



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

(STRATEGIC ALLOCATION POLICY PS30 (HUNTS GROVE EXTENSION))

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

Between

Crest Nicholson South West & Stagecoach West

Project No 23-301-20

Revision No 01

Issue date 21/02/23

Control Sheet

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared between Crest Nicholson South West (and agents acting on their behalf; Calibro Consultants Limited and Nexus Planning limited) and Stagecoach West (Cheltenham and Gloucester Omnibus Co. Ltd. dba), as the relevant local bus operator in the Plan area, hereafter referred to as "the parties".
- 1.1.2 This Statement has been prepared to assist the Inspectors conducting the Examination in Public of the Stroud District Local Plan Review and clarifies those matters that have been agreed in relation to Strategic Site Allocation Policy PS30 (Hunts Grove Extension) set out therein.
- 1.1.3 This SoCG is produced without prejudice to any other matters of detail the parties may wish to address at the examination.

2 OPENING COMMENTS & BACKGROUND

2.1 Stagecoach UK Bus

- 2.1.1 Stagecoach West operates an extensive network of scheduled bus and coach services both within the Plan area and the adjoining Gloucester City region. Indeed, it is the main public transport operator in Gloucestershire.
- 2.1.2 Stagecoach, as a major transport provider, recognises its important role in contributing key information and advice to the plan-making process, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (106(b)) and is actively involved in supporting all stakeholders involved in the development process, from planning and site identification to construction and handover.
- 2.1.3 Their commitment to effective partnership is evidenced by their own guidance document entitled *"Bus Services & New Residential Developments: General Highways and Urban Design advice to applicants and Highways Authorities"*, dated 2017. The company has duly made extensive representations in support of the production of the Local Plan Review at each stage including those submitted to the Regulation 19 Consultation to the Plan are also notable.

2.2 Crest Nicholson

- 2.2.1 Crest Nicholson is a leading property developer, with more than 55 years' experience of building new homes across the UK and is listed on the London Stock Exchange as a constituent of the FTSE250 Index. The company has regional offices in Bristol where they have a history of promoting and delivering new communities in the region, most notably the Hunts Grove development which comprises Policy SA4 of the adopted Local Plan and which in turn includes land rolled forward under Strategic Site Allocation Policy PS30.
- 2.2.2 Thus far, Hunts Grove has delivered over 1,000 dwellings and a 2FE Primary School of the extant planning permission(s) now comprising 1,639 dwellings, a primary school and district centre. A reserved matters application has also been submitted for the district centre.

2.3 Partnership Approach

- 2.3.1 The parties have a long-standing history of working in partnership to deliver non-car transport solutions at new developments around the Country, including at the adjoining Hunts Grove development. This cooperation has helped to deliver the Number 8 bus service which routes through the adjoining Hunts Grove development where it currently terminates. This service is one of the only bus services in the Gloucester area exhibiting higher patronage than pre-pandemic levels.

- 2.3.2 The existing relationship is therefore considered by both parties to be conducive to delivering mutually positive outcomes to enable further sustainable development in the area whilst supporting commercial operations of Stagecoach Bus and thereby ensuring long-term viability of bus services.
- 2.3.3 Both parties agree to continue to work effectively and positively to identify an optimised bus strategy to service the Strategic Site Allocation Policy PS30 as part of a comprehensive and vision-led Sustainable Transport Strategy.

3 THE APPROACH

3.1 Vision-Led Approach

- 3.1.1 The parties acknowledge that the rolling over the existing allocation of Policy SA4 of the adopted Stroud Local Plan into Policy PS30 (Hunts Grove Extension) presents a unique and positive opportunity to deliver a step change in bus provision in this part of the District. This will not only create opportunities for a coordinated multi-modal approach to trips starting and ending within the allocation site itself, but which will create material benefits for existing communities along the routes concerned, bringing positive wider impacts – including to Hunts Grove, Kingsway and Hardwicke.
- 3.1.2 The parties also acknowledge the benefits of ensuring that the Hunts Grove Extension is delivered ahead of other strategic residential developments as it unlocks the potential for strategic level bus and active travel connections along dedicated corridors that will allow bus to compete with private car travel.
- 3.1.3 The parties agree that a vision-led approach to master planning, travel planning and traffic forecasting is most appropriate in understanding the baseline opportunities and constraints for each mode of travel, and creating realistic and reliable assumptions, of modal shift on which investment decisions can be made.

