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# **Examination of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 - 2040**

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Examination in Public Hearings – November - December 2022  
Matter 4 – Site Allocations Process and Methodology

Hearing Statement prepared by Savills on behalf of Obsidian  
Strategic Asset Management Ltd

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## Executive Summary

This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Savills (UK) Limited on behalf of Obsidian Strategic Asset Management ('Obsidian') who are acting as promoter for the Land to the north of Saxilby and west of B1241, Saxilby (assessed in Document EVR076-082 as site reference WL/SAXI/015).

We consider there are deficiencies in the approach taken by Central Lincolnshire in identifying sites for development. This statement sets out how the approach progressed by the Committee is not robust, with the potential to have a significant negative impact on the delivery of housing in the District. The approach taken does not conform with national or adopted local policies. This Statement sets out in detail where these deficiencies lie.

This statement then sets out the modifications which we feel are required to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that the Plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and can therefore be considered sound, before being adopted.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Savills (UK) Ltd on behalf of Obsidian Strategic Asset Management (Obsidian) who act as land promoter on behalf of the landowner of the Land to the north of Saxilby and west of B1241, Saxilby (WL/SAXI/015). A site location plan is contained at **Appendix 1** of this Statement.
- 1.2. This Statement should be read in conjunction with the representations submitted on behalf of Obsidian Strategic Asset Management at previous stages of consultation.

### **Approach to the Examination in Public**

- 1.3. This Statement is directed at specific matters, issues and questions raised for the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review Examination. Broadly, this Statement is directed at Central Lincolnshire's approach and methodology for the spatial strategy and distribution of growth as outlined in Matter 3 of the Inspectors MIQ document.

### **Land west of Sturton Road, Saxilby**

- 1.4. The Land at Sturton Road is located in the 'Large Village' of Saxilby. Saxilby is located to the south west of West Lindsey District, circa 9 km north west of Lincoln. Saxilby is accessible off the A57 and benefits from a railway station served by the Doncaster to Lincoln Line. Saxilby has a primary school and a number of shops including a convenience store, pharmacy, Post Office, pubs, restaurants and cafes, a community centre, Village Hall and a church.
- 1.5. The Land at Sturton Road is located to the north of the village and extends to approximately 145 acres (59.68 Ha). The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 (Lowest Risk of Flooding) although there are areas of medium and low surface water flooding risk. There are no statutory ecological designations on or within close proximity to the site. The nearest SSSI, Doddington Clay Woods, is located approximately 5.1 km south of the site/ The site falls outside of the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for this designation.
- 1.6. There are no listed buildings on or within close proximity to the site. The Grade I Listed Church of St Botolph is located circa 350 metres to the south, intersected by existing development.
- 1.7. Two sites to the north of Saxilby are under construction currently. 'Saxilby Heights' (111 dwellings) is under development by Taylor Wimpey and is located off Church Lane. 'Ingleby View' (133 dwellings) is being developed by Lovell Homes and is located off Sturton Road.
- 1.8. Obsidian's ultimate objective with regards to the Land to the north of Saxilby and west of B1241, Saxilby (WL/SAXI/015) is to deliver a development of up to 650 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), a School (Use Class F1(a)) and some employment or commercial floorspace as appropriate (Use Classes B2/B8 or E). The site is deliverable and developable. The site capacity of 650 residential dwellings is put forward as a maximum. Obsidian would also progress on the basis of a smaller site size or an allocation for delivery on a phased basis, across the entire plan period (and possibly beyond).

## 2. Matter 4 – Site Allocations Process and Methodology

### Issue 1 – Site Allocation Methodology

**Q1. The Central Lincolnshire Policies S76-S82: Sustainable Urban Extensions and Housing Allocations Evidence Report<sup>15</sup> includes a summary of the site allocation process. As part of the initial sift, how were sites discounted by location? If a site was beyond the edge of a built-up area, was it discounted without further assessment?**

- 2.1. Document EVRS76-S82 states that the initial sift of sites received through the HELAA and Call for Sites process was undertaken by threshold (less than ten dwellings discounted) and location (sites not within or adjacent to the built up area discounted). We support the approach taken to assess the developability and deliverability of sites both within the built area and adjacent to it.
- 2.2. We support the approach taken by the committee with regards to defined settlement limits, instead focussing on the developed footprint, both in terms of within policy and within the assessment methodology.
- 2.3. Document EVR076-082 goes on to assess the sites which were not discounted in this initial sift, including the Land to the north of Saxilby and west of B1241, Saxilby (WL/SAXI/015).

