

Waitrose Mill Hill East

Statement in Support of a Mixed-Use Residential Allocation in the Barnet Plan

For Site Specific EiP Sessions Commencing 4th November 2022

September 2022

LICHFIELDS

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 We are instructed by the John Lewis Partnership (JLP /The Partnership) to appear at the Examination in Public (EiP) following duly made representations on the emerging draft Reg.19 Barnet Local Plan (BLP), produced by the London Borough of Barnet Council (LBBC).
- 1.2 The Partnership is the UK's largest employee-owned business and is owned in trust on behalf of its 80,000 Partners. In turn, The Partnership owns 34 John Lewis stores and 331 Waitrose stores.
- 1.3 The business has undertaken a thorough review in the last 2.5 years and put in place a Partnership Plan that seeks to restore its profits. Championing equality, sustainability and wellbeing, the business is seeking to diversify from its retail core into the Build to Rent (BTR) market. The Partnership sees Build to Rent as a key addition to the business, aiming to deliver some 10,000 homes under its management in the next 10 years.
- 1.4 The initial focus is on a limited number of existing locations the Partnership owns through utilising airspace above its retail assets, whilst ensuring that a strong retail operation remains beneath.
- 1.5 The John Lewis Partnership wholly owns its Waitrose store at Mill Hill and proposes this store to be one of the first to be promoted for this exciting new BTR initiative.

Representations to Reg.19 Draft Barnet Local Plan

- 1.6 Representations to the Reg.19 Draft Barnet Local Plan (BLP) have been duly made in support of a mixed use residential allocation on the existing site of Waitrose Mill Hill, at 2 Langstone Way, Mill Hill NW7 1GU.
- 1.7 As a key stakeholder in the Mill Hill East Area, and as owners of the Waitrose store and adjoining car park areas, JLP would like to participate in the examination of Policies relevant to Mill Hill East and the relevant site allocations sessions, in order to help inform the final form of the policies and site allocations.
- 1.8 This Statement should be considered as part of the site-specific sessions arranged to commence from 4th November 2022.
- 1.9 The intention of The Partnership is to maintain its retail food store at Mill Hill East for Waitrose, to help sustain the local centre and serve the wider community, alongside the development of the site for approximately 140 Build to Rent (BTR) residential units, which will include building above the Waitrose retained car park. These homes will be owned jointly with an investor and will be developed and run by JLP.
- 1.10 The timing of The Partnership's decisions to progress this opportunity meant that it was not possible to make representations on earlier versions of the emerging Plan, notably the Reg.18 document. However, after making Representations on the Reg.19 Plan, JLP and its advisors have had positive initial pre-application discussions with LBBC. It is hoped that these will continue and that LBBC recognise the site as one suitable for mixed use residential development which enhances the vitality and viability of Mill Hill East whilst providing an important residential allocation at a sustainable location.
- 1.11 As a local centre location well accessed by public transport, we consider the site, including car park, is capable of mixed-use residential development. We confirm that the site is suitable,

available and achievable for residential development and its inclusion in the Barnet Plan will help make the Plan 'sound'

- 1.12 Further representations on policies relating to Tall(er)Buildings for the EiP session arranged for 2nd November are submitted separate to this Statement.

2.0 The Site

2.1 The extent of the Waitrose Mill Hill East site is provided at Appendix A.

2.2 The site is a significant one and falls immediately to the south of Mill Hill East underground station. It is defined by the existing Waitrose store and its car park, with the following boundaries:

- To the north, by embankment, Tube Line (Northern Line) and Mill Hill East Station (indicated in the BLP as site allocation 47).
- To the south, by Langstone Way
- To the west by the Virgin Active club and car park, the Day Lewis Pharmacy and Langston Way Surgery
- To the east by Bittacy Hill / the B552

2.3 The site is accessed by foot and car from Langston Way.

2.4 The site is in Flood Zone 1 with very low risk of flooding.

2.5 In considering the site for a mixed residential allocation which would maintain the Waitrose food store and provide approximately 140 BTR homes on a podium above the car park, it is considered that the site is:

- Suitable: The site falls within the defined Mill Hill East Centre, in an area of growth and adjacent to Allocation 47 in the BLP.
- Available: The site is immediately available and falls as one of the first sites to be progressed as part of the JLP BtR initiative.
- Achievable: JLP have confirmed the site can be delivered within the next 5 years.
- Deliverable: The John Lewis Partnership own the site, with no significant contractual or physical impediment to development. Whilst a gas line crosses the southern part of the site, a suitable scheme has been devised which avoids this being any impediment to development.

