

PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF 34 RESIDENTIAL UNITS AT ATTWOOD LANE, HEREFORD

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1.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of Lioncourt Homes to support a full planning application for the residential redevelopment of land at Attwood Lane, Holmer, Hereford. The description of development is as follows: -

> "Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 34 no houses and garages together with roads, sewers and associated external works."

- 1.2 The statement analyses Hereford's current employment land situation, future employment land supply and demand and the circumstances where the re-use of such land is acceptable. In conjunction with this analysis, this statement also examines the attractiveness of this site for employment purposes and the marketing of the site.
- 1.3 This site comprises 0.98 hectares, half of which is allocation for residential and the remainder protected for employment purposes in the adopted Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This report demonstrates that the loss of the allocated employment part of this site (0.49ha) will not have a detrimental effect on employment land supply within the city. Furthermore, it will also show that there is an oversupply of employment land within the District for the current plan period. Consequently, retention of the land at Attwood Lane for employment purposes is unnecessary.
- 1.4 An assessment of the proposal against relevant planning policy is then undertaken to demonstrate the proposal's consistency with the forward planning strategy for the area. An examination of the adopted development plan is undertaken as well as of the emerging Local Development Framework. Consideration is also given to relevant other material considerations, specifically the requirements National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with regard the reuse of employment land and to housing need and housing land supply.

1.5 This planning statement concludes that there is clear planning policy justification for the redevelopment of this site for residential purposes. Furthermore, due to the minimal loss of employment land within Hereford, the proposed residential re-utilisation of the land in question will not be detrimental to employment land provision within Hereford.



Site Location and Context

- 2.1 The application site is located at Attwood Lane to the north of Roman Road, Holmer, Hereford.
- 2.2 The character of Attwood Lane is predominantly residential with a small pocket of employment land, which is the application site at its northern end. The residential nature of the area has been reinforced further following the grant of planning permission for over 300 dwellings on land to the east of Attwood lane which Crest Nicholson are in the process of building out. The lane itself is a narrow road which links Roman Road with Church Way, the A49 and Coldwells Road. The width of the lane and its pronounced bend makes the road unsuitable for long term intense traffic of heavy vehicles and machinery that are likely to be associated if the application site remain in employment use.
- 2.3 The site comprises 0.98 hectares of previously developed land to the north of Hereford. It consists of a rectangular parcel of land surrounded by residential development to the west and south. Open countryside abuts the site's northern and eastern boundaries.
- 2.4 The site falls within Hereford's development boundary as drawn within the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Adopted, March 2007. Part of the site is allocated for employment purposes and part for residential.
- 2.5 The application site is now vacant and has been since March 2008 having been previously occupied by a gravel distribution company (TW Jones) and a scaffolding firm W & J Scaffolding Limited).
- 2.6 Within the site the former buildings associated with the previous businesses remain and are very utilitarian in appearance adding little to the predominantly residential character of the area. There are a number of mature and semimature trees that lie along the north and eastern boundaries of the site, which vary in quality, although they do provide a reasonably well established boundary treatment to the site at present. The existing vegetation and how this will be treated as part of the proposed development

is looked at in detail as part of the landscape appraisal that accompanies this application.

2.7 The site is comparatively flat but does slope downwards in a southerly direction. There are no environmental constraints, which could preclude the development of the site for residential development.

Planning Background

- 2.8 The planning history associated with this site has been the subject of three planning applications in the last ten years that are of relevance.
- 2.9 In 2002 a full application was submitted for the change of use of the storage yard to a retail use. This application was subsequently withdrawn.
- 2.10 2004 an application under reference In DCC/2004/3085/F for the construction of 32 dwellings was submitted by Persimmon Homes. This application was reported to planning committee with a positive recommendation but subsequently refused by Members. At the time, the planning officer in his committee report considered the loss of employment land to be minimal in relation to existing employment provision in the surrounding area and that the residential redevelopment of the site as a whole offered tangible benefits to the surrounding area removing a non-conforming use.
- 2.11 The 2004 application was taken to appeal but subsequently withdrawn as the then tenants of the site had not found suitable premises to relocate too.
- 2.12 Further to the above, an additional application for residential redevelopment of the site was submitted by Taylor Wimpey in January 2008 for 32 dwellings, with car parking and associated works. This planning application was again withdrawn and was not progressed far enough to receive an officer recommendation.
- 2.13 Most recently, Lioncourt Homes submitted a planning application last year that sought to develop 34 houses on the site in question. This application was refused on 19th December 2012 for loss of employment land, landscape impact and contamination issues.



3.0 Development Proposal

3.1 The application scheme proposes the erection of 34 new dwellings and comprises the following mix: -

Privately Owned Houses 22 Private dwellings.

