

Land at Salisbury Hall, London Colney

Submissions on behalf of Tarmac

Hertsmere Borough Council
Draft Local Plan

Employment Land Call for Sites
February 2021

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Client

Tarmac

Our reference

TARC 3000

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These site submissions have been prepared by Turley, on behalf of Tarmac, pursuant to the Draft Hertsmere Local Plan, call for potential employment sites consultation, 2021. Tarmac is an established land promotion and development company with a significant portfolio of freehold and other commercial land interests both within Hertsmere Borough and in the neighbouring St Albans District. Tarmac is also a major national employer with nationwide experience of bringing forward strategic development sites of all scales for new residential, mixed-use, commercial and industrial development.
- 1.2 Tarmac is promoting two of its freehold sites in the north of the Borough within the M25 corridor, east and west of Junction 22, for new employment development. Turley has been instructed to prepare site submissions in relation to each of these two promoted site locations. The following site-specific submissions relate to Tarmac's **Land at Salisbury Hall, London Colney**, which is located south of the M25, as shown on the attached red line plan at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 The Salisbury Hall Site is bounded to the north and east by the B556 which runs parallel to, and south of, the M25. A roundabout junction between the westbound M25 off-slip, the A1081 and the B556 is located on the Site frontage. The Site comprises approximately 14.25 hectares of flat, arable land adjacent to the westbound carriageway of the M25 and can be potentially accessed from either Junction 22 or directly from the B556.
- 1.4 The Site is promoted as a significant new employment opportunity with the potential for early delivery to help stimulate and re-invigorate the local economy. For the purposes of illustration we have included a Framework Plan which illustrates how the site could accommodate **340,000** sqft of new employment floorspace, with an access from the B556. The illustrative Framework Plan is attached at **Appendix 2** for reference.
- 1.5 The remainder of the Site (circa 8.35 ha) is proposed as compensatory Green Belt in the form of a publicly accessible, adjacent parkland, as shown on the illustrative Framework Plan. This new landscaped, parkland area additionally serves to separate the proposed developable areas from an identified off-site heritage constraint to the south.
- 1.6 The following site evaluation describes the illustrative scheme in the Framework Plan and sets out the availability, suitability and deliverability of the proposals by reference to the current and potential use of the Site, the timescales for delivery and relevant constraints.
- 1.7 This evaluation concludes with a summary case as to why exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of **Land at Salisbury Hall, London Colney** by Hertsmere Borough Council for **5.9** hectares of new employment development.
- 1.8 To demonstrate the potential for achievability and early delivery, multiple expressions of commercial interest have also been provided at **Appendix 3**, which are self-explanatory.

2.0 SITE EVALUATION: LAND AT SALISBURY HALL, LONDON COLNEY

Location and Site Characteristics

- 2.1 The promoted Site at Salisbury Hall comprises approximately 14.25 hectares of largely open arable land with peripheral boundary trees and mixed hedgerow, located adjacent to the westbound carriageway of the M25, at Junction 22, as shown on the attached red line plan at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 There are existing farm accesses onto Ridge Hill (B556) to the north and from Salisbury Hall to the south. Ridge Hill separates the site from the motorway and provides vehicular access to J22 of the M25. Ridge Hill broadly runs adjacent to the northern boundaries of the Site and there are nearby bus stops as shown on the Framework Plan (**Appendix 2**).
- 2.3 The Site is also bisected across its length by a Public Footpath, which runs parallel with the south western boundary, as shown on the accompanying Framework Plan.
- 2.4 The south-western boundary generally comprises a linear mix of trees and hedgerows which lies adjacent to other undeveloped open land used for outdoor sports purposes. The nearby, privately owned, De Havilland Aircraft Museum also lies approximately 230 metres due south of the south eastern boundary of the Site.

Accessibility

- 2.5 The Salisbury Hall Site is connected to the existing community at London Colney through a well-developed network of public rights of way. The Watling Chase Timberland Trail runs north-south to the east of the site. This route has a toucan crossing on Bell Lane and a footbridge across the M25 motorway to London Colney.
- 2.6 There are footways along A1081 directly to the north. There is also a north-south bridleway to the east which runs under the motorway through an underpass providing a route to land to the East of London Colney and Tyttenhanger. The pedestrian and cycle links are capable of further improvement to ensure that the new development becomes fully integrated.
- 2.7 In addition to walking and cycling opportunities, there are several existing bus services on the B566 and London Colney to the north which can be accessed from the Site. These bus services provide regular public transport connections to destinations including St Albans and New Barnet (No-84) and Watford and Hatfield (No-602). Employees will therefore have sustainable travel choices and alternatives to the private car.
- 2.8 London Colney has a range of facilities within a convenient walking distance to meet the day-to-day needs employees including the large retail park at Colney Fields with several large food and non-food stores. The site has good road connectivity within its journey to work catchment on the regional road network via the B556, B5378 and A1081 and is well connected to the strategic road network at Junction 22 of the M25.