4 PRINCIPLE OF PS30 (HUNTS GROVE EXTENSION)

- 4.1.1 The parties are cognisant that Policy PS30 (Hunts Grove Extension) is a site that already benefits from an allocation under Policy SA4 of the statutory adopted development plan for the area and that, accordingly, the principle of a residential development of 750 dwellings and associated facilities is already well established in policy.
- 4.1.2 The allocation follows on from and adjoins the existing Crest Nicholson development at Hunts Grove, on which work continues. A third and final phase of development accounting for about 750 dwellings as part of an existing planning permission is soon to commence, associated with the construction of a new access junction on the A38 and Neighbourhood Centre.
- 4.1.3 The current Local Plan development strategy for Stroud District has long concluded that Hunts Grove and its extension south of Haresfield Lane represents a sustainable location for development.
- 4.1.4 In “rolling forward” the allocation Policy SA4 into PS30 (Hunts Grove Extension) in its current Local Plan Review, it is implicit that the Council has concluded that this remains the case, having regard to its locally determined priorities in the Draft Local Plan Review (LPR), and national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 4.1.5 The parties strongly agree with this assessment.
- 4.1.6 Specifically, Stagecoach support for the rolling forward of the allocation because the site consolidates an existing urban extension on which a variety of facilities are planned to meet day to day needs. The site is able in the same way to directly benefit from recent extension of the local bus service network to Hunts Grove, and to some extent, existing longer distance services nearby accessible from stops on the A38.
- 4.1.7 The site forms part of a much larger mix of land uses that already exist or are proposed for allocation, including (but in no way limited to) the existing major employment destination at Waterwells to the north, and land south of Junction 12 of the M5 to the south. The rolling forward of the site is therefore a logical way of meeting housing needs very close to rapidly expanding employment sites, and in so doing makes walking cycling and public transport use greatly more relevant and attractive compared to personal car use.
- 4.1.8 Both parties recognise, and are committed to exploring in greater technical detail, a clear opportunity to connect the existing Hunts Grove development and the allocation of PS30 (Hunts Grove Extension) to the south directly to existing and proposed employment east of the M5 via a dedicated connection only for sustainable modes, using the existing Haresfield Lane M5 overbridge which would enable existing bus services to bypass the existing M5 Junction 12.

- 4.1.9 Both parties agree that, subject to the results of further consideration, a proposed non-car corridor utilising the Haresfield Lane overbridge would offer the potential for early benefits to the delivery of the Sustainable Transport Strategy of the Stroud District Local Plan Review.
- 4.1.10 Both parties agree that this measure would support a bus service improvement that demonstrably would damp demand for car trips between Kingsway, Hunts Grove and land to the south of Junction 12, and further employment and services in Stonehouse beyond, that would otherwise seek to use the B4008 and Junction 12 of the M5 Motorway.