Affordable Houses

12 affordable units.

Access Arrangements

3.2 The housing development will be accessed off Attwood Lane through a new junction arrangement comprising a simple priority tee-junction with Attwood Lane. The access will alter the priority along Attwood Lane in order to assist in lowering vehicle speeds. This arrangement was previously agreed to be acceptable by highway officers as part of the 2004 and 2007 planning applications.

Parking Provision

- 3.3 A total of 69 car parking spaces are proposed, including 25 garages. The parking provision is in accordance with guidance set out in Herefordshire Council Environment Directorate: Highways Design Guide to New Development document 2006, which suggests the following provision:
 - i) 1 bed 1 parking space;
 - ii) 2 beds 1 parking space;
 - iii) 2/3 beds 2 spaces; and
 - iv) More than 3 beds 3 spaces
- 3.4 The number of spaces proposed (69 parking spaces and 25 garages) is considered appropriate based on the sustainable location of the site.

Local Highway Improvements

- 3.5 The applicant is also prepared to provide a reasonable contribution for the highway authority to provide a local traffic calming scheme, further to pre-application discussions with highway officers.
 - i) the previously junction arrangement, which changes the priority of Attwood Lane within

the vicinity of the junction;

- ii) the provision of a new footway from the site to the existing footway; and
- iii) a contribution to a traffic calming scheme which is detailed in the draft Heads of Terms included with the application.
- 3.6 Full details of the highway implications associated with the proposed development are set out within the transport statement that accompanies this application.

Drainage

- 3.7 The existing drainage system on site consists of a foul drain that is connected to a septic tank, which is emptied periodically. The surface water drains from the large area of hardstanding across the site into the surrounding fields and onto Attwood Lane but not at a controlled rate and is significantly determined by the level of concrete surface across the site at present.
- 3.8 As part of the proposed redevelopment of the site, it is proposed to install a new mains drainage system. This will be connected directly to the new mains drain that Crest Nicholson are installing on the adjacent housing site to the east. This is necessary as there is very little capacity on site at present within the existing septic tank. Furthermore, the current unadopted system that serves the existing housing to the south is at capacity and not capable of accommodating any further houses. Consequently, connecting to the new mains drain that will be installed by Crest is the most appropriate solution in this case as this will be built to an agreed specification that is separate from the existing unadopted system and will, once completed, be adopted by Welsh Water. In turn, the foul drainage from this site and Crest will be stored in a sink hole on the Crest site and released into the mains drain on Holmer Road at a controlled rate. This will ensure that there is no back up of effluent in the existing system.



- 3.9 Similarly, a new connection for the surface water flows has been negotiated with Crest Nicholson to discharge into the adjacent development infrastructure. This infrastructure ultimately outfalls to a local watercourse and has been designed to current EA and Welsh Water standards to ensure that flood risk is not exacerbated and development flows are appropriately catered for. It is intended that all of the new drainage infrastructure will be offered for adoption by Welsh Water.
- 3.10 In essence, the surface water and foul drainage will be comprehensively dealt with as part of the application proposal and, most importantly, the foul drainage will be discharged into a new mains drainage that will be built to an adoptable standard and the flow controlled appropriately.



Context of Analysis

- 4.1 This section provides an overview of the employment land situation in Hereford. determining whether there is a need to retain this site for employment purposes, or whether it can be considered as a whole for residential redevelopment. This section of the report provides an overview of the planning policy context governing employment land within Herefordshire before examining the current and future employment land situation, how employment land has been analysed to determine its suitability for such purposes and the role that the application site plays, if any, in providing a suitable level of employment provision within Hereford City. When looking at the suitability of the application site for employment purposes, we shall also look at its current status and the marketing of the site to establish if it is an attractive site for on-going employment uses.
- 4.2 To provide some context to the employment land situation within Hereford, we have, as highlighted above, reviewed the most up-to-date planning policy, the employment land analysis produced by the Council in their 2010-2011 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and the emerging evidence base that the Council are collating as part of their local development framework. This includes an employment land study produced by Drives Jonas Deloitte for the Council dated December 2012. These studies look at the employment land requirement within Herefordshire and Hereford in particular, to see if the County has sufficient employment land to meet current and future Furthermore, the employment land demand. studies also review existing individual sites within and around Hereford to determine their suitability for continued and future employment purposes and to determine whether they are worthy of protection now, and through to 2031.