**Q2. How was the settlement hierarchy and distribution of development used to inform decisions on which sites to allocate? For example, how did the Committee ensure that, when taking into account commitments, the levels of growth in each location would reflect the overall strategy?**

- 2.4. The site assessment process considered sites across every tier of the hierarchy, including large villages both within and outside of the Lincoln Strategy Area. Whilst this is generally supported, a mechanism for encouraging more growth in Large Villages and other settlements within the Lincoln Strategy Area should have been built into the site assessment methodology, to ensure that delivery in this sustainable location is prioritised over sites outside of it. This would ensure consistency with policies S1 and S2.
- 2.5. Village Assessments were also used to inform this approach<sup>1</sup>. Saxilby was assessed as part of this evidence. The assessment notes:  
  
*‘Saxilby is a large village with a good range of services and facilities that also meet the day to day needs of surrounding smaller villages. It also has good road and public transport links with Lincoln.’*
- 2.6. Clearly therefore Saxilby is a sustainable location for accommodating growth, in line with paragraph 8 of the NPPF, whilst also supporting smaller villages in the surrounding area<sup>2</sup>. The location of growth to Saxilby also aligns with the Settlement Hierarchy and distribution of growth outlined within policy S1 and S2 given the settlement is within the Lincoln Strategic Area.

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<sup>1</sup> Document STA008

<sup>2</sup> NPPF (2021) Paragraph 79

- 2.7. In contrast to this, Saxilby has been allocated a lower level of growth than other Large Villages in the Strategic Area. This is not commensurate with its sustainability credentials, similar to other Large Villages that are well connected to transport corridors between Lincoln and the Main and Market Towns. Relative to the number of homes at 1 April 2018, proposed levels of growth are: 44.6% at Welton; 38% at Dunholme; and 32.4% at Cherry Willingham. In contrast, the proposed level of growth at Saxilby is considerably lower at just 18.2%. In Obsidian's view, this approach does not align with the Preferred Growth Option [Option 5], and in turn raises questions as to whether the Local Plan, in this context, has been positively prepared, fully justified, and effective.
- 2.8. Document EVR06-082 also identifies sites within each settlement which benefit from live planning permissions, though the paper describes that these were taken into account to determine appropriate development densities, rather than in identifying settlements capable of accommodating further growth.
- 2.9. The Local Plan should be forward looking and must identify sites which are capable of delivering growth over the plan period<sup>3</sup>. This should be considered separately to past growth, particularly in otherwise sustainable locations such as Saxilby.
- 2.10. The suggested approach, allocating sites in line with the settlement hierarchy, would also achieve the objectives of Paragraph 105 of the NPPF, which seeks to focus sustainable growth in locations which are, or can be made, sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes'.

***Q5. Where concerns were raised regarding a technical aspect of a site, such as drainage or visibility splays and access, how were these issues resolved as part of the site allocation process? Was further information requested and if so from whom and when?***

- 2.11. Relevant PPG<sup>4</sup> supports and encourages the identification of large-scale developments such as village and town extensions. However, in contrast to this national guidance, Site reference WL/SAXI/015 appears to be been assessed but discounted.
- 2.12. The site assessment concluded that the Land to the north of Saxilby and west of B1241, Saxilby is free from any statutory designations which would prevent its development.
- 2.13. Document EVR076-82 states that the site was discounted on the basis that:
- 'The site is a large area to the north of Saxilby that would have impacts upon the character and setting of the village. There are other sites preferable'*
- 2.14. The site assessment also notes that:
- 'The western edge of the site is within Flood Zone 2. Parts of the site are at risk from surface water flooding'*

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<sup>3</sup> NPPF (2021) paragraph 22

<sup>4</sup> Guidance: Housing and economic land availability assessment. Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 3-009-20190722

- 2.15. The site assessment appears to discount the site on the basis of its size and impact on the character of the settlement (contrary to relevant PPG<sup>1</sup>), existing commitments and which raised technical issues such as isolated flood risk and highways considerations.
- 2.16. The committee did not approach the promoter of the site to undertake any technical assessments of the site, which would have demonstrated that highways improvements and an appropriate drainage strategy and masterplanning could overcome concerns relating to highways and flood risk.
- 2.17. The approach taken seems to disregard the potential for larger sites such as Land to the north of Saxilby and west of B1241, Saxilby (WL/SAXI/015) to deliver infrastructure improvements which can alleviate technical aspects and provide enhancements.
- 2.18. We are aware that there are capacity issues at the existing primary school. This was raised as a significant concern in response to development proposals in the Village. The location of the school means that there are limited opportunities for its expansion. It follows that directing a larger quantum of development to Saxilby will facilitate the required improvements to existing infrastructure. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan<sup>5</sup> does not identify any planned improvements to Saxilby despite the allocations proposed. Additional development at scale could support an increase in primary school capacity with a new or relocated and expanded school, care facility and potentially a local retail unit; and more generally could support the delivery of wider community projects identified in the Saxilby within the Ingleby Neighbourhood Development Plan.

***Q7. Was the site selection process robust? Was an appropriate selection of potential sites assessed, and were appropriate criteria taken into account?***

- 2.19. We have outlined in the above the inconsistencies in the site selection process.
- 2.20. The Site is assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal as a 'reasonable alternative' to the progressed site allocations in the village. It is unclear from document reference EVR07-082 to what extent the Sustainability Appraisal has been taken into account when selecting sites for allocation. We request additional information in this regard to demonstrate that the SA was afforded significant weight in the process, in line with the NPPF<sup>6</sup>. The information provided will determine the robustness of the process.
- 2.21. In any event, we have undertaken a review of the sustainability appraisal and through this review we have identified inconsistencies in the assessment of sites which could adversely influence the sites progressed, leading to less sustainable sites being progressed. When looking at the Sustainability Appraisals assessment of site reference WL/SAXI/010, it is clear that the proposed development (mix of uses) on the site has not been taken into account, nor has the NPPF (Para 73) which acknowledges that large scale development in sustainable villages (such as Saxilby) presents opportunities for other enhancements through investment in infrastructure as well as through increased expenditure which can support existing services.