5 EXISTING BUS SERVICES

- 5.1.1 Stagecoach operates Service 8 to Hunts Grove from Gloucester City Centre using an intentionally direct route via the A430 Secunda Way, and then via Kingsway and Waterwells to the site entering via Marconi Drive. In line with the consented Master Plan for Hunts Grove, the route uses Harrier Way as the primary street to reach its terminus close to the bottom of Hunts Grove Way, at a purpose-built temporary turning circle. This puts virtually all dwellings within a 400m walk of the route. The terminal is just 150m from the edge of the Hunts Grove Extension land.
- 5.1.2 Service 8 operates at a core Monday-Saturday daytime frequency of every 20 minutes. This rises to every 15 minutes in the peak hour in each direction. A 30-minute frequency runs on Sundays.
- 5.1.3 As well as the rapidly expanding retail, leisure and entertainment venue of the Gloucester Quays, the route runs close to the Gloucester College Campus, Gloucester Station, and then runs across the city centre to the east, serving a variety of commercial areas at Metz Way and Eastern Avenue, before terminating at Gloucester Business Park in Brockworth.
- 5.1.4 Additional services that connect Gloucester, Quedgeley and Stonehouse operate past Hunts Grove on the A38, where a pair of stops exists. This includes the 64 route that operates to Stonehouse via Whitminster and Great Oldbury generally every 30 minutes; and service 65 which runs via the B4008 and Standish to Stonehouse, generally every hour. This also runs through the emerging employment cluster south of Junction 12, including Javelin Park. Service 64 offers a Sunday service while 65 runs only Monday-Saturday.
- 5.1.5 Thus, at the outset, it is apparent that the land proposed for the Hunts Grove Extension is in immediate reach of not just one, but three regular bus services offering direct connectivity within a 25-minute ride to a large number of local services and employment centres, as well as Gloucester City Centre.
- 5.1.6 Furthermore, whilst there is currently some uncertainty regarding the long-term impact of COVID on travel behaviour, it is notable that Service 8 is the only service in the wider Gloucester City area – and one of only a few in the South West – that has patronage levels above that prior to the pandemic. This is not only because of the continued delivery of housing at Hunts Grove but a product of the attractiveness of the route and the destinations it serves.
- 5.1.7 In this context, there is no long-term viability concerns relating to Service 8, or for that matter Service 64 or 65.

6 MASTERPLANNING OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 Background

- 6.1.1 Crest Nicholson have commenced work on technical assessments in preparation of an outline planning which is to be submitted in November 2023. As part of this, early master planning work has been undertaken with input from Stagecoach. This aims to ensure bus services are not only potentially capable of penetrating the site to capture maximum patronage, but to also unlock the potential for a strategy that would maximise the attractiveness of bus travel towards nearby strategic employment sites, both for future residents of the draft allocation SP30 but also for other draft allocation sites, most notably GL1 and GL2, as well as existing residents of Hunts Grove.
- 6.1.2 Both parties agree that the ongoing delivery of Hunts Grove will deliver an extension to the primary street and bus route to link it to the A38 at a new signalised all-movements junction well before any occupation of the Hunts Grove Extension.
- 6.1.3 Close to this junction will be a new local centre, which forms a feature of the consented Master Plan. This link is now mostly constructed, albeit not open to traffic, and has incorporated a length of Haresfield Lane on the southern edge of the consented Hunts Grove site. As part of these works, bus stops and shelters have already been installed by Crest Nicholson ready for the further extension of service 8, and such other services as might use this link in the future.
- 6.1.4 The whole of the proposed Extension site south of Haresfield Lane would be within 500m of these stops. Thus, the residents of the extension land would be able to take advantage of this service from the point of first occupation. This immediate availability of a highly relevant public transport choice is quite unusual for a development of this kind – a point we would wish to emphasise. It does not depend on extension of a route suitable for buses through the site, which rarely can be made available early on in the development programme.
- 6.1.5 The emerging Master Plan anticipates two points of access into the site off Haresfield Lane that are intended to allow a bus to enter and circumnavigate. This makes it possible for buses to terminate within the site immediately east of the proposed Hunts Grove Local Centre. Such a solution would place all residents within 250m of a bus stop.
- 6.1.6 However, this is not the only option available for Service 8. Both parties acknowledge the opportunity and will work positively to explore opportunities to facilitate an extension of the service beyond Hunts Grove (including Hunts Grove Extension) towards the Cross Keys Roundabout to service the Quedgeley West Business Park.
- 6.1.7 Depending on the allocation of land at Hardwicke Green proposed as allocation G1 in the Local Plan Review, Stagecoach will also work with the relevant developer at the appropriate time to explore the potential to provide cross-link Service 8 from

Hunts Grove (including Hunts Grove Extension) to realise greatly enhanced mutual connectivity for both developments either side of the A38. This would also offer the scope to effectively double the frequency of services between both proposed allocations and Gloucester City Centre.