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Planning Policy Background

HerefordshireUnitary Development Plan (2007)

- 4.3 The Herefordshire UDP was adopted in March2007. The Vision for the UDP comprises the following:
 - "create fair and thriving communities, which will be inclusive for all, allowing equal and full access to opportunities and services;
 - properly protect and enhance the environment through sustainable development;
 - build a strong, competitive and innovative economy with a balanced mix of business, jobs and homes."
- 4.4 Within the employment chapter of the plan the aim is to:
 - "ensure a better balance of employment opportunities in communities throughout the County;
 - enable the provision of suitable land and premises to meet the identified and anticipated needs of both indigenous growth, including the expansion

of

- existing business and start ups and inward investment; and
- positively support the diversification of employment opportunities within therural areas."
- 4.5 Policy S4 of the UDP looks at the diversification and regeneration of the economy of Herefordshire and sets out the following objectives: -
 - "Making provision for 100 hectares of land for Class B employment development in the County. This provision includes land allocation in a range of locations throughout the County and existing planning permissions. In addition to the larger scale allocations, policies will permit suitable employment development in the rural areas which are consistent in scale

with their location, in order to help ensure balanced communities and to secure rural regeneration;

- Ensuring a suitable portfolio of land is identified in terms of choice of sites, size, quality, location and Use Class to meet differing needs, and that sufficient land is available which is readily capable of development and well served by existing infrastructure or capable of being served; and
- Building strong, competitive and innovative economy with a balanced mix of businesses, jobs and homes through which the local economy can flourish."
- 4.6 Policy E5 of the Local Plan, entitled 'Safeguarding employment land and buildings' seeks to safeguard the site in question against nonemployment uses, and states: -

"Proposals which would result in the loss of existing, permitted or proposed employment land and buildings to non-employment uses will only be permitted where:

- there would be substantial benefits to residential or other amenity in allowing alternative forms of development, and the site or premises concerned can be shown to be unsuitable for other employment uses, including consideration of mitigation measures. Where such proposals are permitted, an alternative site should be found for the relocation of any existing businesses; or
- 2) in the case of proposals incorporating elements of retail use, this is restricted to a minor or incidental activity associated with an otherwise acceptable Part B or other employment generating use."
- 4.7 The guidance notes to this policy suggest that it is important to retain the existing and proposed supply of employment land for such purposes, to maintain and enhance employment opportunities across the District.

Herefordshire Local Development Framework and Revised Preferred Options Consultation on the Core Strategy October – November 2011

- 4.8 Policies in the adopted UDP will be saved for a period of 3 years and gradually replaced by the Local Development Framework as relevant documents are prepared. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out a timetable of Local Development Documents (LDDs) to be produced over the next three years of the Local Development Framework programme.
- 4.9 Work is progressing on both the Core Strategy and the Development Control Policies DPD with adoption expected in 2013. The Statement of Community Involvement and a number of Supplementary Planning Documents have already been adopted. The AMR and employment land study produced by Drivers Jonas Deloitte are informing this process and provide the most up-to-date information on the employment land situation within Hereford.

Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands

4.10 While the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) will be removed from consideration, these have informed the work local authorities are undertaking as part of their LDF process. The RSS has sought to ensure that Council maintains a supply and range of available employment sites through to 2026 that respond to and cater for the needs of the market. No overall employment land target has been set but the RSS specifies that there should be a five year rolling reserve of sites.

National Planning Policy

4.11 In terms of national planning guidance, NPPF seeks to ensure that employment related development helps to foster a strong and stable and sustainable economy. Furthermore, it states that local authorities should provide a regular economic assessment to provide a robust evidence base to help understand existing employment needs and those of the market. Most importantly states that local planning authorities

should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose.

Summary

- 4.12 Currently, there is a need to provide 100 hectares of employment land within the exiting plan period and that there should be a range of sites available for employment purposes within Hereford. There is the opportunity to redevelop this employment site but only where benefits can be derived from an alternative use.
- 4.13 As part of the evidence base for the LDF, NPPF states that regular assessments of employment land should be undertaken and that all existing employment sites should be assessed to understand their continued suitability for employment purposes and whether they are suitable to meet the needs of the market. This will help to identify deficiencies in the market and plan for future economic growth.
- 4.14 At this stage, Herefordshire Council are already undertaking an annual review of the employment land supply in their area through their AMR. Furthermore, the Herefordshire Economic Development Assessment reviews all of the existing employment sites within the City to understand their suitability for on-going employment needs. The following section of the report is based on the review of these documents and examines existing employment land supply. The employment land analysis is undertaken to understand if there is merit in retaining the application site for employment purposes.

Current Employment Land Supply

4.15 From 2005 there has been a requirement for local authorities to produce an AMR each year, based on a period running from 1st April to 31st March. Each AMR must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than the following 31st December each year. The latest AMR available is 1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011, which has been scrutinised as part of this application. The AMRs are a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of policy and to understand the extent to which policies are being achieved.

