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## 1. Executive Summary

1.1. Savills has been instructed by Safestore PLC ('Safestore') to prepare a statement and participate in the forthcoming examination of the London Borough of Wandsworth (LBW) Local Plan in response to MM2: Matter 2 – Spatial Development Strategy (Policies SDS1 and PM1). This Hearing Statement responds to the Main Matters, Issues and Questions within the draft hearing programme, specifically addressing the following questions:

- ***Is the Spatial Development Strategy 2023 - 2038 for the London Borough of Wandsworth justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national guidance, and local context, including the London Plan?***
- ***Is Wandsworth's spatial strategy and the distribution of development as set out in Policies SDS1 and PM1 (Area Strategy and Site Allocations Compliance) supported by robust and up to date evidence and otherwise soundly based?***
- ***In setting a minimum requirement of 20,311 new homes for the plan period 2023 – 2038, does WLP Policy SDS1 make adequate provision to meet Wandsworth's housing needs and does the plan clearly set out a delivery trajectory that is achievable?***

1.2. We understand that the Inspectors are not assessing the merits of individual sites as part of this Examination process. As such, reference made to specific sites owned by Safestore in this hearing statement seeks to demonstrate the deficiencies of the Draft Plan's evidence base, concluding that the Draft Plan is not sound

1.3. This statement outlines why the Spatial Development Strategy of the Draft Local Plan is **unsound** on the following grounds:

- Main Modification PPMM/001, which proposes the removal of part B of Draft Policy PM1, should not be confirmed. Instead Part B should be amended to provide flexibility within the policy. Our proposed changes to the wording of Part B of Draft Policy PM1, outlined in paragraph 3.3, are required if the Draft Policy is to be considered sound;
- Not only does the Draft Local Plan not positively plan to meet housing need, it also fails to set out an effective Policy framework to facilitate the delivery of housing on allocated sites, such as Lombard Road (RIV6), by setting prescriptive building height caps (See Matter 13 Hearing Statement submitted on behalf of Safestore); and
- When read as a whole, the Draft Local Plan sterilises the development potential of allocated sites, such as Lombard Road (RIV6) and Ingate Place (NE7), preventing the delivery of the

Draft Local Plans Strategic Development Strategy (Policy SDS1) and ability to achieve sustainable development, in line with paragraph 8 (parts a, b and c) of the NPPF.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. Safestore is the owner of three commercial sites within the LBW: Ingate Place in Battersea, 19 Lombard Road in Battersea and 1 Bendon Valley in Southfields. As a major landowner in the Borough, Safestore aspires to continue and grow business trade within the Borough, with an emphasis on optimising the development potential of their existing sites.
- 2.2. Safestore provides self-storage solutions to businesses and the public. Self-storage is an increasingly popular and important service which complements modern living and business needs. Nationally, just over half of Safestore's space is occupied by residential customers with the remainder occupied by businesses.
- 2.3. The businesses which use Safestore tend to be small and medium-sized and are attracted by the all-inclusive and flexible terms. These terms make the product an affordable and desirable option compared to traditional warehousing. Businesses can increase or decrease unit size at short notice without charge and can exit the facility with less than one months' notice.

## 3. Main Representation

### Policy PM1 – PM1 Area Strategy and Site Allocations Compliance

- 3.1. Draft Policy PM1 sets out the overall strategy of how and where growth, renewal and regeneration will be distributed across the LBW. The Draft Local Plan promotes Area Strategies that provide detail on how different areas of the borough will accommodate change, in line with the core planning principles set out in Chapter 2 - Placemaking, Inclusive Growth and People First:

#### **PM1 Area Strategy and Site Allocations Compliance**

- A. Planning permission will be granted where the proposed development positively addresses the Placemaking, Inclusive Growth and People First principles and where the development would be in accordance with all other relevant development plan policies and the detailed requirements and considerations set out in the Area Strategies and Site Allocations.
- B. Proposals which do not comply with the relevant development plan policies, Area Strategy and Site Allocations will be resisted unless it is clearly evidenced that an alternative type of development can be justified. In such circumstances, the development must not prejudice the delivery of the Local Plan's Vision and Objectives, the Objectives of the Area Strategy, or Site Allocations on neighbouring sites.
- C. In order to ensure that a comprehensive and cohesive approach is taken to the planning and delivery of sites identified as a cluster within an Area Strategy, the Council will expect site owners to jointly prepare a masterplan or concept framework. Planning applications will need to demonstrate how they comply with the Masterplan or Concept Framework. On adjoining sites, outside of clusters, planning applications should demonstrate how the proposal will not prejudice the development of those adjoining sites.
- D. Where further or updated information and guidance is provided in a Supplementary Planning Document or other planning related document which is relevant to an Area Strategy or Site Allocation, this will be a material consideration in determining applications.

