



Masons Farm, George Green, Slough, Berks SL3 6BG

Report to:

Deloitte

Stonecutter Court
1 Stonecutter Street
London
EC4A 4TR
United Kingdom

08015751

DTZ, 48 Warwick Street, London W1B 5NL

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Contents

1	Background	1
2	Address	1
3	Property Description & Current Lawful Use	1
4	Planning History	1
5	Planning Opportunity (policy review)	2
6	Review of Previous Commentary	5
7	Development Potential	6

Appendices

1	Site Location Plan
2	Review of Housing Land Requirements
3	Minutes of Meeting with Planning Officers

1. Background

- 1.1 The site consists of a former farmhouse and farm buildings, including 15 stables and outbuildings in agricultural use on a site of 15 acres in the village of George Green. The buildings are located on the core site of 6.69 acres, the remainder of which is open Green Belt land.

2. Address

- 2.1 Masons Farm, George Green, Slough, Berks SL3 6BG.

3. Property Description & Current Lawful Use

- 3.1 The full site extends to 15 acres, on the outer edge of the village of George Green, approximately two miles north east of Slough, Buckinghamshire.
- 3.2 The site is located south of George Green Road and east of the A412, linking to Slough and Uxbridge. The site benefits from a single access onto George Green Road.
- 3.3 The site of Mason's Farm includes a number of buildings, all of which are in a poor state of repair. The three storey farmhouse is in dilapidated condition and presently unoccupied. It is estimated the building was built in the early 1950s.
- 3.4 There is a timber frame barn adjoining the east side of the farm house, which provides around 166sqm floorspace, albeit in poor but watertight condition. Three blocks of stables lie to the west of the farmhouse along with a number of outhouse buildings (including garages, workshop, machinery shed and hay barn).
- 3.5 The lawful use of the site is therefore agricultural with associated residential use, within the Green Belt.

4. Planning History

- 4.1 A planning application was made for this site in 2006:

Application Ref	Date of Approval	Description of Development
07/00107/OUT	Refused 29/03/2007 (not appealed)	Redevelopment of the site to provide 60 residential units (30% affordable) village store, post office, sports hall, associated parking and landscaping. Construction of vehicular access.

- 4.2 This application sought the full redevelopment of the site for a new development of 60 residential units, associated facilities and a new access at Mason's Farm. The application was refused under delegated powers in January 2007.
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- 4.3 The primary reasons for refusal, related to:
- Inappropriate land use in the Green Belt, where only development for a specific list of categories, for example agriculture or forestry, is allowed;
 - The precedent which may be set for future development on similar sites;
 - Inadequate quality of the urban design;
 - Preventing potential for future minerals extraction;
 - Location of the site within a flood zone, without having completed a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA); and
 - Insufficient information relating to tree protection and ecology.
- 4.4 All of these issues need to be taken into consideration in the preparation of any alternative proposals for the site in the future.

5. Planning Opportunity (Policy Review)

Regional/Strategic

- 5.1 The area of George Green falls within the remit of the draft South East Plan (2006). This Plan was subject to Public Examination in 2007, the Panel Report was published in late 2007, and additional changes published in July 2008. These are currently out for public consultation until October 2008.
- 5.2 The focus of development in the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley, in which this area falls, is meeting economic growth targets and ensuring that the delivery of housing matches this growth and can be served by adequate transport links. What is most notable is that the housing target number for South Bucks (which has been increased through the most recent changes) is only 94 dwellings per year over the entire Plan period.

Local

- 5.3 The site falls within South Bucks District Council, where the saved policies of the South Bucks Local Plan 1999, form the statutory plan for this area.
- 5.4 South Bucks District Council produced a Preferred Options Core Strategy document in 2006. This was withdrawn for reconsideration, and a revised version is due out for consultation in Autumn of 2008. It is understood that there will be moderate changes, but it can be considered that the previous document provides a good indication as to future policy considerations in the determination of planning applications. These preferred policies have therefore also been considered.

