

Black Country Core Strategy
Council House
Priory Road
Dudley
DY1 1HL

30 October 2018

EP ref: 18-134



Sent via online submission only

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Land south of Bosty Lane, Aldridge

Emery Planning is instructed by HIMOR (Land) Ltd to submit the land south of Bosty Lane, Aldridge to the Council as part of the current Call for Sites consultation to inform the emerging Black Country Core Strategy Review.

We have completed the Council's Call for Sites form online. In addition to the forms and this letter, the following documents are also enclosed:

- Site location plan
- Initial site masterplan by PlanIt I.E. Limited

HIMOR is an established strategic land promotion company with a track record of delivering sites of this nature. HIMOR reached agreement with the landowners to promote the land south of Bosty Lane (East) for development earlier this year. The site is being promoted as an allocation for residential or mixed use development in the Core Strategy Review, and/or any subsequent Site Allocations documents.

Emery Planning previously wrote to the Councils on 8 March 2018 to provide details of the HIMOR controlled land. However the site is not included on the Councils' online mapping system so it is not clear whether those representations were taken into account. Notwithstanding, circumstances have moved on in recent months in terms of discussions with the school, and therefore these submissions reflect the latest position in relation to the site and its promotion.

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The site comprises approximately 66.5ha. It consists of 3 main parcels:

- Aldridge School (circa 11.5ha, edged orange on the attached plans) – The school land is owned by the Mercian Trust. The school would be redeveloped for housing as part of the proposals, and re-located onto adjacent land.
- Land south of Bosty Lane (East) (circa 38ha, edged red on the attached plans) – This land is controlled by HIMOR. It is currently used for agriculture (grazing). The land would be developed for housing.
- Land south of Bosty Lane (West) (circa 17ha, edged purple on the attached plans) – This land is owned by the Council, although some is also controlled by HIMOR. The new Aldridge School would be relocated to this land.

It should be noted that the masterplan is indicative only, and is an initial version. However it demonstrates one way in which the sites could be developed comprehensively to provide a new school and residential development to meet identified housing needs.

HIMOR is promoting the land under their control to the south of Bosty Lane for residential development through the Black Country Core Strategy, and consider that the land should be released from the Green Belt in order to meet development needs irrespective of the need for a new school. However the opportunity has arisen to promote the land jointly in light of discussions with representatives of Aldridge School, and these submissions are made on that basis.

The current school was built in the 1950s and requires extensive ongoing improvements and modernisation to meet modern educational needs. The proposals present an opportunity to deliver a state of the art educational facility on the Council owned land to the south of Bosty Lane, funded by the residential development at the existing school site and the land south of Bosty Lane (East). Therefore in addition to the residential development, which is desperately needed and for which Green Belt release will be required in any event, the proposals also offer an opportunity to secure the long term future of the school.

Whilst HIMOR intends to promote the site and their land through the emerging Black Country Core Strategy, it should be noted that the opportunity to deliver a new school (funded by the wider residential development) is viewed as a shorter term opportunity, which could be brought forward via a planning application.

In principle, the delivery of a new school is capable of comprising the very special circumstances necessary to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, such that planning permission could be granted outside of the development plan process. In this regard we draw attention to the Secretary of State appeal decision of 21 March 2018 in respect of Effingham School in the borough of Guildford (PINS ref: APP/Y3615/W/16/3151098). The Secretary of State found that the provision of school buildings which meet modern educational and social need; addressing the condition of the school; and meeting need for school places each carry very substantial weight, and furthermore that these comprised very special circumstances which outweighed the 'substantial' harm to the openness of the Green Belt which had been identified. That appeal was allowed.

Further information on the Bosty Lane site is provided through the Council's online Call for Sites forms. If any further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact us. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with the Council to discuss our proposals further.

Yours sincerely
Emery Planning


Associate Director