6.2 Haresfield Lane over-bridge & Potential Sustainable Access Link

- 6.2.1 In accordance with the access and movement strategy consented for Hunts Grove, the original Haresfield Lane alignment continues south of the development area from a new priority junction formed with Harrier Way at which the priority is offset. To prevent rat-running a Traffic Regulation Order is to be applied to this junction making it one-way only northbound.
- 6.2.2 The existing public highway leads over the M5 shortly after which there is a T-junction with a side road leading directly to the existing St Modwen employment development, which the Local Plan is proposing to consolidate with a further employment allocation.
- 6.2.3 Within the land control north of the bridge there is obvious potential to further adjust the access strategy to the area to make this link into one available in both directions, but only for walking cycling and public transport. Such a strategy needs no major engineering intervention, but would rely on a CCTV-enforced link, probably just south of an access point to the proposed playing fields and sports pavilion that are separately to be provided by Crest Nicholson as part of the Hunts Grove consent.
- 6.2.4 Such a link would open up a direct and progressive bus link from Stonehouse towards the M5 Motorway Junction 12 employment area, then progressively routing through all the major housing and employment developments east of the A38 in a manner that would make bus journey times highly competitive with driving. This would easily be effected through the diversion of service 65 from Naas Lane/Newhaven Drive in Kingsway via Waterwells and Hunts Grove (supplementing service 8) then via the Haresfield Lane link to re-join the existing B4008 route near Dobbies Garden Centre. It is worth noting that in so doing, it would abandon very few stops currently served.
- 6.2.5 Both parties commit to exploring the opportunity to create changes in the network to deliver a sustainable access link incorporating the Haresfield Lane over-bridge, including the commercial assessment of the benefits of re-routeing bus services along the new corridor.

6.3 Connectivity to Growth Areas East of M5 Motorway

- 6.3.1 The parties note that the relevance of this link is heightened in view of the wider planned increase in employment on the line of route and Stagecoach consider an uplift in the service to run broadly every 30 minutes between Gloucester and Stonehouse, to be commercially attractive. This synergises with the scope further to improve the frequency south of Stonehouse to Dursley, in support of other proposed allocations in the Local Plan Review at Wisloe Green, and North West of Cam (Draycott).

6.3.2 Both parties agree that such interventions could be initiated at a later date as those developments start to come forward, and that these service enhancements would be separately funded but nevertheless enabled by the sustainable access corridor.

6.4 Service Route & Specification

6.4.1 With regard to the strategic allocation proposed at the Hunts Grove Extension, the parties agree to continue discussions on the currently envisaged package of bus enhancements, which are follows:

- a. That initially if as expected, phasing of the development progresses from north to south from Haresfield Lane, the first phase(s) of the Hunts Grove Extension will depend on existing regular service 8 within Hunts Grove using the stops already provided that will be open for public use before the first occupation on the proposed Extension.
- b. There is likely to be a strong business case to improve the evening and Sunday Service 8 modestly from an early stage with proportionate developer funding.
- c. That, subject to technical and planning due diligence, from a point when no more than 25 homes are occupied on the Hunts Grove Extension, to have provided a facility for buses to use Haresfield Lane in two directions to reach the B4008 using the existing highway network south of the current and proposed employment development south of M5 junction 12. At this stage, Stagecoach would consider diversion of the existing hourly service 65 into the site at no cost.
- d. That, at the point that the “enhanced street” proposed within strategic allocation G1 Hardwicke Green is provided running through that site from Sellars Road to the Bristol Road, and made available to buses, Stagecoach would look to link the operation of Service 8 and the new Hardwicke Green service in both directions, creating new local links east to west between the site and Quedgeley, and doubling the effective frequency available to the site from the city centre, with nil cost to Crest Nicholson South West.
- e. Consideration will be given to the opportunity for plots on the western part of the site to take advantage of existing services on the A38 via a new stop southbound on the A38 just south of the new Hunts Grove crossroads, supported by appropriate active travel connections.
- f. At a suitably early trigger and with appropriate financial contribution to be reasonably and commercially agreed, Stagecoach commit to increase the frequency of Service 65 to every half-hour Monday-Friday, between Stonehouse (Grove Lane) and Gloucester with an increased evening service operating Monday-Saturday, and an hourly Sunday service. Specific journeys can additionally be expected to tie in with major employment occupiers,

that would be delivered as part of separate proposals. This would require two additional peak vehicles.