2.6 Given the above, JLP confirm the site can be delivered in years 1-5 of the BLP and that it can form an allocation for mixed use development within the BLP.

3.0 **Support for a Mixed-Use Residential Allocation**

Additional Growth for Mill Hill East

- 3.1 The key diagram of the BLP (Page 31) shows Mill Hill East as a key growth area in the Borough.
- 3.2 The Waitrose is located at a sustainable location within the Holders Hill Circus Local Centre, adjacent to Mill Hill East Station.
- 3.3 The Waitrose site is presently unallocated in the BLP but adjacent to Site 47 (Appendix B) which comprises Mill Hill East Station and which is envisaged to deliver 127 units through redevelopment of airspace above and on land adjoining the station.
- 3.4 Mill Hill East has been the subject of significant development, which the BLP continues to support. Land to the north of the underground station, comprising former barracks and training centre, is subject to an Area Action Plan (AAP) for intensification for approximately 2,000 new homes and 500 jobs. This is presently under construction by Barratt, with an estimated 2,240 properties being developed in a phased manner alongside community facilities, including parks, open spaces and new primary school. Unimplemented allocations in the AAP remain part of the Local Plan.
- 3.5 POLICY GSS01 of the draft plan, in seeking delivery of *'Sustainable Growth'* includes the provision of up to 1,500 homes in Mill Hill. BLP Policy GSS07 notes the growth of Mill Hill East and supports additional proposals on suitable sites to deliver further good suburban growth. Separately, para 4.24.7 / GSS09 notes Mill Hill East Station as an existing transport hub *'offers significant potential for intensification and growth'*.
- 3.6 Table 5 *'New Homes Delivery'* supporting GSS07 foresees up to 1,500 new units over a 15-year period, with up to 1,200 of these being delivered in years 1-5 of the Plan.
- 3.7 The Waitrose could make a significant contribution to this further growth in years 1-5 of the Plan, helping make the Plan sound through the delivery of 140 units on a brownfield, sustainable and accessible location.
- 3.8 The allocation of the Waitrose site for residential development will achieve sustainable development under the terms of NPPF21 in achieving, overarching objectives of para 8:
- a) An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economic position for Mill Hill East, Holders Hill Circus Local Centre and the existing Waitrose to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure with further growth, utilising an existing and accessible brownfield site;
 - b) A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring a sufficient number and range of homes, including BTR, can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations linked with the existing services and infrastructure of Waitrose, Mill Hill East and the vitality and viability of the existing centre; and
 - c) An environmental objective – to utilise greater density of a brownfield site at an accessible location in order to protect and enhance more sensitive natural and historic environments and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including seeking net zero carbon in operation for the new homes and assisting in moving to a low carbon economy whereby development is located at accessible locations with existing nearby services and facilities.

- 3.9 We consider that the Waitrose Mill Hill site, including construction above its car park, can be included within the BLP and that such an allocation will help make the Plan sound, more effective and justified.