Site Context and Constraints

- 2.9 Pursuant to these site submissions, Tarmac commissioned Turley to identify the relevant constraints to the proposed development of the Site for employment purposes to inform the submitted illustrative Framework Plan. The Site has some identified constraints and we summarise these below and how the Framework Plan has responded in terms of presenting an achievable and deliverable employment scheme.
- 2.10 The site is largely free of any obvious on-site constraints, being primarily flat and level and save for a small pond area in the centre of the Site, is not subject to any significant constraints which would directly affect the ability to deliver development on the most suitable areas of the Site.
- 2.11 The agricultural land classification is generally Grade 3 and the Site is located in Flood Zone 1. Whilst the Site is set at a lower level than the adjoining Junction 22 of the M25 motorway, the Site can be easily accessed via the B556, as illustrated on the Framework Plan at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.12 The broad context of the Site includes the nearby De Havilland Aircraft Museum, which is a Listed Building, located approximately 230 metres due south of the south eastern boundary. This is the primary identified off-site constraint and the private museum forms part of a small cluster of commercial buildings in this general location which also includes Santen Pharmaceutical.
- 2.13 Other existing features in the general vicinity of the Site include the Watford FC Training Ground, University College London Sports Fields and Arsenal Training Grounds to the south west. To the north of the Site on the northern side of the eastbound carriageway of the M25 is the new settlement proposal (Bowman's Cross) currently promoted by Urban and Civic as a spatial option in the Draft Local Plan.
- 2.14 Further west, on the northern side of the M25 is the Colney Fields Retail Park, which although located within St Albans District, lies only within 600 metres of the main access to the Salisbury Hall site and is easily accessed via the A1081. Other than these identified areas shown there are no other known site constraints.

The Illustrative Framework Plan

- 2.15 The illustrative Framework Plan proposals set out at **Appendix 2** take into account the identified constraints and illustrate a scheme for approximately **5.9** hectares of new net employment land with access from the B556. The development is focused at the northern end of the Site and includes the provision of 8.35 hectares of parkland and new structural landscaping to the south east (14.25 hectares in total).
- 2.16 The illustrated scheme shows a developable net site coverage of approximately **41%** with five illustrative buildings, totalling circa 340,000 sqft of new employment space.

2.17 For the purposes of illustration these have been presented as a single building of 160,000 sqft, closest to the main point of access with the B556, accompanied by three smaller employment buildings, each of around 40,000 sqft and a further building of 60,000 sqft, broadly oriented in parallel.

2.18 The proposed overall land budget for the illustrative scheme at **Appendix 2** is as follows:

| Land at Salisbury Hall: Proposed Land Budget | |
|---|---------------------|
| Red Line Site Area | 14.25 ha |
| New Employment Land (Net Developable Area) | 5.90 ha |
| Open Space associated with New Development | 8.35 ha |
| Potential New Employment Floorspace | 340,000 sqft |

Green Belt Impact of the Proposed Development

2.19 Whilst the proposals contained in Appendix 2 are purely illustrative, in terms of assessing the release of the Site against the five purposes of Green Belt, as set out in Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the evaluation of the promoted Tarmac site at Salisbury Hall can be broadly summarised as follows:

a) To check unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

2.20 The Tarmac proposal is for a high quality, landscape-led, employment development with good standards of design, landscaping and social integration with the existing nearby settlements of London Colney and St Albans, including the provision of new public green infrastructure for the benefit of the wider community. The nearest settlement of London Colney to the north-west does not represent a large built up area and is permanently separated from the Salisbury Hall Site by the M25 corridor.

2.21 The release of the promoted Site for employment use and 8.35 ha of new compensatory parkland, as set out in the attached Framework Plan, would help to maintain the existing settlement identities of London Colney and nearby Shenley, the latter of which, is located approximately 2 kilometres to the south west of the site. The proposals would also be subject to full public consultation and examination and brought forward via the Plan-led system and so would not represent unrestricted sprawl in this area of the Borough.

b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

2.22 The nearest affected settlements are London Colney, St Albans and Shenley which could not be physically coalesced by the partial development of the promoted site, by reason of the permanent severance caused by the M25 and the 2 kilometre distance to Shenley.

2.23 The location within the Site for the new employment use is particularly well contained by the M25 / B556 to the northeast and by the setting aside of approximately 8.35 ha of new parkland as an appropriate landscaped green buffer to the south of the proposed new employment curtilage.