Land Use Designation

- 5.5 The entire site is within the Green Belt, adjacent to the Green Belt settlement of George Green, as identified in the Local Plan 1999, and Core Strategy Preferred Options 2006. An 'Area of Attractive Landscape' lies to the east of the settlement. Saved Local Plan Policy L2 requires development in the vicinity of this designation to consider any impact on its conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and wildlife interest.
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- 5.6 The site lies outside the settlement boundary of George Green.
- 5.7 The site does not lie in any Conservation Area, and does not contain any listed buildings.
- 5.8 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment undertaken for South Bucks identifies that the southern section of George Green at George Green Road (i.e. including this site) is situated in Flood Zone 3a. As such, any future development will need to be supported by a detailed site based Flood Risk Assessment to review the local risk of flooding in this area. This site would need to undertake this requirement were any future development proposed.
- 5.9 There are no Tree Preservation Orders on the site; however a number of the trees in the centre of the site are locally protected.
- 5.10 It is understood that an Article 4 Direction has been served on the farm land south of the Westfield Farm buildings (beyond the core site area but within the site as a whole) to restrict permitted development rights. It is unusual for councils to serve Article 4 directions in such cases, and this is considered to be a clear signal of the council's desire to prevent any detrimental forms of future development of the land, probably as a result of previous pressure for residential development on this land.

Green Belt

- 5.11 Maintaining the Green Belt and protecting it from inappropriate development is a key aspect of South Bucks' future development strategy and is, outlined in both the Local Plan and emerging Core Strategy. Continued designation of land as Green Belt is considered to contribute to the strategic objective of restraining development and furthermore, its fragmented loss will be strongly restricted.
- 5.12 National planning policy attaches great importance to protection of the Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 2, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
- 5.13 Green Belt designation is taken seriously as part of planning policy and there is a clear presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. National planning policy contained in PPG2 sets out forms of appropriate development and states that very special circumstances will be required to justify 'inappropriate' development.
- 5.14 Appropriate development is agricultural/ forestry uses, new buildings to provide essential facilities for outdoor sport or recreation, cemeteries or limited extension to existing dwellings. It is important to note that all other forms (i.e. including residential) are judged inappropriate and will normally be resisted as a matter of principle.
- 5.15 This is emphasised in South Bucks' Local Plan policy GB1, which states that:
- "Within the Green Belt, planning will not be granted for development other than for the change of use of existing buildings or land or the construction of new buildings or extensions to existing buildings, related to:*
- a) *Development for agriculture or forestry*
 - b) *Essential facilities for outdoor sport, recreation or leisure*
 - c) *Mineral working and subsequent restoration of land*
 - d) *Cemeteries*
 - e) *Limited extension, alteration or replacement of dwellings (GB10/11)*
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- f) *Other uses of land and essential facilities for them which would not compromise the purpose of land in the Green Belt and would retain its open and undeveloped character*
- g) *Development in these categories will only be acceptable where:*
- *The proposal would not adversely affect the character and amenity of the Green Belt*
 - *The scale, height, layout, siting, form, design and materials of any new building would not affect the character and amenity of the Green Belt*
 - *The proposals for extensions to existing buildings would harmonise with the scale, height, form and design of the original building.”*
- 5.16 The demonstration of ‘exceptional circumstances’ in order to override the Green Belt designation and achieve development for anything other than the ‘appropriate’ uses, requires support at a national, regional and local level to prove a strong case that the site provides an appropriate location for the development and that no alternative site exists that would not require the development to be placed in the Green Belt.
- 5.17 Green Belt release and its requirement to meet housing targets and growth aspirations have been considered at a strategic level, and are not considered necessary in South Bucks. We do not believe there is any opportunity to pursue release of this site from its Green Belt allocation.
- 5.18 South Bucks’ Local Plan policy addresses the parameters for the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt (saved policy GB2). This identifies that where buildings are capable of conversion without major reconstruction, and that the proposed form, bulk and design are in keeping with their surroundings and that the new use does not detract from the undeveloped nature of the Green Belt, their reuse will be acceptable. Any creation of employment use through the reuse of buildings should be related to enhancement of agriculture. In the case where extensions to buildings to be reused are proposed, these should be of a scale whereby they are essential to facilitate the reuse and strictly ancillary to the main use. The scale should be appropriate and subordinate to the main building.
- 5.19 Extensions to, or additional buildings for employment use will not be permitted in the Green Belt (saved Policy GB4).
- 5.20 Saved Policy GB10 sets out guidance for extensions to existing dwellings in the Green Belt. These are rigorous and seek to ensure that the extensions are modest and in scale with the existing building, as follows.
- “Extensions to existing dwellings in the Green Belt will be allowed where:*
- *The proposed extension together with the existing dwelling would be for single family occupation.*
 - *The extension would be integral to and of a small scale in relation to the existing (original) dwelling.*
 - *The dwelling (when enlarged) would be of a small scale in relation to the size of the residential cartilage.*
 - *The proposal would not adversely affect the character or amenity of the landscape or locality.”*
- 5.21 Policy GB11 states that where an application is made for development of a property larger than the existing property, the Council may undertake to withdraw permitted development rights for that site.
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Housing Requirement

