

# **Birmingham Development Plan**

**2031**

Examination Hearing Statement on behalf  
of Calthorpe Estates

## **Matter G: Spatial Delivery of Growth**

October 2014

**Turley**

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**Client**

Calthorpe Estates

**LPA reference**

October 2014

# Executive Summary

1. This Hearing Statement is submitted by Turley on behalf of Calthorpe Estates in respect of their objections to the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP), specifically the need to identify the northern and western parts of Edgbaston as a Growth Area.
2. This Statement addresses Matter G: Spatial Delivery (Policy GA9) due to be heard on Tuesday 18 November and should be read in conjunction with the representations submitted by Calthorpe Estates in March 2014.
3. Calthorpe Estates is also making further submissions in respect of Matter K (centres, retail and tourism).

## **Main Issue: Are the Plan's proposals for these key growth areas justified and deliverable?**

4. Calthorpe Estates considers the Plan to be unsound because it does not plan positively for the growth potential of the whole of Edgbaston, much of which is owned freehold by the Calthorpe Estate.
5. Previous versions of the plan have included policy support for development in the Hagley Road Corridor (Policy S2), Bristol Road Corridor (Policy S3) and Edgbaston Mill/Warwickshire County Cricket Club (Policy S4) as well as Selly Oak and South Edgbaston (Policy S5) – see Consultation Draft Core Strategy (December 2010). Calthorpe Estates has commented on these policies but has been supportive of their inclusion in the plan.
6. Since these earlier drafts, there has been growth of an Edgbaston Medical Quarter much wider than that referred to in para 5.106 as being focussed on South Edgbaston. Pebble Mill is being redeveloped for healthcare uses.
7. The City Council is also working with Calthorpe Estates on an informal planning framework for Edgbaston 'Village' – the area immediately adjoining the Edgbaston (Five Ways) District Centre, which is itself undergoing regeneration. Elsewhere, Edgbaston Mill and the County Cricket Ground are undergoing transformation, with more potential to be realised.
8. Vacancy rates in the Hagley Road Corridor are now running at circa 50% of commercial office stock with greater than ever potential for mixed re-use, refurbishment and even redevelopment.
9. Finally, Calthorpe Estates is planning improvements to the area around the Botanical Gardens, providing opportunities for growth and change.
10. The justification for the "growth areas" identified in the current plan falls short of the rationale needed for excluding these important parts of Edgbaston. The levels of growth in this plan are higher than in the previous versions of the plan, so it seems irrational to reduce the number of key growth areas.

# 1. Q17: Should there be a new or extended GA policy area covering the northern and western parts of Edgbaston, next to the City Centre?

- 1.1 Calthorpe Estates made representations in March 2014 to request that the former policy support for key growth locations from earlier versions of the plan should be reinstated by identifying a new or extended Growth Area policy (GA9) including parts of northern and western Edgbaston in addition to Selly Oak and South Edgbaston.
- 1.2 It was noted that 'Edgbaston' was identified on Plan 4 on page 34 of the plan which is titled "Spatial distribution of growth" and appears to identify all of the proposed Growth Areas as well as a number of other district centres. The Main Modifications now propose the removal of Edgbaston from Plan 4 on the basis that "*although it will accommodate some growth, it is not an identified growth area*".
- 1.3 The City Council's response to our comments was to reject the proposition for the following reasons:
- (a) *Aspirations for growth on sites such as Pebble Mill, Edgbaston District Centre, the Hagley Road corridor, Edgbaston Mill and Warwickshire County Cricket Ground are well known. In many cases planning permission has now been granted, and development has commenced. Consequently, the policy guidance in the previous Core Strategy Consultation Draft has been superseded by events, the principle of developing these sites is established and the omission of the previous guidance does not constitute a failure to plan positively for the area's development.*
  - (b) *Lack of any identified development opportunities for the Hagley Road commercial frontages.*
  - (c) *Other sites and proposals may have a cumulative impact across the area, and be identified in the evidence base (SHLAA etc.), but individually they are not sufficiently large enough to warrant a dedicated policy.*
  - (d) *The geographical distribution of these locations is also much more dispersed compared to identified District Centres such as Northfield or Erdington.*
- 1.4 We will address each point in turn, but none goes to the heart of what the purpose of a Growth Area might be. To understand this, we need to look at the policies in Chapter 5 of the plan and their justification.

