



SWORDERS

Agricultural Commercial Residential

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Welcome to the latest Strategic Land Update

I hope you find this issue helpful as it brings you an update on the latest views on strategic land site identification as well as our market update and round-up of a selection of Sworders' recent planning successes. You can also read about funding speculative planning applications and whether seeking a promoter on and off market is the best approach for you.

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WHAT NEXT FOR HOUSING DELIVERY?

Since the early 2000s, Governments of all colours have repeatedly stressed the need to address England's poor record of housing delivery. However, nearly 20 years later the issue has become more, not less, acute.

There have been no shortage of solutions – Labour's Sustainable Communities Plan, Regional Spatial Strategies and Ecotowns, and the Conservatives Open Source Planning, Localism and Garden Towns and Villages. There are many reasons why these solutions haven't delivered housing, but to us at Sworders, two in particular stand out. Continued on page 2



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WHAT NEXT FOR HOUSING DELIVERY?

Firstly, interventions to ‘speed up planning’ inevitably result in exactly the opposite outcome. Releasing land for housing takes time. Changing the rules half way through means authorities wait for the new system to be established, and then the process has to be started again. The clearest example of this is the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies in 2010, just at the point when they were adopted and poised to deliver housing. It is ironic that a significant number of the development sites allocated in these Strategies are now about to be re-allocated under the current system. If the Strategies had been kept in place, these houses may already have been delivered.

A second reason is the tension localism has created in local politics. In theory, localism places the responsibility for housing delivery with local communities, however many communities are opposed to housebuilding. As local politicians are elected by their constituents, there is little incentive to make the often challenging decisions required to bring forward housing, despite many Councillors’ full appreciation of the need. Without a strong lead from a

higher tier, Councillors struggle to act. The Government has finally realised this, putting in place stronger sanctions and rules from the centre on calculating housing need and having an up to date plan. The system is now once again poised to deliver.

The concern is that in the event of an election, a new Government could be tempted to have another go at speeding up planning!

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STRATEGIC LAND SITE IDENTIFICATION

The key to delivery of development sites to the house building industry is the early identification of land with potential to fulfil its end use. Over the past 25 years, Sworders have built up a significant portfolio of sites that we are either promoting on behalf of clients, or for which we have secured a third party promoter to take on the cost and risk of this process.

We closely monitor Local Plans and identify opportunities to ensure the early identification of sites, in particular, where the Local Authority is unable to demonstrate a five year land supply. The first stage of site identification is the 'call for sites'. It is at this stage that representations are made which need to focus on the technical aspects of the site, the availability and any factors affecting the delivery of the site.

Sites may vary from a small acreage in village locations to new settlements or urban extensions. We are promoting sites across much of the country and have a team of planners, surveyors and architects working across three offices specialising in this work.

Some notable recent successes include:

- Braintree, Essex
- Swavesey, Cambridgeshire
- Walkern, Hertfordshire
- Hunsdon, Essex
- Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire
- Broughton Astley, Leicestershire

- Daventry, Northamptonshire
- Great Bardfield, Essex

Sworders offer their clients specialist skills and high quality advice to enhance value and performance of property assets, often on 'no win, no fee' terms.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST?

If your agent does not act for Housebuilders or Promoters in any strategic land matters, does not sell New Homes and does not accept introductory commission or inappropriate corporate hospitality, then you are probably already a Sworders' client!

GARDEN VILLAGES, TOWNS AND CITIES



Whether “New Towns,” “Garden Cities,” “Eco-Towns,” or “Garden Villages,” successive Governments have all introduced schemes to encourage the promotion of new settlements. In January this year the Government announced backing for 14 garden villages (a new initiative for smaller settlements of between 1,500 and 10,000 homes) and 3 new garden towns (more than 10,000 homes) and may run a further call for expressions of interest later in the year. These schemes will receive funding, support in terms of expertise, brokerage and offer of new planning freedoms. They will also have access to infrastructure funding programmes across Government, such as the new £2.3 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund, showing a strong commitment from this Government to meet the challenge to deliver housebuilding on a national scale.