- 5.22 As set out in relation to the South East Plan guidance, South Bucks has a requirement to deliver only 94 residential units per annum across the Borough.
- 5.23 The Core Strategy Preferred Options emphasizes that South Bucks is confident of meeting this target through existing consents and identified sites, and indeed will seek to manage the amount of housing coming forward to ensure there is not an over provision which affects the character of the District.
- 5.24 There is therefore no policy requirement to release sites, particularly these within the Green Belt to meet housing delivery requirements. Preferred policy approach 5, requires that housing development should make full and effective use of land, whilst having regard to the character of an area. Previously brown field land would therefore be the preferred location for additional development if required.

Rural Exceptions

- 5.25 Rural exceptions policy, as set out in PPS3, enables Local Authorities to identify sites suitable solely for affordable housing. These are often small, Greenfield sites, which would otherwise not be released for housing under conventional planning guidance. South Bucks has drafted a rural exceptions policy within the draft Core Strategy. However, the policy is only to be applied on a strictly limited basis within five specifically designated parishes. George Green is not included.

Mineral Extraction

- 5.26 This site is designated as a minerals extraction site within the Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2004-2016. This is an acceptable use in the Green Belt, where the land will be restored to its former character following mineral extraction. This may provide a short term alternative opportunity for the site, subject to the consensus of individual plot owners.

6. Review of Previous Commentary

RD Planning and Land Report 2008

- 6.1 The RD Planning and Land Report prepared for Deloitte suggested that there may be the opportunity to deliver residential development to assist the District in meeting their RSS target housing delivery target.
- 6.2 As identified, even with the increased 94 dwellings per annum required by the emerging RSS, South Bucks are confident of meeting and even exceeding delivery of the target number of dwellings without the need for Green Belt release. It is therefore considered that delivery of additional dwellings will not be possible on the back of a housing needs case.
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Cluttons Report, May 2008

- 6.3 The Cluttons report identifies that the site is appropriate for development of one to two residential properties.
- 6.4 We would agree that there is the potential for continued use of the site for one residential dwelling only, the quality of which could be improved through renovation, and the scale may be increased through minor extension subject to high quality design.

Savills Report, March 2006

- 6.5 The Savills report confirms our view that none of the buildings are listed. There is no suggestion of any specific development opportunity beyond the refurbishment of the existing dwelling and this is subject to successfully obtaining planning consent.