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<sup>5</sup> Document INF001a

<sup>6</sup> NPPF (2021) Paragraph 32

- 2.22. Of significance, the SA methodology does not set defined perimeters for the assessment of sites which leads to the arbitrary application of ratings and the SA is therefore inconsistent. The table and associated comments at **Appendix 2** has been created to highlight these inconsistencies. The assessment for site reference WL/SAXI/010 should be amended in line with these comments. It is clear that if a robust assessment methodology was applied, and guidance within the relevant PPG was taken into account, the benefits of allocating a larger development site, such as the Land to the north of Saxilby and west of B1241, Saxilby (WL/SAXI/015), would result in a much more sustainable development which would also serve to improve the sustainability of Saxilby, in line with the NPPF<sup>7</sup>.
- 2.23. An accurate assessment of sites within the Sustainability appraisal and affording significant weight to this assessment, would ensure that the site assessment process is robust.
- 2.24. The reliance upon evidence which appears contrived does not meet the requirements of the NPPF<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> NPPF (2021) Paragraphs 73 and 105

<sup>8</sup> NPPF (2021) Paragraph 35



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## Appendices

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## Appendix 1 Site Location Plan

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Land West of Sturton Road, Saxilby



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## Appendix 2

### SA Assessment and Commentary

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## Appendix 2 – Sustainability Appraisal Commentary

Sustainability Objective																			
	1. Housing	2. Health and Wellbeing		4. Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure		5. Landscape and Townscape	6. Built and Historic Environment	7. Natural Resources – Water	8. Air Pollution		9. Natural Resources – Land and Soil		12. Climate Change Adaptation and Flood Risk	13. Transport and Accessibility		14. Employment		15. Local Economy	
Policy and Site Reference	1. Housing	2.1 Access to healthcare facilities	2.2. Opportunities for healthy lifestyles	4.1 Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	4.2 Local Green Space	5. Landscape and Townscape	6. Built and Historic Environment	7. Natural Resources – Water	8.1 Air Pollution	8.2 Noise Pollution	9.1. Agricultural Land	9.2 Minerals Resource	12. Climate change adaptation and flood risk	13.1 Access to services and facilities	13.2 Sustainable travel modes	14.1 Employment	14.2 Education, training and learning	15.1 Encourage and support local economy	15.2 Protect and enhance hierarchy of centres
WL/SAXI/010	+	-	--/?	0/?	0	+/?	-/?	0	+	0/?	-	0	+	-	-	-	--/?	0	0
WL/SAXI/004	++	++	++	0/?	0	+/?	0/?	0	+	0/?	-	0	+	-	-	-	--/?	0	0
WL/SAXI/007	+	+	+	0/?	0	+/?	0/?	0	+	0/?	++	0	+	-	-	-	--/?	0	0

**Comment 1** - WL/SAXI/010, promoted by Obsidian strategic asset management, is located, circa 1km from the nearest doctors surgery, when measured from the proposed site access or circa 500 metres from the nearest point. There is no clear justification for the site being measured as having a neutral impact on access to healthcare facilities, given that the site is located within walking distance of the nearest surgery and an appropriate section 106 contribution would be made to healthcare facilities following the granting of planning permission.

**Comment 2** – WL/SAXI/010 is identified as having significant negative or unknown impacts on opportunities for healthy lifestyles in contrast to the assessment given to adjacent allocations (WL/SAXI/004 and WL/SAXI/007). There is no clear justification for this. The site provides better opportunities for the delivery of public open space for recreational use on account of its size. Sustainable travel links and services are located a short distance away.

**Comment 3**- WL/SAXI/010 is identified to have an unknown impact on biodiversity and geodiversity. This is unjustified. The site is not subject to any statutory ecological designations and the scale of the site would provide significant opportunity for betterment in terms of biodiversity.

**Comment 4** - All of the sites identified above (allocated sites WL/SAXI/004 and WL/SAXI/007 and discounted site ref. WL/SAXI/010) are identified to have a significant negative impact on access to services and facilities and a negative impact on sustainable travel modes. The proposals for site reference WL/SAXI/010 would include for a small commercial centre and/ or employment space and so would result in a significant positive impact. The site is 1.2km from Saxilby railway station and less than 500 metres from the nearest bus stop. This should be measured as significant positive, commensurate with the settlements role as a large village.

**Comment 5** - WL/SAXI/010 seeks to include a school within the development. It should therefore not have been assessed as having a significant negative impact on Education, training and learning.

**Comment 6** – The NPPF is clear regarding the support that housing development can have on supporting the local economy. The proposed development of circa 650 new residential dwellings on site reference WL/SAXI/010 would result in a significant positive impact in encouraging and supporting the local economy.