- 4.16 The most up-to-date AMRs stating point for assessing the existing employment land supply is the need to provide up to 100 hectares of employment land across the county. This is employment land within the 'B' classes as defined within the Use Class Order 2005. The core indicators for assessing employment land within the AMR are as follows:
 - the amount of land developed for employment by type;
 - ii) the amount of land developed for employment, by type, which is in development and/or regeneration areas defined in the development plan; and
 - iii) employment land supply by type."
- 4.17 As part of this review, the current employment land supply across the county is 150.21ha. This comprises 110ha of allocated land and 40.21ha of employment land was either under construction or benefited from unimplemented planning permission, either full or outline. The Employment Land Review, which is examined in due course, was commissioned to inform part of the LDF evidence base, has also looked in more detail at the employment land proposals which may result in a reduced supply figure in the 2010 AMR. However, as things stand, the employment land requirement of 100ha during the current plan period has been exceeded resulting in a considerable over supply of 50.21ha. Given this, the loss of part of the application site, which comprises only 0.49ha of employment land, will not be detrimental to the overall employment land supply in Herefordshire.
- 4.18 The AMR also sets out a section which deals with the loss of employment land to other uses during the monitoring period, seeking to ensure that this does not occur. It states: -

"No specific targets were adopted in the UDP for acceptable amounts of employment land that may be developed for alternative uses. However, Herefordshire Council recognise the importance of protecting both existing and proposed employment sites in order that the UDP may successfully deliver the economic objectives."



4.19 While the loss of employment land to other uses is sought to be avoided. The AMR does accept that some losses will occur and states:

> "During the monitoring period 0.18ha of employment land was granted planning permission for alternative uses during the monitoring period. Approximately 0.15ha of employment land was lost to residential uses over 6 sites."

4.20 The overall employment land supply are set out in the conclusion of the AMR, which stipulates:

"During the monitoring period Herefordshire Council has ensured that there is sufficient employment land in sustainable locations to meet the economic objectives of the UDP. The decrease in employment land completions is of concern but reflects the economic difficulties experienced across a wider spectrum during the monitoring period."

- 4.21 Given the above, it appears that the employment land aspirations of the Council are currently being met. Furthermore, given the current oversupply of employment land and the fact that the employment land target has been achieved, there is compelling evidence to suggest that the loss of the employment allocation (0.49ha) that forms part of this application site will not be detrimental to the employment land supply and is insignificant in the context of the AMR analysis.
- 4.22 As discussed, there is a more detailed employment land review that the Council commissioned in 2009 that was further updated in 2010 and 2012 to inform the LDF process. This looks in detail at the current employment land supply and also examines the suitability of individual sites for future employment purposes.
- 4.23 The report states that there is currently 112ha of employment land in Herefordshire that is allocated or committed. In this respect, there is still an oversupply of employment land when measured against the existing UDP requirement of 100ha. In Hereford, the report states that there is a good supply of employment land on the whole, although this is weighted in favour of manufacturing. In essence, it would seem, given the oversupply of employment land, that the loss

of 0.49ha in this case will not have a detrimental effect on the overall supply of employment land within Herefordshire, or more specifically Hereford.

- 4.24 Further to the above, the Drives Jonas Deloitte report also looks at the future employment requirements of the county and Hereford to understand what the future need is for employment land. In doing this, it has reviewed all Unitary Development Plan allocations and commitments and other sites identified by the Council in terms of market attractiveness, environmental sustainability and strategic planning/economic considerations. All the sites examined have been ranked using the following criteria:
 - a) 'Best': Very good quality relatively unconstrained sites suitable for local or incoming clients with a national / regional choice of locations.
 - b) 'Good': Sites which may be subject to some constraints but with potential to be suitable for inward investors and / or locally-based businesses.
 - c) 'Moderate': Sites which score poorly against one or more qualitative factors but which (could) perform a role in the employment hierarchy, including for local businesses.
 - d) 'Poor': Generally poor quality sites with significant constraints and often in inappropriate locations. These could have potential for (partial) de-allocation or release to other forms of development.
 - e) 'Owner-Specific': Allocations which are not likely to be available on the open market. In accordance with good practice, allocations which are only available for a specific occupier are excluded from available employment land totals until sites gain planning permission."
- 4.25 The surveyed sites as part of the analysis have been given a ranking in accordance with the above established criteria. This has resulted in the following recommendations: -
 - "Retaining existing Local Plan employment allocations sites (and main commitments) ranked as Best or Good through the Development Plan process. There is likely



justification however to release the poorest performing sites from the employment portfolio (i.e. those ranked as 'Poor');"