7. Development Potential

- 7.1 South Bucks has issued specific guidance on their website relating to the marketing of plotted land particularly within the Green Belt. This is of direct relevance to this site and UKLI's plans. The guidance states that South Bucks is, '*vehemently committed to the protection of the Green Belt and intends to maintain and strengthen the Green Belt even further*'. The guidance note emphasises that if a plot of land is in the Green Belt, it is likely to remain so and in which case, '*the strongest policies of restraint upon development will still apply*.'
- 7.2 The Article 4 Direction also provides a very clear steer as to the Local Authority's likely resistance in relation to any proposed development beyond the existing built footprint of the site.
- 7.3 The vast majority of the site (12ha) has been plotted by UKLI, therefore there is not the potential for the wholesale resale of the site. Any redevelopment potential should be considered in this context.
- 7.4 The development potential of this site is considered on the basis of the stringent guidance relating to development in the Green Belt. The Green Belt designation means that the Council will apply a general presumption against development, but permission may be given for development reasonably required for agricultural/forestry uses or new buildings to provide essential facilities for outdoor sport, recreation, cemeteries, or limited extension of existing dwellings. In this case, consideration will also need to be given to the flood risk potential of any additional proposed development on the site.
- 7.5 All of the UKLI land lies outside of the George Green settlement boundary. However, through the formation of the South Bucks LDF system, it is possible to make a case for the realignment of the Green Belt Settlement Boundary around George Green. It would need to be demonstrated that the 'Openness' of this part of the Green Belt would not be material harmed by development. The UKLI land already has a number of agricultural buildings spread across the northern part of the site and it would need to be argued that there would be no additional harm to 'Openness' resulting from new development in this location. This approach to promoting the site for residential development would have to be taken through the emerging Land Allocations DPD, evidence gathering for which will commence in late 2010.
- 7.6 Notwithstanding the above, the likely opportunities therefore relate to the existing buildings on the site. There is one main house which it is likely to be most appropriate to retain in
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residential use. There may be the potential for the moderate extension of this building if it can be demonstrated to be appropriate in design terms and to secure the ongoing use of the building for residential use, particularly if associated with the continued and enhanced agricultural use of the site and associated buildings.

- 7.7 Demolition and rebuild of the existing house may also be possible. This would be most appropriately proposed on the existing built footprint of the current house, potentially with the scope for some extension to the property. Again, the likelihood of achieving this level of development would be dependent upon the quality and design of the development proposed. It must be seen to be appropriately related to the scale of the existing building and operation and respond to the sensitivity of the landscape designation.
- 7.8 Any new agricultural dwelling/building will only be acceptable where it is essential to the operation of an established agricultural holding, or where required for the functioning of the agricultural enterprise.
- 7.9 It is considered however, that the existing agricultural buildings around the site could appropriately be renovated to enable continued use or enhanced agricultural use. Alternatively or additionally, there may be the potential to develop the stables buildings to enable an element of equestrian use to be accommodated, if it could be demonstrated this was necessary to enhance the existing agricultural use. Again, the scale of development or any extension to these buildings would be subject to the rigorous assessments of Green Belt policy.
- 7.10 The development potential of this Green Belt site is therefore considered to be limited to the enhancement and small scale extension of the existing buildings to secure and enhance their residential and agricultural use.
- 7.11 It may also be noted that this site is designated as part of a wider minerals extraction site within the Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2004-2016. This is an acceptable use in the Green Belt, where the land will be restored to its former character following mineral extraction. This may provide a short term alternative opportunity for the site, subject to the consensus of individual plot owners.