7 SIGNATURE TO AGREEMENT

Signed on behalf of Crest Nicholson South West

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Name] – Associate Strategic Land & Planning Director

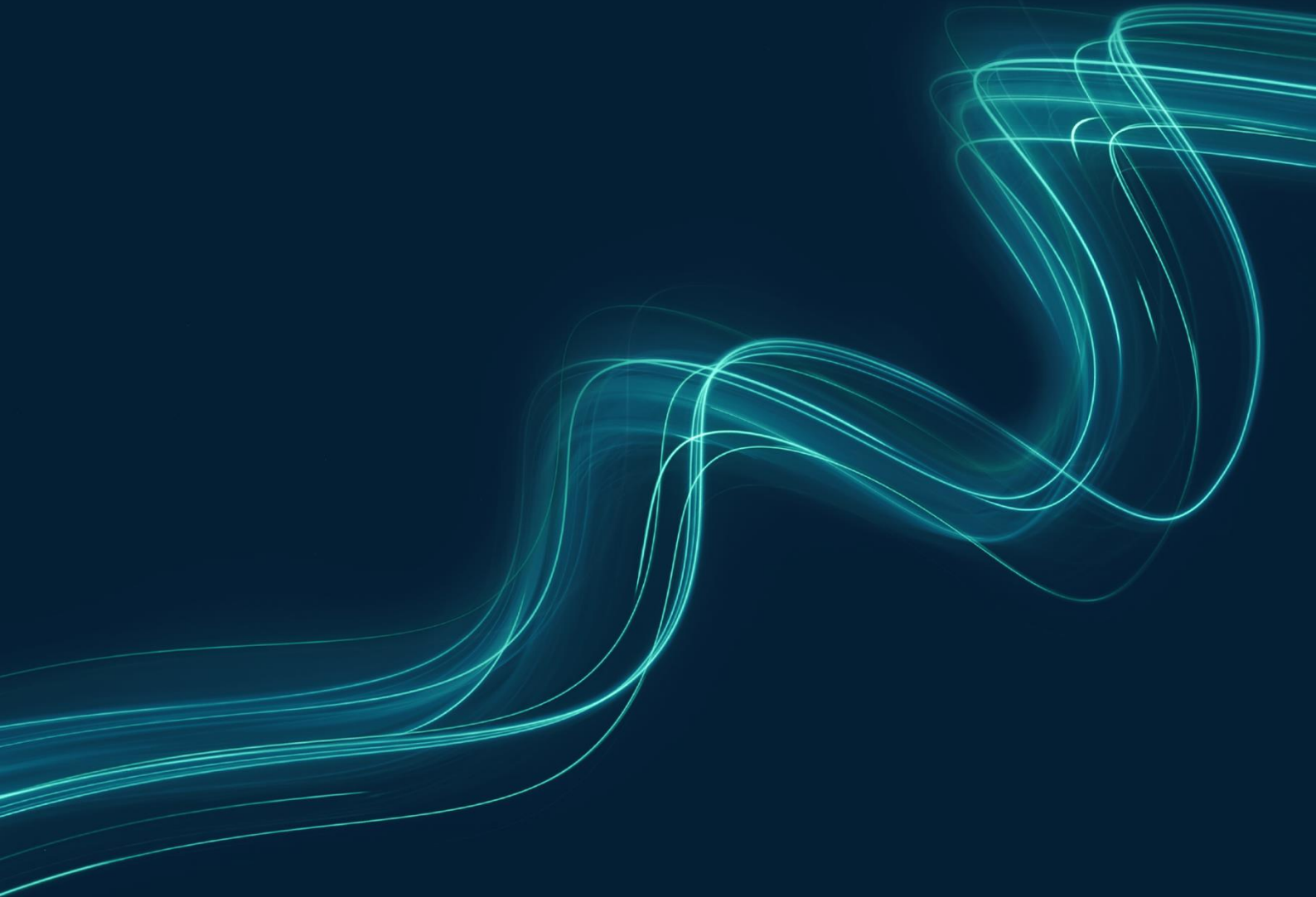
Signed on behalf of Stagecoach West

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Name] – Stagecoach West

Dated 21st February 2023





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