Sworders are already progressing over a dozen schemes of this scale across eight counties and, in the majority of cases, we have secured promoters to fund the promotion.

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RECENT PLANNING SUCCESSES

GREAT BARDFIELD, BRAINTREE

We recently achieved outline planning permission on appeal for 37 dwellings in Great Bardfield in Braintree District. The preparation included early engagement with the Parish, a consultation event in the local Town Hall, pre application discussions with the Local Authority, submission of the planning application and eventual appeal where the Council changed their stance in regard to the housing requirements for the district. The appeal was allowed.

The site is now being marketed by Sworders.

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STRATEGIC LAND PROMOTION

Sworders currently advise landowners on promotion and other developer agreements across the following counties but have also provided property advice in the South, South West as well as the North.

- BEDFORDSHIRE
- BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
- CAMBRIDGESHIRE
- CHESHIRE
- DERBYSHIRE
- ESSEX
- GLOUCESTERSHIRE
- GREATER LONDON
- HERTFORDSHIRE
- KENT
- LEICESTERSHIRE
- LINCOLNSHIRE
- NORFOLK
- NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
- NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
- OXFORDSHIRE
- RUTLAND
- STAFFORDSHIRE
- SUFFOLK
- WARWICKSHIRE
- WORCESTERSHIRE



MARKET UPDATE

A selection of sites sold by Sworders since our last strategic update.



■ Willington, Derbyshire
Planning for 42 dwellings



■ Greet, Gloucestershire
Planning for 4 dwellings



■ Newport, Essex
Planning for 84 dwellings



■ Holt, Norfolk
Planning for 85 dwellings



■ Braintree, Essex
Planning for 136 dwellings



■ Longshoot, Nuneaton, Warwickshire
Planning for 120 dwellings



■ Great Bardfield, Essex
Planning for 37 units



■ Walkern, Hertfordshire
Planning for 84 dwellings

FUNDING SPECULATIVE PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Landowners have a variety of choices as to how to fund speculative planning applications. As a firm, we are very happy to share risk and reward with our clients in regard to the time our surveyors, planners and architects invest in schemes. However, clients do need to fund third party costs. For larger schemes, those third party costs can easily reach six figure sums and for many of the bigger schemes planning promotion costs can reach seven figures. In those cases, it is often more appropriate to bring in a third party promoter. Having advised in excess of 200 landowners on more than 100 promotion agreements throughout much of the country, Sworders are very well placed to advise on the pros and cons of promotion agreements, options and joint ventures, as well as collaboration and consortium agreements.

ON OR OFF MARKET PROMOTER?

An increasing number of landowners choose not to go to the open market to secure a promoter. This is often prudent on sensitive sites as it gives the promoter the opportunity to undertake a raft of preliminary work before risking any opposition group being formed. However, in a number of cases we have clients, who as Charities or as Trustees acting in the interests of beneficiaries, consider a full marketing strategy more appropriate.

As a result we market several sites at any given time and regularly update our list of promoters in a rapidly changing market place. We are therefore well placed to generate interest from a variety of promoters when an increasing number of landowners prefer an 'off market' disposal.



INDEPENDENT ADVICE FOR STRATEGIC LAND

Sworders have been advising on strategic planning agreements since the 1980s and have established a reputation as one of the country's leading advisers in promotion agreements for strategic sites. Acting only for the landowners (and not for developers), we are well placed to provide totally impartial advice. Sworders are in the ideal position to advise landowners on appropriate forms of agreement, integrating an understanding of the planning process with the valuation and sale of sites.

Sworders have led the way in the use of promotion agreements and have contributed significantly to their increase in popularity in recent years, giving a better alignment between landowner and promoter interests and thus providing landowners with far better protection than option agreements.

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