Summary

- 7.12 There is limited potential for Green Belt release given the low annual housing requirement for the District and high rate of completions currently being achieved.
- 7.13 George Green is not a qualifying parish for an 'exceptions' rural affordable housing development (as set out within the draft Core Strategy).
- 7.14 Through the emerging LDF system (Land Allocations DPD), it may be possible to argue a case for the realignment of the Green Belt Settlement Boundary of George Green, to enable the promotion of residential development on the UKLI site.
- 7.15 The Core Strategy Preferred Options report is due out for public consultation in late 2008, which would provide the opportunity to begin to promote the site for alternative use through the LDF process.
- 7.16 There is potential to refurbish and modestly extend the farmhouse to provide a larger single dwelling house or to knock down and rebuild a new larger dwelling house (two or three
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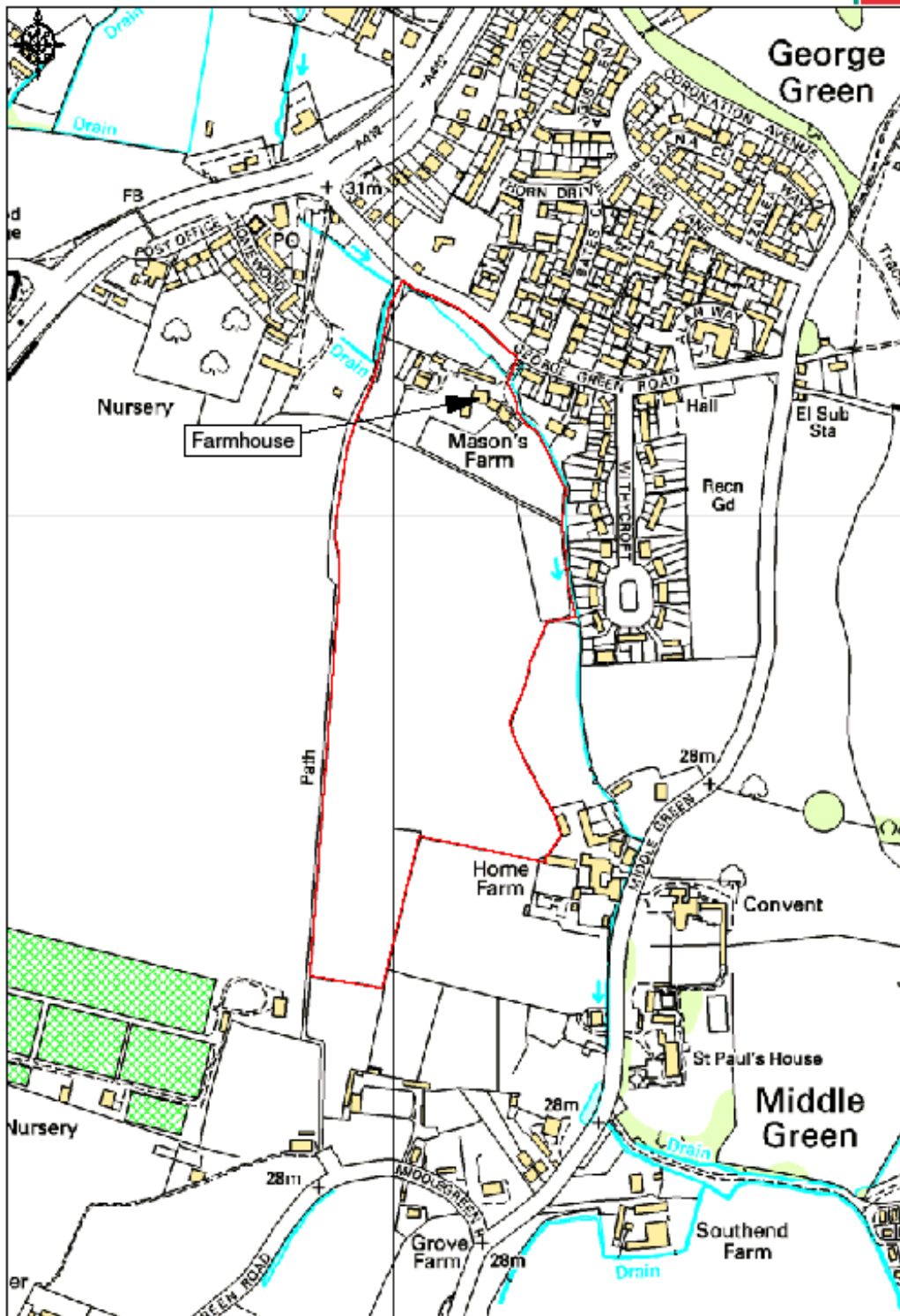
storey). Linked to this there is scope to upgrade the agricultural buildings on the site to provide for either enhanced agricultural or equestrian use.