Strategic Location of Waitrose Site

- 3.10 The Waitrose site occupies a strategic position within the Mill Hill East growth area, within a local centre and adjacent to Mill Hill East Station, a key transport hub. Bittacy Hill / the B552 adjacent the site is also designated a major TfL route.
- 3.11 The site does not fall within a Conservation Area and a search on Historic England's website shows there to be no listed buildings on the site or in the vicinity (within 300m of the site).
- 3.12 BLP Para 2.5.1 notes '*Barnet's town centre hierarchy provides a strong, distinctive feature for the Borough economy. The variety of centres (regional, major, district and local) across the Borough will be the focus of sustainable, mixed-use development, with the aim of promoting their unique identity as a catalyst for future growth.*' Policy TOWo1 supports residential development within the Town Centre hierarchy within Barnet, including local centres.
- 3.13 Policy GSS07 in support of further development at Mill Hill East notes development proposals should be supported by a Transport Assessment setting out public transport improvements / demonstrating how sustainable transport options will be provided. The Policy also notes development proposals should provide careful consideration of any impacts on the Mill Hill Conservation Area and Green Belt designations.
- 3.14 The Waitrose's proximity within a centre and to Mill Hill East Station and central position within the growth area adjacent a key transport node is shown at Appendix B. Work undertaken to date in support of a G+7 storey building by Montagu Evans shows there will not be significant impact on either Conservation Area or Green Belt, both of which are at some distance from the site. Bittacy Road is a TfL Priority Route, and the site falls immediately north of Mill Hill East Station. The Waitrose site is therefore at a highly accessible and sustainable location.
- 3.15 Para 4.8.2 notes that the delivery of new homes will mostly be in the growth areas including Mill Hill East, alongside new housing in the Borough's centres. Para 4.8.3 notes the approach to growth seek to regenerate and develop areas of brownfield and underused land and buildings, particularly where these are in areas of good public transport provision, such as the Waitrose site.
- 3.16 BLP Para 7.6.1 notes residential accommodation within mixed use development in town centres can help contribute to vitality and viability by increasing footfall for business, supporting the night-time economy and enhancing levels of natural surveillance and activity.
- 3.17 This is consistent with NPPF21 para 86 which requires planning policies and decisions to support the role that town and other centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to inter alia '*growth, management and adaptation*'.
- 3.18 This includes (inter alia):
- '(a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow **and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing)** and reflects their distinctive characters,' (our emphasis).*
- 3.19 And to:
- 'f) recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.'*

- 3.20 NPPF21 Para 123 notes local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land, supporting proposals for the use of retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town and other centres.
- 3.21 NPPF21 Para 125 notes plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible and that this should include greater density in centres and locations that are well served by public transport. These standards should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential development within these areas, unless it can be shown that there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate.
- 3.22 NPPF21 para 81 similarly supports the formation of policies to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, with significant weight applied to supporting economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development, such to allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. The ability to deliver BTR at Mill Hill will help support JLP, as a key stakeholder, and ensure long term investment within the Mill Hill East area.
- 3.23 The London Plan 2021 forms part of the development Plan for Barnet. Policy SD6 Town Centres and High Streets specifically supports the vitality and viability of London's varied town centres. As part of this, the need for adaption and diversification is recognised, with the London Plan stating town centres, particularly smaller centres, need to diversify to ensure future vitality and viability. Policy SD8 similarly recognises that the capital's town centre network is dynamic, and the role and function of centres needs to change over time to ensure future resilience.
- 3.24 The allocation of the Waitrose at Mill Hill for mixed use development will ensure future vitality and viability to the local centre and create a further resident population to support not only the role and function of the centre, but services in the wider area.

Widening Residential Choice (Including BTR)

- 3.25 BLP Para 5.2.4 notes that the Barnet Borough needs to offer a greater choice than simply a standard tenure of residential market units for sale.
- 3.26 To achieve this, BLP Para 3.3.2 notes one key objective for the Council will be to increase the supply of rental options within the Borough, with the BLP noting this should include greater provision of BTR. Such an approach is consistent with NPPF21 in providing variety and choice in residential development and tenure and provision of additional such uses will help make the Plan sound.
- 3.27 JLP propose its development at Mill Hill to be fully BTR, with the business developing and running the homes to, in turn, help complement its retail business and the core values of the Partnership.
- 3.28 BLP Paras 5.17.1-2 notes LBBC are supportive of BTR proposals, and that the provision of affordable housing as part of BTR schemes should meet requirements of London Plan Policy H11. This approach to a viability tested Discounted Rental Model for the provision of affordable units would be acceptable to JLP.
- 3.29 NPPF21 para.60 notes (inter alia) to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed.
- 3.30 The allocation of the Waitrose at Mill Hill for Build to Rent (BTR) will therefore help achieve such a widening of residential choice within LBBC.