- 4.26 From the rankings and recommendation, it is very clear from the analysis carried out by Drives Jonas Deloitte the best, good and moderate sites that should be retained in employment use and protected in perpetuity. All the employment sites surveyed are clearly listed in their report. However, there is no reference to the land at Attwood Lane in any capacity. In this respect, it is assumed that this site was not even considered worthy of analysis in this instance. While this maybe the case, it is probably prudent to rank this site against the criteria derived by Drives Jonas Deloitte and agreed with the Council. In doing this, it can be concluded that the site is highly likely to considered as poor. This is the case, as the site is badly located in relation to other land uses and is of a general poor quality. In this respect, it can be concluded that this site should be considered for other forms of development, which, in this case, would be for a residential redevelopment. These issues are examined in further detail as part of the planning policy analysis.
- 4.27 In addition to the above, this site has been marketed for let unsuccessfully since approx mid 2008 for a period of two years without interest, providing further evidence as too the sites unsuitability for further employment purposes. Furthermore, the previous employment companies occupying the site have long since relocated.
- 4.28 The employment land analysis carried out also deals with the marketing of sites and stipulates in paragraph 9.69 that the following criteria should be applied when looking at alternative uses for a site:

"For other uses such as housing, we would recommend that the following additional criteria are also applied:

Details of active marketing - to allow the full consideration of specific demand, details should be sought on marketing including duration, method and price, particularly in relation to premises. As part of this assessment, consideration should be given to the appropriateness for subdivision of premises." 4.29 In terms of time, a minimum period of 12 months marketing is recommended before considering alternative uses, as set out in paragraph 9.71 of the employment land study. This says:

> "The precise period of marketing will be influenced by prevailing market conditions at the time but a minimum period of 12 months would normally be appropriate. Marketing should be carried out by an established commercial property agent and should include on-site boards, adverts in the relevant publications (national property publications and / or local press) and inclusion on the vacant property register. The extent of marketing required will vary from site to site depending on its size and type."

- 4.30 In this case, the site has been marketed for over three years without success by Turner and Company based in Hereford. However, the marketing over recent years has been sporadic. Tthe site has been marketed through displaying on site boards, advertising in the property press and local paper, and inclusion on the Council's vacant property register. In this respect, it can be concluded that the property has been marketed extensively and in excess of the minimum period recommended. Moreover, it should be noted that the marketing has taken place while market conditions have been more favourable and through the recession but without success. Given the above, it can be appropriately concluded that the site in question is no longer an attractive location for employment and should be considered for an alternative use, which, in this case, is residential.
- 4.31 Through the examination of the employment land situation within Hereford, we are also aware of a recent appeal decision that has resulted in the loss of employment land at Holmer Trading Estate. The proposal that was the subject of the appeal resulted in the loss of 1.65ha of employment The Inspector, although allowing the land. appeal, did have reservations about the loss of employment land, particularly when measured against local plan policy E5. He concluded that substantial benefits to residential or other amenity would need to be demonstrated and that the site would need to be shown as unsuitable for other employment uses. He concluded that



was not the case. However, in this instance, the benefits to the amenity of the surrounding residential environment are self-evident and will be discussed in further detail within the policy section of this report. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated through the marketing of the site that it is no longer suitable for employment purposes.

- 4.32 In his deliberations over the appeal at Holmer Trading Estate, the Inspector also had concerns regarding the loss of 1.65ha of employment land given the constraints of the city in general and the fact that the river crossing affects accessibility and the marketing of some of the sites. For these reasons he felt that the loss of land weighed against permitting the scheme, it was just the fact that a greater number of jobs that would be created that tipped the balance in favour of the then appeal proposal. In this case, it is appreciated that some employment land will be lost. However, this will only be 0.49ha, which, as demonstrated above, will not have a marked effect on employment land supply in the area. Furthermore, the extensive marketing of the site illustrates the on-going unattractiveness of the application site as a location for employment generating businesses.
- 4.33 From the submission of the recent planning application in respect of the above, the Council, through the consultation response of their Senior Planning Policy Officer, consider this site to be sui generis. Furthermore, they also consider that if the site were to come forward for employment use it would need to be redeveloped and would require substantial investment. The Council have concluded that this is unlikely to take place particularly when there are employment sites nearby within Hereford's Business Parks with vacant units which are more suited to the mainstream employment uses and are available and ready to move into.
- 4.34 Paragraph 22 of the NPPF is clear that local planning authorities should avoid the long-term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. The site is not a viable employment site, as the Council have acknowledged and would not have a realistic chance of being used for employment purposes.

- 4.35 Given that the site is a brownfield site, the redevelopment of this land would be in compliance with paragraph 111 of the NPPF which promotes the effective re-use of brownfield land. Given that the has been vacant for a number of years, there is not the requirement in Policy E5 of the UDP to relocate the sui-generis employment site.
- 4.36 The Council consider that the loss of this sui-generis employment site is not considered to significantly impact upon the supply of employment land in Hereford. The site, if developed for housing, would enable the use of the site to be conducive to the surrounding residential area protecting the amenity of surrounding properties which would be compromised if a further employment use were accommodated on site.