- 7.17 There is potential to exploit the site for minerals extraction as part of a wider minerals extraction programme.



APPENDIX 1





GIS
Geomatics
Survey

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Mason's Farm, George Green, Slough, Buckinghamshire SL3 6BG

APPENDIX 2



8. Review of Housing Requirements – Masons Farm, George Green, Slough

Housing Numbers

- 8.1 Until such time as the South East Plan is adopted, the housing requirements for South Bucks are set out in the Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan which covers the period to 2011. This requires a total of 2,400 dwellings up to 2011 as follows:
- 1991-2001 - 1,800
 - 2001-2006 – 300
 - 2006-2011 – 300.
- 8.2 Importantly, these housing requirements were based on an assessment of the ability of the District to accommodate housing development without the need to release land from the Green Belt. The Council's records of completions up to 2006 (Annual Monitoring Report 2007) indicate that between 1991-2006 2,205 dwellings had been completed, thus exceeding the Structure Plan requirements up to 2006 for 2,100 dwellings (1,800 + 300).
- 8.3 In the period 2006 – 2011 the Council expects to have completed 1,191 dwellings, thus significantly exceeding the Structure Plan requirements for a further 300 dwellings. This completion rate is forecast on the basis of projected completions on of both allocated sites and known unallocated sites. The Council undertook an Urban Capacity study published in 2006 to inform this trajectory.
- 8.4 The Council has also set out its housing trajectory to cover the South East Plan period up to 2026. The South East Plan, once adopted, is likely to set out a minimum housing provision figure of 94 dwellings per annum for South Bucks and a total of 1,880 between 2006 and 2026. The Council's housing trajectory in the period up to 2011 indicates that the completion rate of 94 dpa will be exceeded each year. Beyond this period, the Council has projected a completion rate of 94 dwellings in line with the South East Plan requirements, without actually identifying where this delivery will come from e.g. via allocations or non allocations. Nonetheless, the Council maintains in its latest AMR (2007) that, according to the South Bucks Urban Capacity Study, there should be continuing provision beyond commitments to meet requirements until 2026, though this will need to be retested in 2007/08. This provision included potential release of a large MOD site from the Green Belt in Beaconsfield.

Housing Locations

- 8.5 In 2006 the Council submitted a Preferred Options Core Strategy, but later withdrew it. This stated that as a result of 87% of the district being within the Green Belt, it was not possible to identify broad areas for future housing growth in the Core Strategy. Accordingly, the Council's forthcoming Site Allocations DPD will set out how the District will meet the strategic housing requirements. The Council is in the process of undertaking a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which will help to inform this position. The initial findings of the SHLAA have indicated an 11.6 year supply of deliverable housing and to this end accords with PPS requirements to identify a five year supply of deliverable housing.



- 8.6 Whilst development in the Green Belt has historically been strongly resisted in South Bucks, a small number of dwellings have been completed in the past on Green Belt sites, although these have largely been as a result of infill or intensification. It is not clear at this stage whether sites in the Green Belt will be considered as necessary to meet the Council's future housing requirements, though it is unlikely according to the initial findings of the SHLAA.

Implications:

- South Bucks is currently exceeding housing requirements set out in the Structure Plan and is likely to exceed the target to 2011 by a significant amount. There are therefore no expected short term shortfalls in the housing requirements up to 2011
- Beyond this period the housing provision figures will be set by the South East Plan. Initial indications show that these figures are likely to be met, with it being very unlikely to require release of sites in the Green Belt.