4.0 Proposed Changes to draft Plan

4.1 Firstly, to make Policy GSS07 and emerging Local Plan more ‘effective’ and ‘justified’ we consider JLP’s site should be included within the BLP’s development sites.

4.2 Since previous consultation on the Local Plan, JLP has progressed feasibility work on its site for a mixed-use development. This work demonstrates that a scheme with 140 build to rent units could be accommodated on its site above part of the car park alongside a retained Waitrose store. There has also been positive feedback to initial pre-application discussions.

4.3 As a brownfield site at a sustainable and accessible location, the site is deliverable in being suitable, available and achievable within Years 1-5, ie during the first period of the Plan. Its inclusion in the Mill Hill East policy and as a site allocation, will help give added certainty to the ability of the plan to deliver the new homes required over the plan period.

4.4 Secondly, we consider Policy GSS07 could be updated to increase its consistency with national policy which encourages making more effective use of land and to make it more consistent with NPPF Policy (Para 125(a) which encourages optimising the use of land and density at accessible locations.

4.5 The following changes to the BLP Policy GSS07 (para 3) are respectfully requested. Struck out words are to be omitted. Additions are shown in **bold**.

‘The Council will positively consider proposals on suitable sites to deliver further good suburban growth, including at ~~Mill Hill East Station~~, Watchtower House and IBSA House.

More intensive development is appropriate at Mill Hill East Station and on land to the South of Mill Hill East Station, occupied by the Waitrose site. The above sites, collectively ~~which together could deliver 5-687~~ new homes.’

4.6 The addition of the Waitrose site and development above its existing car park, ‘Land South of Mill Hill East Station, Comprising Waitrose and Car Park’ should also be reflected within the Schedule of Site Proposals in Annex 1 and in an update of Map 3E, similar to that contained in Appendix B.