- 2.24 As such, the built element of the proposed hybrid use would be visually well contained within the boundaries shown on the Framework Plan and would not be prejudicial to this primary Green Belt purpose.

c) To safeguard the countryside from encroachment

- 2.25 The Tarmac site is generally flat and open in character, having a pastoral appearance, a good percentage of which (**59%**) will be largely maintained and enhanced as the southern part of the Site will be retained as formal, semi-natural and natural public greenspace. The areas proposed for built development on the Site are strongly contained to the north given the prevalence of major transport infrastructure and are adjacent to established and permanent boundaries.
- 2.26 The site is also set at a significantly lower level than the adjacent Junction 22 and so the partial development of the identified northern sections of this Site, proximate to the M25, in conjunction with the provision of a high percentage of dedicated new landscaped parkland, would not represent any visual encroachment into the open countryside in this particular location.

d) To preserve the setting and character of historic towns

- 2.27 The Salisbury Hall Site is not directly proximate to any historic towns, being located some distance away from the nearest historic town at St Albans. The Site is proximate to the Shenley Conservation Area to the south west although this village is also approximately 2 kilometres distant. Accordingly any residual impacts can be suitably managed through the detailed design process, as set out in principle by the illustrative Framework Plan.

e) To assist in urban regeneration

- 2.28 The planned release of part of this site for the sustainable new employment development proposed would not be prejudicial to the delivery of urban regeneration elsewhere in the Borough. The combination of the scale of the employment requirement in Hertsmere, the limited urban capacity for brownfield redevelopment and the predominance of Green Belt throughout the Borough, means that the planned release of Green Belt will be a key and necessary element of the spatial strategy of the new Hertsmere Local Plan.

Availability, Suitability and Deliverability

- 2.29 The promoted Site comprises 14.25 hectares and is within the sole freehold ownership of Tarmac. The Site is available now for the proposed employment uses, as illustrated in the Framework Plan and the Site requires no advance remediation.
- 2.30 The Site can be brought forward soon after the adoption of the Local Plan and can be allocated for development at an early stage with confidence. Essentially the Site is viable, particularly well located and easily connected so is suitable for a wide range of general employment uses and also accessible to other major infrastructure in the M25 corridor.

- 2.31 There are no known significant constraints to the immediate development of this site for the proposed employment use as shown. Where off-site constraints exist, such as the identified Listed Building to the south, these are capable of mitigation through the design process, via the use of appropriate building heights and orientation. In addition, by also creating the landscaped, recreational, parkland use between the identified locations and the developable areas of the site, as illustrated in the Framework Plan.
- 2.32 The development of the Site for the employment use proposed will therefore provide the opportunity to deliver a significant scale of new employment floorspace for the Borough in a strategically well suited location. The development of this Site will also improve the sustainability of the wider area, helping to re-invigorate the local economy, by providing high quality, local employment facilities, accessible by public transport.
- 2.33 This is suitably demonstrated by the numerous expressions of interest and commercial validations for this Site, as set out in **Appendix 3**, which strongly suggest that this Site is of a scale and location which is particularly attractive to the market.

National Policy on New Employment Development

- 2.34 The NPPF states at **Paragraph 80** that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.
- 2.35 **Paragraph 81** of the NPPF states that planning policies should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth and also set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period. Paragraph 81 also advises LPA's to help address barriers to investment and be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.
- 2.36 **Paragraph 82** states that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.

Conclusions and the Exceptional Circumstances Case

- 2.37 The NPPF does not provide decision makers with a strict definition with regards to what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances'. However Paragraph 137 of the NPPF sets out a number of matters that should be identified and dealt with in order to ascertain whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify releasing land from the Green Belt.

- 2.38 The approach taken in the ‘Calverton’ judgement (*Calverton Parish Council v Greater Nottingham Councils - 2015*) also provides useful guidance when considering whether exceptional circumstances exist. These include; the intensity of the assessed need, inherent constraints on the supply of land suitable for sustainable development and difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the Green Belt.
- 2.39 The intensity of the assessed employment need in Hertsmere Borough is self-evident in that a call for sites exercise has been initiated at a very late stage in the Draft Local Plan making process. Accordingly the question of whether development should take place in the Green Belt has moved from a question of principle to the practical application of the advice in Paragraphs 80 – 82 of the NPPF and the application of sustainability criteria for newly promoted employment sites.
- 2.40 In conclusion, the promoted site on Land at Salisbury Hall, London Colney, will support economic growth and productivity in the local area, taking into account local business needs and also wider opportunities for development. The Site can assist in the long term sustainable economic growth of this part of the Borough by attracting inward investment to support the wider economic strategy and meet anticipated needs over the plan period, thereby helping to stimulate and re-invigorate the local economy.
- 2.41 Reference to **Appendix 3** demonstrates that the Site is suitable for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales as this is a highly suitable, accessible and viable Site location, adjacent to national highways infrastructure.
- 2.42 These Site submissions have identified a suitable site for sustainable new employment development on Land at Salisbury Hall, London Colney and have set out a summary case for the allocation of the Site in the emerging Hertsmere Plan. Where the Council requires additional information, Tarmac and its consultant team are able to address any technical queries on request and welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Council.

Appendix 1

Land at Salisbury Hall

Site Location / Ownership Plan

Appendix 2

Land at Salisbury Hall

Illustrative Framework Plan

Appendix 3

Land at Salisbury Hall

Expressions of Interest and Local Market Appraisal

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