APPENDIX 3



MASON'S FARM, GEORGE GREEN, SLOUGH, BUCKS, SL3 6BG

LAND TO THE NORTH OF NORHT PARK, IVER, BUCKS, SL0 9BA

**NOTE OF DISCUSSION WITH AREA TEAM LEADER, DEVELOPMENT CONTROL,
SOUTH BUKCS DISTRICT COUNCIL
2ND SEPTEMBER 2008, 9.30AM**

Attendees:	Stephen Kyle (SK)	South Bucks DC
	Julia Riddle (JR)	DTZ

1.0 Introduction

1.1 JR explained the background to DTZ being instructed to value the UKLI portfolio, and provide planning advice in relation to the sites at Mason's Farm and North Park, situated in South Bucks.

2.0 Mason's Farm – planning history

2.1 JR explained the understanding that the site at Mason's Farm is located in the Green Belt, outside the settlement boundary of George Green.

SK confirmed that this is the case.

JR questioned SK's knowledge of any planning history on this site.

SK confirmed that in accordance with JR's understanding a planning application was made for redevelopment of the site for residential use, which was refused under delegated powers.

JR questioned the reasons for refusal.

SK informed that the applicant had always been advised that there was no redevelopment potential for this site, particularly not of the scale anticipated by this application. The location, and Green Belt allocation were the main reasons for refusal.

JR questioned whether any alternative development opportunities had been discussed for this site either prior to or further to this application.

SK explained that further discussions had been held (by telephone, no certain dates) regarding opportunities for conversion/ rebuild of the outbuildings for residential use. SK confirmed that the buildings are considered to be of insufficient quality to be

considered under the Council's policy for redevelopment or conversion of buildings in the Green Belt from agricultural use. They are poor quality, functional buildings. There may be potential for their upgrade for continued agricultural use.

3.0 Green Belt release

- 3.1 JR questioned whether there would be any potential for the release of this site from the Green Belt to meet future development requirements in the area?

SK confirmed that the Local Authority is required to identify potential sites for future development to meet housing delivery targets should they not be met elsewhere. This has been strongly resisted by Members, who have accepted that this is required, and as such some sites have potentially been identified, which will be set out in the housing trajectory of the forthcoming LDF documentation. However these sites are not in this area.

Furthermore, SK emphasised that if additional sites were required, they would not be in this area, and this site would not be suitable.

SK also emphasised that South Bucks have a very low housing delivery target as set out in the South East plan, therefore they are confident of meeting this target without the need for Green Belt release.

4.0 North Park, Iver

- 4.1 JR set out the existing allocation of the site within the Green Belt, and the limited development existing on the site.
- 4.2 SK confirmed that again, the redevelopment of this site would be strongly resisted on the basis of its Green Belt allocation.

SK added that in the case of this site, there is very little established development, which would further hinder any development potential for the site. There may be the potential for some enhancement of the agricultural or horticultural use.

JR questioned whether there might be the potential for release of this site for development, in the future? SK confirmed that as with mason's Farm, this is not an identified site, nor in a suitable area for consideration for release.

5.0 Interaction and Correspondence with UKLI

- 5.1 SK confirmed that there have been telephone discussions with UKLI in regard to the Mason's Farm site, and discussions in relation to the previous planning application at Mason's Farm. SK emphasised that at all times, the discussions had emphasised that SBDC do not consider there to be by development potential for these sites.



6.0 Other Uses for the sites

- 6.1 JR questioned whether a rural exceptions policy might enable consideration of the release of the site for future affordable housing use?
- 6.3 SK confirmed that this is not a strategy SBDC have been implementing nor consider necessary to meet their affordable housing requirements.
- 6.3 JR questioned the reasons for and implications of the Article 4 notices served on the site?
SK confirmed that these were served when SBDC were aware of the promotion of the sites for inappropriate uses, to avoid their subdivision, and emphasise the strength of opposition to their future redevelopment.