5.0 Conclusions

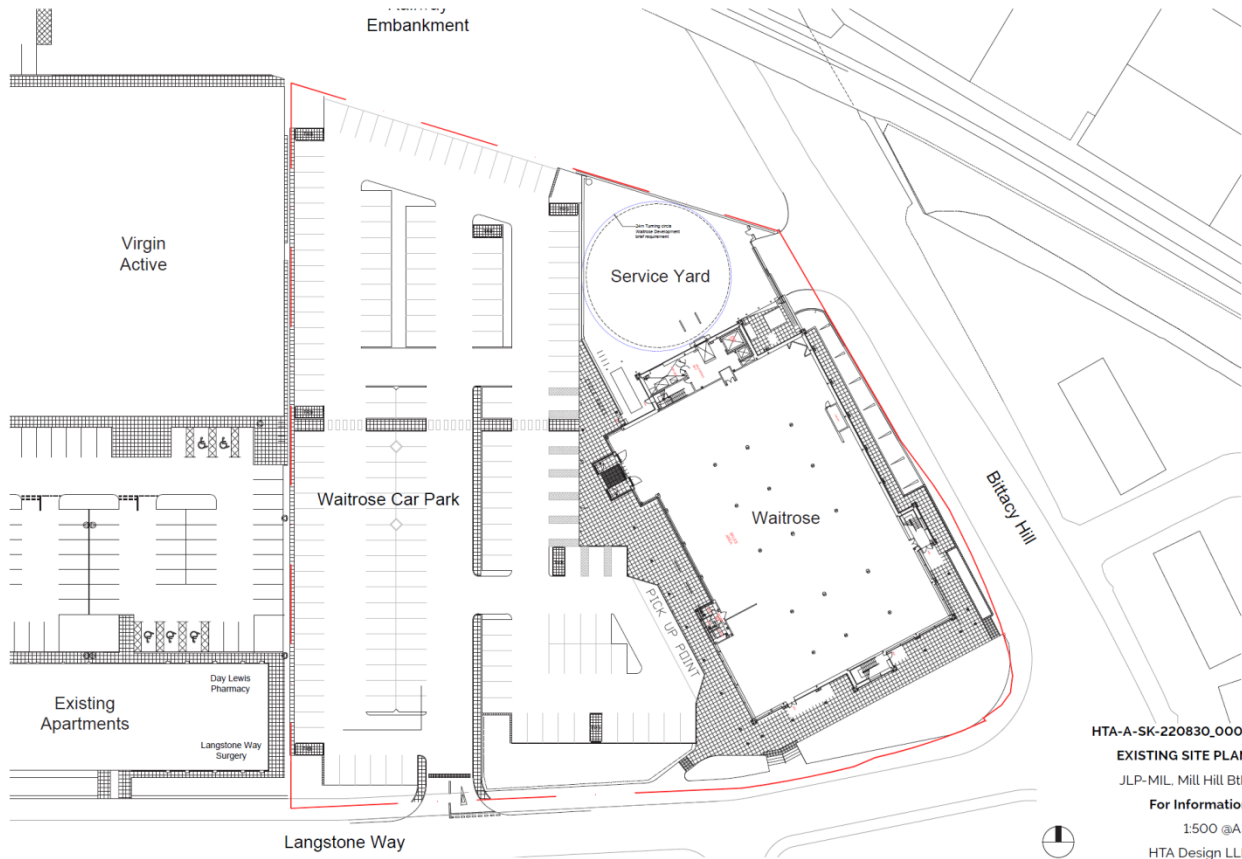
- 5.1 JLP has undertaken a thorough review in the last 2.5 years and put in place a Partnership Plan that seeks to restore its profits. Championing equality, sustainability and wellbeing, the business is seeking to diversify from its retail core into the Build to Rent (BTR) market. The Partnership sees Build to Rent as a key addition to the business, aiming to deliver some 10,000 homes under its management in the next 10 years.
- 5.2 JLP wholly owns its Waitrose store at Mill Hill and proposes this store to be one of the first to be promoted for this exciting new BtR initiative.
- 5.3 Representations to the Reg.19 Draft Barnet Local Plan (BLP) have been duly made in support of a mixed-use residential allocation on the existing site of Waitrose Mill Hill, at 2 Langstone Way, Mill Hill, NW7 1GU.
- 5.4 The intention of The Partnership is to maintain its retail food store at Mill Hill East for Waitrose, to help sustain the local centre and serve the wider community, alongside the development of the site, including development above Waitrose's existing car park for approximately 140 Build to Rent (BTR) residential units. These units will be developed and operated by JLP.
- 5.5 The timing of The Partnership's decisions to progress this opportunity meant that it was not possible to make representations on earlier versions of the emerging Plan, notably the Reg.18 documents.
- 5.6 However, subsequent to the making of Representations on the Reg.19 Plan, JLP and its advisors have had positive initial pre-application discussions with LBBC. It is hoped that these will continue and that LBBC recognise the site as one suitable for mixed use residential development which enhances the vitality and viability of Mill Hill East whilst providing an important residential allocation at a sustainable location.
- 5.7 As a local centre well accessed by public transport, and as an accessible location supported by the BLP, London Plan and NPPF21 we consider the site appropriate for a mixed-use residential allocation.
- 5.8 We confirm that the site is suitable, available and achievable for residential development and deliverable within 1-5 years, ie during the first period of the Plan.
- 5.9 If there any comments or queries, or clarifications required on any of the points raised in these representations, then please do not hesitate to contact Ian Anderson at
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Lichfields

September 2022

Appendix A: Site Plan

Site Plan: Waitrose Mill Hill



Appendix B: Emerging Barnet Plan, showing Growth Area, Allocations and Position of Waitrose Site

Map 3E Mill Hill East Area

