46 at Thurcaston, as identified in Policy SL04, justified as an appropriate location for the development of 420 new homes, given its score in Table 7.2 of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) [SD/4] as one of the least sustainable strategic sites?**

1.25 Firstly, we note that the score for SS3 (ref.261) in Table 7.2 of the SA appears incorrect. SS3 is colour coded as red under the 'Allotments' category, which, according to Table 4.6 of the SA, applies when 'a site is allotments'. However, SS3 does not contain allotments and should not be rated red in this category.

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<sup>4</sup> EB/OS/2a

<sup>5</sup> EB/OS/2

<sup>6</sup> EB/OS/2a



- 1.26 According to the Council's allotment map<sup>7</sup>, the nearest allotments to SS3 are both over 1500m away. Table 4.6 specifies that sites over 1500m from allotments should be colour coded brown. This error contributes to SS3 appearing as one of the least sustainable strategic sites.
- 1.27 Nevertheless, it must also be recognised that the purpose of the SA is to identify the potential significant environmental, social and economic effects of different options to guide the LPA in selecting the best growth strategy. It is not designed to determine the most appropriate strategy, that is a decision for a plan making authority and taking a variety of factors into account.
- 1.28 In this regard, the overall scoring of SS3 should be balanced against the need for the LLP to provide deliverable housing sites within a tight local authority boundary with very few remaining strategic site opportunities. It is evident that the LPA is already struggling to identify enough suitable sites to meet its identified needs.
- 1.29 Alternatives have been considered to the loss of green wedges with the SA including no loss of green wedges, but the alternatives were rightly discounted, as explained in response to Q.41.
- 1.30 Furthermore, it must be recognised that the SA and Viability Assessment Study identifies the difficulties with brownfield sites, and sites in the Central Development area being able to deliver 30% affordable housing. On the other hand, greenfield sites, such as SS3, are able to deliver 30% affordable housing provision.
- 1.31 Overall, when all relevant factors are considered, it is considered that the SA and other evidence base documents demonstrate that SS3 is justified and appropriate. The approach taken aligns with NPPF Para 60 which reaffirms the need to significantly boost the supply of housing and meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible.

**58. Is the housing allocation in Policy SL04 justified, effective and consistent with national policy, with particular regard to:**

***(a). The effect of the development on green infrastructure, including the loss of the Green Wedge; biodiversity; the living conditions of existing local residents; air quality; pollution; flood risk; traffic and highway safety; archaeology; and infrastructure and community facilities?***

The effect of the development on green infrastructure, including the loss of the Green Wedge

- 1.32 We have already outlined our comments regarding the loss of green wedge in response to Q.41 & 57.
- 1.33 A GI Strategy will be prepared and submitted as part of a planning application. The proposals will need to comply with the requirements of Policy SL04 which states that open space is to be defined in combination with environmental and biodiversity enhancements through the masterplanning process. The supporting text states that a masterplan will be required to develop the housing and GI, open spaces and SUDs in keeping with the character of the surrounding of the area, with due regard to the surrounding green wedge and in compliance with the rest of policies of the plan.

The effect of the development on biodiversity

- 1.34 SS3 has been the subject of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a full suite of ecological surveys. These confirm that there are no insurmountable reasons that the development as described by

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<sup>7</sup> <https://data.leicester.gov.uk/explore/dataset/allotments-waiting-list/map/?location=12,52.62556,-1.13417&basemap=b2848c> (accessed 31.05.24)

Policy SL04 would be unachievable or undeliverable. SS3 is therefore considered to be justified, effective and consistent with national policy with regard to the effect of the development on biodiversity.

#### The effect of the development on living conditions of existing local residents

- 1.35 As outlined above, a masterplan is required to be developed in keeping with the character of the surrounding of the area, with due regard to the surrounding green wedge and in compliance with the rest of policies of the plan. Upon submission of a planning application, the application would need to be assessed against Policy DQP06 which outlines the factors concerning the amenity of existing and future residents will be taken into account, both individually and cumulatively with the existing situation.