**Figure 1: Draft Policy PM1: Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19) Version January 2022**

- 3.2. Main Modification PPM/001 proposes the deletion of part B of Draft Policy PM1. As repeated in Paragraphs 2 and 47 of the NPPF, planning law requires that all planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Ultimately, it is the role of the decision-maker to determine applications in 'a

positive and creative way', using the Development Plan as a starting point but considering all material planning considerations to arrive at a balanced decision.

- 3.3. Therefore, with the change proposed by Main Modification PPMM/001, we consider Draft Policy PM1 to be inflexible, not effective and therefore **unsound**. We consider that Part B of Draft Policy PM1 should not be deleted but should be amended as suggested below if it is to be considered sound:

*“B Proposals which do not comply with the Area Strategy and Site Allocations will be permitted where it can be clearly evidenced that an alternative type of development is appropriate”*

Policy SDS1 – Spatial Development Strategy 2023-2038

- 3.4. Draft Policy SDS1 sets out the overarching Spatial Development Strategy for the Draft Local Plan that seeks to address the long-term needs of the borough, including maximising the opportunities that exist to provide new homes. It states the following:

***“Within the period 2023 – 2038 the Local Plan will provide for a minimum of 20,311 new homes. This includes the provision of a minimum of 1,950 new homes per year up until 2028/2029, including on small sites.”***

- 3.5. Draft Policy SDS1 proposes an annual housing target of 1,950 new homes until 2028/29, which aligns with the LB of Wandsworth's ten year housing target of 19,500 homes identified in Table 4.1 of the London Plan. However, the Council's own LHNA (2020), published as part of the Draft Local Plan evidence base, cites that the objectively assessed LHNF within the LB of Wandsworth is 2,537 homes per annum or 45,666 homes between 2019 and 2037. Whilst aligning Draft Local Plan Policy SDS1 with the ten year London Plan housing target seeks to ensure “general conformity”<sup>1</sup>, it has no regard to the need to undertake an early review of the London Plan given that the identified annual housing need of 66,000 homes is not being planned for. The need for such a review is highlighted in the letter written to the Mayor of London by the then Secretary of State James Brokenshire (dated 27 July 2018) which states that:

***“It remains crucial however that you bring forward a revised London Plan that has regard to new national policies at the earliest opportunity. You will want to note paragraph 33 and annex 1 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework, which sets out that the Government expects plans to be reviewed early where all identified housing need is not being met and to ensure a plan is in place which reflects current national policy. I would therefore expect you to review the London Plan to reflect the revised National Planning Policy Framework immediately once the London Plan has been published.”***