## **Growth Area Justification**

- 1.5 The plan states the delivery of growth will require "focus" in a number of locations which "play an important role" (para 5.2) but then says the distribution of growth will be "more dispersed" with focus on "opportunity sites and key transport corridors" (para 5.3).

Reference is also made to the network of local centres (para 5.4) and core employment areas (para 5.5).

- 1.6 Within this range of potential growth locations, the “Growth Areas” are then defined as “key areas” “which will make a significant contribution towards delivering the levels of growth in Policy PG1” (para 5.8), with a focus on “re-using existing urban land through regeneration, renewal and redevelopment” (para 5.9).
- 1.7 The Growth Areas range from the City Centre (the regional centre and key growth point) to the sub-regional centre of Sutton Coldfield, which already has an adopted Regeneration Framework, and the three District Growth Points of Perry Barr (part of Aston, Newtown and Lozells), Meadway (part of the Eastern Triangle) and Selly Oak (part of the Selly Oak and Edgbaston Growth Area (GA9)), which in addition to the growth of the district centre itself, is also earmarked for the development of 700 homes largely on the former Selly Oak Hospital site and a new Life Sciences Campus adjoining the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and University of Birmingham (para 5.10). The other district growth points are also earmarked for significant residential development in excess of 1,000 dwellings and Aston includes major employment proposals as well.
- 1.8 The other Growth Areas are longstanding regeneration projects – Longbridge, Greater Icknield and Bordesley Park – plus the new allocations of the Langley SUE and Peddimore. All bar Peddimore deliver significant housing as well as employment opportunities.
- 1.9 As we will show, the degree of focus and the nature of development proposed in these areas are not dissimilar to that envisaged in the northern and western parts of Edgbaston. The scale of Growth Areas varies and their main purpose differs. Whether as an extension of Selly Oak and South Edgbaston or as a separate Growth Area in its own right, we consider Edgbaston is justified as a Growth Area, being a location which has and can continue to play an important role and accommodate significant development to help deliver the City’s growth.

### **Has the need for policy been superseded by events?**

- 1.10 The Council’s response in point (a) suggests that the need for policy has been superseded by events, as:

***Aspirations for growth on sites such as Pebble Mill, Edgbaston District Centre, the Hagley Road corridor, Edgbaston Mill and Warwickshire County Cricket Ground are well known....***

- 1.11 Of itself, this is no reason to exclude them from policy. Most of the other Growth Areas are also well known and have the subject of emerging and adopted policy over the past decade. Current proposals can change, permissions can lapse whereas policy guidance is there for the long term. It provides support and certainty. In the case of the Hagley Road corridor, increased office vacancy rates, and the recent flurry of office conversions to residential are changing the nature of this important approach into the city centre. Calthorpe Estates is responding to similar pressures within Edgbaston by producing an informal planning framework (copy enclosed at Appendix 1) to guide future development in the ‘village’, including sites such as the Chamber of Commerce where previous

permissions have lapsed. These are changes which would benefit from policy recognition.

***In many cases planning permission has now been granted, and development has commenced. Consequently, the policy guidance in the previous Core Strategy Consultation Draft has been superseded by events....***

- 1.12 Whilst permissions have been granted for many of the current schemes in the above locations, the same can be said for much of the development in other Growth Areas. Within Selly Oak and South Edgbaston, the University of Birmingham masterplan has been approved, as has the Battery site redevelopment including the relocated Sainsbury's store and the new Life Sciences Campus, and the residential redevelopment of the Selly Oak Hospital site is approved. Further afield, there are approved DPDs for Longbridge and Aston/Newtown/Lozells and SPDs for Sutton Coldfield and Greater Icknield. All could be said to have been superseded by events, without the need for specific policy in the current plan.

- 1.13 Whilst development has commenced at the Edgbaston Mill and Warwickshire County Cricket Club sites, both schemes pre-date the recession and are not yet completed. District centre status and clear policy guidance would assist in adapting to new market opportunities and accommodating other sites which may come forward in the vicinity such as the Tally Ho site.

***..the principle of developing these sites is established and the omission of the previous guidance does not constitute a failure to plan positively for the area's development.***

- 1.14 The evidence of the other Growth Areas where the principle of development is established by the approval of other plans and the granting of permissions counters the first point, but we disagree that the omission of the previous guidance (i.e. that in the 2010 consultation draft of the plan, or a variant thereof) does not constitute a failure to plan positively. It does, as these are areas subject to as much change as the Growth Areas, where policy would be welcomed by the landowner and other stakeholders.