#### The effect of the development on air quality and pollution

- 1.36 SS3 is not located within the Air Quality Management Area. However, it is acknowledged that additional traffic associated with the development or with construction could contribute to air pollution.
- 1.37 SS3 is greenfield and no issues of land contamination are expected.
- 1.38 Upon submission of a planning application, the application would need to be assessed against the other relevant policies of the LLP, many of which cover matters relating to air quality such as Policy T02.
- 1.39 As such, it is considered that SS3 is justified, effective and consistent with national policy with regard to the effect of the development on air quality and pollution.

#### The effect of the development on flood risk

- 1.40 SS3 is in Flood Zone 1. EA Surface Water mapping shows a low (1 in 1000) to high (1 in 30) risk flow route to bisect the east of SS3.
- 1.41 Sequential arrangement of development and incorporation of existing flooding routes in and around SS3, as well as appropriate management of surface water runoff through a sustainable drainage strategy will ensure that flood risk could be managed in accordance with NPPF requirements. A Hydraulic Modelling report has also been prepared and submitted as part of a pre-application enquiry.

#### The effect of the development on archaeology

- 1.42 An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (2020) has been prepared on behalf of PSL in respect of SS3. The Assessment concludes the area assessed has 'moderate to high' potential for archaeological remains, particularly from the prehistoric and Roman periods. However, it notes that SS3 lies outside the medieval village core of the village and so, despite the presence of the medieval finds on the site, the potential for medieval remains is considered likely to be 'low to moderate'. It also concludes there is likely to be little potential for remains of the post-medieval period.
- 1.43 Overall, it is considered that the housing allocation in Policy SL04 is justified, effective and consistent with national policy with regard to the effect of the development on archaeology.

#### The effect of the development on infrastructure and community facilities



1.44 As per our response to Q.36 and 38, the proposed development of SS3 is not anticipated to result in any significant infrastructure requirements beyond those expected of a typical greenfield site of this nature. As per the SoCG<sup>8</sup>, it has also been outlined that SS3 could accommodate complementary uses, including a care home and convenience retail.

***(b). The relationship of the site to the existing settlements, including Thurcaston, and its accessibility to local services and facilities?***

1.45 The Vision Document, included with our Regulation 19 representations, details the location and proximity of SS3 to nearby services and facilities on pages 14-15. A local convenience store is also proposed as part of the development of SS3 which will also add to the services available in Thurcaston.

1.46 SS3 is within 400m of bus services and easily accessible to local facilities by walking or cycling. Main work destinations—Leicester, Blaby, and Charnwood—are reachable by bus, foot, or bike, offering residents realistic alternatives to car travel.

1.47 SS3 is also located adjacent to Ashton Green, a Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) located on the southern side of the A46 Leicester Western Bypass which will provide new services and facilities. As part of the proposed development of SS3, a pedestrian and cycle connection is proposed via the existing underpass ensuring connectivity to the south.

1.48 SS3's location will provide future residents with a realistic opportunity to travel by modes other than the private car.

***(c). The evidence to support the site's 'deliverability' and 'developability', as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF, and set out in the Housing Allocations and Commitments – Deliverability and Developability 2022/23 [EXAM 9]?***

1.49 SS3 is available for development, owned by Leicester Diocesan Board of Finance and LCC, with PSL as the promoter. There are no legal barriers to bringing SS3 forward in the short term and indeed that would prevent an immediate delivery of new homes.

1.50 SS3 is a greenfield site with typical infrastructure needs, making site preparation and delivery straightforward. No significant issues or abnormal costs are expected to impact viability or deliverability.

1.51 PSL has conducted extensive preliminary technical studies, informing an initial concept masterplan which further demonstrates the deliverability of SS3, as noted in the SoCG<sup>9</sup>. Ongoing pre-application discussions with the LPA are in progress, with an outline planning application expected in Q2 2025.

1.52 The technical studies carried out to date have also demonstrated that SS3 could yield approximately 525 dwellings and that there are no technical constraints which would prohibit the delivery of SS3 as outlined in Policy SL04.

1.53 PSL is confident the development is achievable and deliverable, with housing expected within 5 years as outlined in response to Q.63.