Summary

- 4.37 From the analysis undertaken, it is clear that there is justification to consider the redevelopment of the entire application site for residential purposes for the following reasons:
 - Currently an over supply of employment land within Herefordshire. Therefore, the loss of part of this application site (0.49ha) will not have a detrimental effect on the overall employment land supply.
 - The Council's most recent AMR states that 0.86ha of employment land has been lost in the last year to other uses and this is not considered to be unacceptable. In this case, the loss of employment land will total 0.49ha. In the context AMR, the general trend is that the loss of employment land has been decreasing over the last 7 years or so.
 - From the Council's employment land study undertaken by Drives Jonas Deloitte, the application site has not even been considered as one of the existing employment sites in the city worthy of analysis. However, if it had been examined as part of the analysis undertaken, it is considered that the site would perform very poorly due its locality and surrounding uses, which are residential. Consequently, it should be considered for redevelopment to residential purposes.
 - The unsuitability of this site for employment purposes is further supplemented by the fact that the site has been marketed for





employment uses without interest. This again highlights the fact that this site should be appropriately considered for residential redevelopment.

- It is appreciated that a recent appeal decision at Holmer Park raised concerns about the loss of employment land, this case is substantially different in that the loss of employment land is minimal and alternative uses should be considered given the extensive marketing of the site and the fact that it is an unattractive location for employment generating uses.
- Taking the above into account, the proposal for residential development would be appropriate given that the site is brownfield, within the confines of Hereford City as well as complimenting surrounding residential uses. The current sui-generis use of the site is an isolated employment site which has derelict buildings and would require considerable investment in order to make the site attractive to the market. The redevelopment of the site for residential use has the general support of the community support and would significantly reduce the amenity impacts which would be significant if the site were reused for employment purposes.

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5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 In order to demonstrate the acceptability of the application proposal, this section of the report conducts an assessment of the redevelopment against the key planning objectives of relevant planning policy. It is demonstrated below that the proposal is consistent with all tiers of relevant planning policy. These are examined in relation to the key planning objectives, in detail below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012

- 5.2 This places strong emphasis on the development plans guiding future growth and sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In this respect, paragraph 14 of NPPF states that where proposals accord with the development plan these should be approved without delay. Where development plans are out of date and proposals are sustainable planning permission should be granted without delay.
- 5.3 In terms of employment related development and the protection of existing employment sites paragraph 22 states:

"Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Land allocations should be regularly reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities."

5.4 In this case, the site is not allocated but protected for employment uses. The marketing of the site for around 3 years has demonstrated that consistent and on-going advertising of the sites availability has failed to secure a further exclusive employment use for this site. Furthermore, the employment land within Herefordshire has been regularly reviewed as part of the AMRs which reveal that there is a sufficient supply of employment land without the retention of the site in question. Moreover, the employemnt land review undertaken by Drives Jonas Deloitte does not even recognise the site in question as a employment site of any merit. Given this and the marketing of the site, it can be concluded that there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for further employment purposes.

5.5 In line with the guidance in NPPF, the alternative uses proposed should be treated on their merits. Given the feedback received to date and the planning history associated with the site, we know the Council are agreeable to the principle of the development proposed and that it will result in a sustainable form of development. Further to this, NPPF at paragraph 51 also states that changes of use of sites currently in 'B' use classes should be considered where there is an identified housing need. In this case, Herefordshire has a shortage of housing land supply. Given these implications and the strong presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF, the principle of the development proposed is acceptable in this case.

Housing

With regard to housing development, NPPF 5.6 states that local planning authorities should offer a wide choice of high quality homes and provide a supply of deliverable housing sites sufficient to provide 5 years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Currently, according to the Council's latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the Council can show 4.6 years of their 5 year requirement. In this respect, the proposed development will help make up some of the shortfall currently being experienced. Where the Council can not provide a five year supply of sites, NPPF states: -

> "Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites."