### **Are there enough sites to warrant Growth Area status?**

- 1.15 In their point (b), the City Council refers to a:

***Lack of any identified development opportunities for the Hagley Road commercial frontages.***

- 1.16 Several of the Growth Areas have few identified development opportunities – such as Aston, Newtown & Lozells, which only identifies the BCU campus at Perry Barr and the Aston RIS; Sutton Coldfield, which identifies two sites on the edge of the town centre; and Bordesley Park and the Eastern Triangle, both of which identify no sites at all. All highlight “wider areas of change”, which is exactly what the Hagley Road corridor is.

- 1.17 The previous Core Strategy Consultation Draft (Policy S2) stated:

***“The Hagley Road corridor will be developed as major gateway to the city centre, with the potential for significant mixed use and commercial development set within a high quality public realm.”***

1.18 It remains the case that significant change of use and redevelopment opportunities exist along the Hagley Road corridor, which would benefit from policy guidance to offer appropriate flexibility for the redevelopment of commercial stock which has reached the end of its economic life, supporting the physical regeneration of the area so that it can perform its role as a major gateway into the city centre.

1.19 The Council's point (c) states:

***Other sites and proposals may have a cumulative impact across the area, and be identified in the evidence base (SHLAA etc.), but individually they are not sufficiently large enough to warrant a dedicated policy.***

1.20 We have shown that several Growth Areas have few if any identified sites and are at best an accumulation of smaller proposals – e.g. the Eastern Triangle policy GA8 which identifies 14 separate proposals for housing, local centre, transport and environmental improvements. Combining the various proposals in Edgbaston would generate a similar if not more substantive list of changes and development opportunities.

1.21 Edgbaston is also experiencing a sectoral focus on healthcare, beyond the South Edgbaston 'quarter' referred to in the plan at para 5.106. The Edgbaston Medical Quarter<sup>1</sup> and Pebble Mill<sup>2</sup> developments in the wider Edgbaston area extend the geographical coverage of this sector cluster far beyond the Selly Oak Life Sciences Campus economic zone, warranting in our view policy recognition and identification in the plan.

1.22 Enclosed at Appendix 2 is an amended version of BDP Plan 13 "Selly Oak and South Edgbaston Spatial Plan" prepared to show the extent of the wider growth area encompassing the northern and western parts of Edgbaston. The revised plan highlights the proximity and scale of development opportunities within the wider Selly Oak and Edgbaston area.

### **Is the area too large / dispersed for Growth Area Status?**

1.23 The Council's response at point (d) states:

***The geographical distribution of these locations is also much more dispersed compared to identified District Centres such as Northfield or Erdington.***

1.24 The Main Modifications seek to remove Edgbaston as a growth area from Plan 4 on page 34 of the plan, along with the Northfield and Erdington district centres which are also shown on the plan. However, Calthorpe Estates is not seeking Growth Area status for Edgbaston on the basis of its role as a district centre. That is only part of the growth potential this area offers, as we have set out above. The combination of key developments, a unique District Centre half in and half out of the City Centre, an area which accommodates a high proportion of the city's office stock, a major sporting venue,

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<sup>1</sup> A proliferation of 327 medical and life sciences organisations, including 130 hospitals and specialist care centres, 58 centres for medical research, and 12 training facilities all centred within walking distance of each other to the north of Edgbaston where Calthorpe Estates is supporting the growth in the life science and healthcare sectors by investing in new facilities and creating new opportunities for organisations that want to be based within the quarter.

<sup>2</sup> Former BBC Studios which once fully developed with a leading-edge BUPA care home, new Dental Hospital, School of Dentistry, a private hospital and 50,000 ft<sup>2</sup> medical facility will house 400,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of medical employment uses creating over 1,000 jobs

new and existing healthcare institutions, one of the city's most attractive residential suburbs, and a single landowner make Edgbaston quite unlike any other Growth Area.

- 1.25 It is too often viewed as a static area immune from change. However, there have been and will continue to be significant refurbishment and development opportunities as the ongoing renewal of building stock gathers pace. Edgbaston can make a significant contribution towards delivering the levels of growth in Policy PG1 and should be given Growth Area Status.