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<sup>8</sup> SCG/6

<sup>9</sup> SCG/6

***(d). Its viability, having regard to the provision of any infrastructure, affordable housing, BNG and other policy requirements?***

1.54 No viability issues are anticipated, as per our responses to earlier questions.

**59. What evidence is there to show that the historic environment has been fully considered in the process which has led to the allocation of this site for the uses proposed, including any effects on the heritage significance and setting of Thurstaston Conservation Area?**

1.55 SS3 is not situated within a conservation area and there are no known designated or non-designated heritage assets within the site boundary. Furthermore, a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared on behalf of PSL. The results of the HIA state that the proposed development will have a neutral impact upon the setting and significance of the Grade II\* listed building of the Church of All Saints, the Grade II listed buildings of Coffin Bridge and Numbers 90 and 92 Rectory Lane, and the Scheduled Monument at Beaumont Leys. It considers the proposed development shown on the initial masterplan would bring about a degree of less than substantial harm, at the lowest end of the scale, to the setting and significance of the Thurstaston Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Thurstaston Grange (94 Rectory Lane). However, it notes in both instances the impact is well mitigated by proposed landscaping within the northern edge of SS3 which integrates well with the established character of the liminal edge of the village. The proposed development will not impact, directly or indirectly on the significance of any other designated or non-designated heritage assets.

1.56 Heritage effects have also been considered by LCC as part of the process which has led to the allocation of SS3, as outlined in the SA methodology. Page 51 of the SA confirms that Historic England and other interested parties were consulted on the content of the Scoping Report. Changes were then made to address its comments on the methodology including reference to 'Heritage assets and settings included in the site assessments'. Table 7.2 of the SA shows that SS3 scored 'Amber' in relation to heritage impacts.

**60. Should the requirements for open space, sustainable transport and the other infrastructure necessary to mitigate the impact of the proposed development be specified in the policy to ensure it is effective and consistent with national policy in paragraph 34 of the NPPF?**

1.57 Other policies in the LLP deal with these requirements already, for example, open space is covered by Policy OSSR02, and its supporting text at Paragraphs 14.12-14.14 and Infrastructure is covered by Policies DL01, DL02, and T06. Additional detail as part of Policy SL04 would result in unnecessary duplication which NPPF Para 16f) seeks to avoid.

**61. Should the number of dwellings for which the site is proposed, be set out as a minimum figure in Policy SL04 (i.e. 'at least 420 homes') to ensure it is effective in meeting the Plan's housing requirement?**

1.58 The number of dwellings for SS3 under Policy SL04 should be identified as a minimum figure. This is consistent with NPPF Paragraph 60 and Paragraph 35. Indeed, the SoCG identifies that the capacity of SS3, when taking into account site constraints, would be "approximately" 420 homes, with the final capacity subject to technical evidence, density and relevant policies. As stated above, following our own technical work, we believe the site's capacity is actually around 525 dwellings.

**62. When would the first planning application be anticipated for this site?**

1.59 See response to Q.63.

**63. Is the anticipated start date and build out rate realistic and justified?**

1.60 We suggest the anticipated start date detailed in EXAM 9 should be updated as follows:

- 2028/2029 - 50 dwellings
- 2029/2030 - 80 dwellings
- 2030/2031 - 80 dwellings
- 2031/2032 - 80 dwellings
- 2032/2033 - 80 dwellings
- 2033/2034 - 50 dwellings

1.61 The above is based upon two housebuilders delivering SS3 as well as the following:

- Outline application to be submitted with all matters reserved other than access – Q2 2025
- Resolution to grant planning permission – Q3 Q1 2026
- Completion of s106 legal agreement and issuing of planning permission – Q2 2026
- Submission of first reserved matters application – Q4 2026
- Submission of details to discharge pre-commencement conditions – Q4 2026
- Determination of reserved matters application and discharge of conditions – Q2 2027
- Commencement of development – Q3 – 2027

1.62 However, as stated earlier, it is considered SS3's capacity is actually around 525 dwellings. If agreed, this would extend delivery accordingly in years 2034-2036.