- 5.7 In the context of the above, the proposed redevelopment proposals will result in a sustainable development and should therefore be supported.
- 5.8 Further to the above, NPPF also stipulates that planning application should be approved for changes of use to residential from 'B' use clases where there is an identified need for additional housing in the area and there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate. In this case there is a need for additional housing and there is a sufficient supply of employment land without the site in question. Furthermore, following the employment land analysis undertaken for the Council by Drives Jonas Deloitte, the site is question is not identified as an employment site of any note. Given these implications, it is considered that are compelling reasons why a residential redevelopment of this site should be allowed.
- 5.9 NPPF sets out Government's policy with regard to biodiversity. It seeks to achieve sustainable development by ensuring biodiversity is conserved and enhanced. With regard to protected species, it requires planning authorities to ensure that protected species are suitably guarded from the adverse effects of development.
- 5.10 With regard to the application proposal, the submitted ecology report prepared by Ecology Solutions, confirms that are no protected species present on site. While bats have used the site for foraging, they are not utilising any of the existing buildings. In this respect, there are no roosts that require protection. Badgers have also been noted as foraging close to the site but will not be compromised by the proposed redevelopment scheme.
- 5.11 In summary, the ecological assessments of the application site have concluded that the application proposal will provide for an overall enhancement in biodiversity on the site and suitable protection of species. As such, the proposed development is wholly compliant with the requirements of the NPPF.
- 5.12 NPPF sets out Government guidance on transportation issues and how they relate to different forms of development. In relation to housing, the guidance note seeks to promote

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sustainable patterns of development focusing additional housing close to existing facilities so people are able to walk to these from the development.

- 5.13 This site is ideally placed to take advantage of the existing infrastructure that exists adjacent to the site and within the urban fabric of Hereford. Opportunities exist for people to walk and cycle from the proposed development site to nearby shops and services and bus stops that link the site to the city centre. Therefore important links already exist to facilitate connections between the development and centres of employment, services and amenities. Consequently, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the objectives set out in NPPF.
- 5.14 With regard to development and flood risk. The application proposal has been designed with careful consideration of the flooding and drainage issues, in accordance with NPPF requirements.
- 5.15 At present, the site does not benefit from either mains or suitable surface water drainage. The application submission includes the means to connect the site to the mains drainage in the area through the adjoining Crest Nicholson residential scheme.

Development Plan Policies

Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

- 5.16 The Unitary Development Plan was adopted in March 2007 and is the current development plan for the area that is used for development control purposes.
- 5.17 In terms of employment development, Policy E5 of the Local Plan entitled 'Safeguarding employment land and buildings', has already been touched upon within the employment land analysis earlier in this report setting out its objectives. These seek to safeguard the site in question against non-employment uses, and states:

"Proposals which would result in the loss of existing, permitted or proposed employment land and buildings to non-employment uses will only be permitted where:

 there would be substantial benefits to residential or other amenity in allowing alternative forms of development, and the site or premises concerned can be shown to be unsuitable for other employment uses, including consideration of mitigation measures. Where such proposals are permitted, an alternative site should be found for the relocation of any existing businesses; or

- 2) in the case of proposals incorporating elements of retail use, this is restricted to a minor or incidental activity associated with an otherwise acceptable Part B or other employment generating use."
- 5.18 The guidance notes to this policy suggest that it is important to retain the existing and proposed supply of employment land for such purposes, to maintain and enhance employment opportunities across the District. In this case, it has been demonstrated above, that the redevelopment of the entire site for residential purposes will generate no less employment opportunities due to the surplus of employment land within Hereford.
- 5.19 Whilst it is acknowledged that the plan makes provision for other uses, such as residential elsewhere in the city, it is evident that this site is surplus to requirements and not needed for the purposes it was partly allocated for.
- 5.20 Further to the above, the removal of an employment use from the site will improve the environment locally by removing a use which is not suited to the surrounding residential environment. The open employment use of the site has the propensity to generate both noise and heavy traffic that are not conducive to the surrounding residential environment, as they will create environmental, traffic and amenity conflict with existing properties.
- 5.21 The re-utilisation of this site for residential purposes will protect the amenity of adjoining residents and provide a sustainable and productive re-utilisation of this site, which is compatible with the predominant residential character of the area.
- 5.22 Furthermore, the proposed development will only lead to the loss of 0.49 hectares of employment

land, which is extremely insignificant when balanced against the surplus of employment land within the area and the clear tangible benefits that will be derived from the residential redevelopment of the site, which are:

- A change in road configuration along Attwood Lane to improve safety and to slow traffic down.
- The introduction of road narrowing near the entrance to the development to calm traffic speeds and improve facilities for pedestrians.
- A contribution to traffic safety measures on Attwood Lane which could assist in discouraging the 'rat running' movement.
- The potential to remove a non-conforming use from the site and any heavy goods and other commercial traffic from Attwood Lane that would be associated with the current employment use.
- 5.29 It is therefore considered that there are exceptional circumstances relating to this application, which justify departing from Policy E5 of the Local Plan

General Policy Considerations

- 5.30 In addition to the broad principles of housing and transport that have been discussed in respect of NPPF, the unitary development plan provides more specific guidance on the detailed elements of development, which are dealt with in greater detail below.
- 5.31 Policy DR1 of the Local Plan sets out the design issues that should be considered in relation to a development proposal. In particular, this policy seeks to ensure development reflects the character and appearance of the area and is of an appropriate scale and design that is conducive to the townscape.
- 5.37 The proposed development is of a scale that will reflect the character of this predominantly residential area, where properties are generally of two storeys in height. This proposal seeks to incorporate properties that are a maximum of two storeys to ensure the scheme is successfully integrated into the locality. Furthermore, the layout, density, access, scale, massing, design



and materials proposed will be reflective of their surroundings. The proposed development will therefore fulfil the aims of policy DR1.