- 3.6. Since the publication of the London Plan in 2021, the “Planning for London Programme” has been established, which seeks to start gathering evidence, capturing the views of stakeholders and identifying the issues and options to inform a review of the London Plan. This demonstrates a clear intent to undertake a review of the London Plan in the near future. One of the key objectives of this review will be to maximise housing delivery across London and surpass the housing requirement in the London Plan 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 24 (1) (b) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 3.7. Notwithstanding the above, we understand that the LHNF figure is *'unconstrained'* and does not necessarily reflect the extent to which the Council can meet housing need over the plan period. As such, the Council has the option to consider the plausibility of arriving at an alternative LHNF using demographic evidence and existing local and regional policy. However, the PPG states that where a plan-making authority seeks to do this, it must be justified *"using robust evidence, that the figure is based on realistic assumptions of demographic growth"*. However, the LHNA, which forms part of the Draft Local Plan evidence base, demonstrates a clear trajectory for population growth within the LB of Wandsworth between now and 2037, citing the following increases by age category:
- Those aged 20 – 64 are forecast to increase by 44,872;
  - Those aged 65 - 69 are forecast to increase by 5,920;
  - Those aged 75 – 79 are forecast to increase by 3,341; and
  - Those aged 85 + are forecast to increase by 2,988 people.
- 3.8. As such, the evidence base for the Draft Local Plan does not robustly justify deviating from the LHNF so significantly. In fact, it does the opposite in recommending that the Council should consider its objectively assessed need for housing to be 2,537 dwellings per annum and seek to meet this as much as possible.
- 3.9. As stated previously, there is a significant discrepancy between the LHNF and the housing target identified in Draft Policy SDS1 which is not supported by the Draft Local Plans evidence base and has no regard to the recommendation to meet the boroughs LHNF made in the LHNA. Therefore, we consider that the Draft Local Plan is **unsound** on the grounds that it is not:
- **Positively prepared** in that it does not provide a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the areas objectively assessed need;
  - **Justified** in that it is not based on proportionate evidence; or
  - **Effective** in that it does not plan to deliver the needs of the borough over the plan period.
- 3.10. In order for the Draft Local Plan to satisfy the NPPF test of soundness, it should have due regard to the evidence base in seeking to meet its own identified housing need figure rather than defaulting to the London Plan 10-year housing target which is informed by an out-of-date evidence base and likely to undergo a review resulting in increased housing targets.
- 3.11. Notwithstanding the above, a number of sites which are allocated within the Draft Local Plan to deliver against this housing target are rendered unviable and undeliverable by the plan when read as a whole, having particular regard to Draft Policy LP4 (Tall Buildings) which prescribes building height caps for mid and tall building zones across the Borough<sup>2</sup>. Lombard Road (RIV6) is one example<sup>3</sup>, but we note that a number of other landowners with Draft Site Allocations have identified similar viability and deliverability issues as a result of the Draft Plan, as cited in their Regulation 19 representations on the Draft Local Plan.
- 3.12. As such, not only does the Draft Local Plan set an unjustifiably low housing delivery target over the plan period, it also fails to positively support the delivery of allocated sites to meet this target. Essentially, even if the 20,311 housing target were justified, the Draft policy framework does not facilitate the delivery of allocated sites which are expected to deliver against it.
- 3.13. The same case, as set out above, applies to the housing capacity figures cited in Draft Policy SDS1 for the Wandsworth Riverside (1,098) and Nine Elms (8,417) Area Strategies. As the site

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<sup>2</sup> See the Matter 13 Hearing Statement submitted on behalf of Safestore PLC.

<sup>3</sup> See the Regulation 19 Representation submitted on behalf of Safestore PLC.

allocations which make up these housing figures are rendered undeliverable by the Draft Plan, these housing targets cannot be met and this reflects an unsound policy framework.

3.14. On this basis, the Draft Local Plan renders Draft Site Allocations RIV6 and NE7 unviable. As a result, neither Site Allocation will be able to deliver against the development objectives outlined below, as cited in the Draft Local Plan:

- **Lombard Road (RIV6)** – allocated for residential uses and economic floorspace, including improvements to the amenity of the surrounding area and creation of a new public space.
- **Ingate Place (NE7)** – allocated for industrial uses and new green open space, including the rationalisation of access routes within the vicinity of the site and contribution towards the strategic objectives of the Battersea Design and Technology Quarter.

#### 4. Conclusion

4.1. This hearing statement outlines that the Draft Local Plan is **unsound** for the following reasons:

- Main Modification PPMM/001, which proposes the removal of part B of Draft Policy PM1, should not be confirmed. Instead, Part B should be amended to provide flexibility within the policy. Our proposed changes to the wording of Part B of Draft Policy PM1, outlined in paragraph 3.3, are required if the Draft Policy is to be considered sound;
- Does not accord with paragraph 2 of the NPPF which states that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Our proposed changes to the wording of Part A of Draft Policy PM1, outlined in paragraph 3.3, are required if the Draft Policy is to be considered sound;
- In setting a housing target of 20,311 homes across the plan period, which falls significantly short of the Boroughs Local Housing Need Figure, the Draft Local Plan is not positively prepared in that it does not provide a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs;
- Not only does the Draft Local Plan not positively plan to meet housing need, it also fails to set out an effective Policy framework to facilitate the delivery of housing on allocated sites, such as Lombard Road (RIV6), by setting prescriptive building height caps which stifle housing delivery (See Matter 13 Hearing Statement submitted on behalf of Safestore); and
- When read as a whole, the Draft Local Plan sterilises the development potential of allocated sites, such as Lombard Road (RIV6) and Ingate Place (NE7), preventing the delivery of the Draft Plans Strategic Development Strategy (Policy SDS1) and other growth ambitions.