- 5.38 In terms of movement and accessibility, Policies DR2 and DR3 of the unitary development plan seek to ensure that a suitable access is provided to the site for pedestrians, cyclists and a suitable level of parking is given.
- 5.39 The proposed development has been designed to ensure that there is safe and convenient access for pedestrians and cyclists. Furthermore, the access into the site has been arranged around the housing layout to create a variety of spaces that are conducive to the residential uses of the site, as well as pedestrians and cyclists, to ensure the site is not dominated by the car. A suitable level of vehicular parking is provided that is arranged around courtyard areas and within the curtilage of existing properties.

General Housing Policies

- 5.40 In terms of housing, policy S3 of the unitary development plan states that Hereford should provide for 3195 dwellings during the plan period, and consideration will be given to maximising the use of previously developed land, accessibility to employment and local services, infrastructure capacity and the suitability of the site to accommodate the development proposed.
- 5.41 In respect of this policy, the site in question is well placed its terms of its accessibility to local services and employment by other modes of transport other than the car. The proposed site is also generally well placed to take advantage of infrastructure provision such as public transport and education.
- 5.42 In terms of managing the release of housing sites, Policy H3 of the unitary development plan seeks to ensure that previously developed sites are utilised before greenfield land. In addition, it seeks to achieve a mix and range of housing opportunities, including affordable housing. This proposal will not only provide a range and mix of housing, but will also provide 35% affordable housing, which will satisfy the requirements of both this policy and policy H9 of the plan that

seeks the provision of affordable housing. This scheme will provide 12 affordable units.

Sustainable Transport Connections

- 5.43 In terms of public transport, the site is well placed to take advantage of the well established public transport network that exists in Hereford in the form of bus links that run close to the site at the junction of Attwood Lane and Roman Road. These connect the site to Hereford City Centre and beyond in a sustainable manner.
- 5.44 In essence, the proposed residential development will benefit from sustainable transport connections to and from the city centre and other important centres where there are a variety of shops, services and employment opportunities.

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6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 This proposal seeks to construct 34 residential properties on land at Attwood Lane, Holmer, Hereford.
- 6.2 The proposed development is considered to be acceptable for the following reasons.
- 6.3 The development of 34 units will help Hereford Council meet their current shortfall in their 5 year housing land supply.
- 6.4 The proposed development will respect the existing residential character of the area and will correspond to the existing pattern of development that exists at Holmer Park. Furthermore, the proposed residential development will not compromise the existing landscape transition between the urban fringe of Hereford and the surrounding open countryside.
- 6.5 The additional dwellings proposed are ideally located to take advantage of the well-established transport network in the area. In addition, the opportunity exists to ensure that there is minimal reliance on the private car, as alternative modes of transport exist close to the site in the form of bus services to the centre of Hereford, linking the site and its potential occupants to shops, services and employment opportunities.
- 6.6 The additional traffic that is likely to be generated by this proposal can easily be accommodated safely on the existing road system without undue environmental consequences. Full details of the traffic implications associated with this proposal are outlined within the transport statement. In addition, this proposed revised planning application incorporates an improved access for occupiers of the site and emergency vehicles as necessary.
- 6.7 The redevelopment of the site for residential purposes will not result in the loss of employment land or adversely affect the supply of employment land within Hereford, given the surplus of employment land in the City.

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- 6.8 There are clear tangible benefits that will be derived from the residential redevelopment of the site, which provides justification for this proposal, these are:
 - A change in highway configuration along Attwood Lane to improve safety and to slow traffic down.
 - The introduction of a narrowing and a speed table near the entrance to the development to calm traffic speeds and improve facilities for pedestrians.
 - A contribution to traffic safety measures on Attwood Lane which could assist in discouraging the 'rat running' movement.
 - The removal of heavy goods and other commercial traffic from Attwood Lane.
 - There will be no material increase in traffic associated with the new development when compared with the existing commercial use of the land.
- 6.10 In essence, the proposed development of 34 dwellings will be entirely in accordance with planning policy guidance, and there are significant planning benefits derived from this development to allow residential development of the site in question.