

**Statement of Common Ground
between
Portsmouth City Council & City & Regional Ltd**

November 2025

**In respect of the News Centre, Hilsea, Portsmouth
(Northern Parcel)**

**As part of The News Centre Site Allocation in the
Pre-Submission Portsmouth Local Plan 2024**



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

**CITY
& REGIONAL**
DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

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1. Introduction

What is a Statement of Common Ground?

This Statement of Common Ground (SCG) is a jointly agreed statement between Portsmouth City Council (PCC) and City & Regional Ltd. It sets out the position and understanding with respect to key issues between the City Council and City & Regional Ltd in respect to the proposed allocation in the Pre-Submission Local Plan 2024 of the News Centre, Hilsea, specifically the northern parcel of land at the News Centre (herein referred to as 'the site'). This SCG is not binding on either party, but sets out a clear and positive direction to inform ongoing strategy and plan making. It should be noted that this is a bilateral agreement between these two organisations only.

The following documents form appendices to the SCG:

- 1) Draft Policy PLP14: The News Centre of the Pre-Submission Portsmouth Local Plan 2024 (including tracked changes that will be included in the Schedule of Changes that PCC will submit to PINS along with the Local Plan)
- 2) Response from City & Regional on site deliverability and viability (northern parcel)

Role of the two Parties?

In respect to this SCG, PCC is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and as such is responsible for the preparation of the Local Plan for Portsmouth.

City & Regional Ltd is the developer who has expressed interest in the northern parcel of land at the News Centre, which is subject to a proposed allocation in the Portsmouth Pre-Submission Local Plan 2024. They are in contract to purchase the site, subject to planning. Please note that at the time of writing this SCG (October 2025), First Hampshire and Dorset Limited remain the landowner of the whole News Centre site. A separate SCG is being prepared between PCC and Vail Williams LLP, on behalf of First Hampshire & Dorset Ltd, in regards to the southern parcel of land at the News Centre, Hilsea.

2. Location of the Site

Both parties agree that the extent of the developer area of interest (City & Regional Planning Ltd) in respect to The News Centre as shown in figure 1 below is correct.

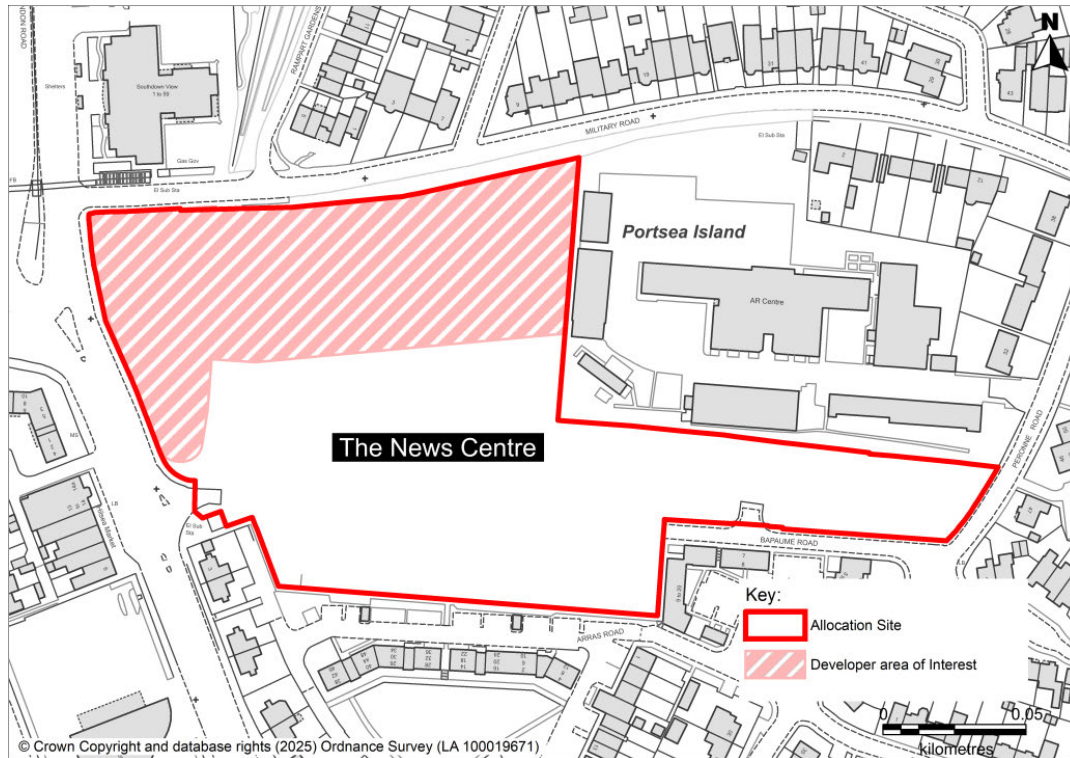


Figure 1: Developer area of interest of City & Regional in respect to The News Centre

3. Key Matters

This section covers the key matters identified by PCC and City & Regional Ltd with regard to The News Centre and sets out matters of agreement and/or disagreement between the two parties.

(a) Housing Growth

The News Centre is expected to provide housing within the Plan period as set out in table 1.

5 Year Period	2025-30	2030-35	2035-40	After 2040	Total
Number of Dwellings	0	100	0	0	100

Table 1: Residential Phasing at The News Centre

There is no objection to PCC's housing growth intentions for the site, and the allocation's inclusion of housing as shown in Table 1 is agreed by both parties. However, in a meeting dated 11/09/25 between both parties, City & Regional Ltd asked if Policy PLP14

(criterion 1b) could be amended to be less restrictive in terms of the number of dwellings anticipated. They suggested that criterion 1b be changed to 'Approximately 100 homes.'

The housing figures included in the site deliverability and viability form (Appendix 2) also slightly differ from those included in Table 1 above.

However, PCC have confirmed that there is wording in the emerging Plan (paragraph 5.2 of the Pre-Submission Portsmouth Local Plan 2024) which notes that the yields proposed under the site allocation policies are approximate.

Secondly, City & Regional Ltd also stated that some units may be delivered in the first five year period (2025-30). They later confirmed (25/09/25) that they consider 80 units may be delivered in the period 2025-30, and the remainder in period 2030-35.

Following review, PCC confirmed that due to a lack of concrete evidence, such as a pending application for the site, it is not possible for the site to be deemed 'deliverable' (as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF) and to have units falling within the first five years of the Plan period. Therefore, PCC proposed that all units should remain within 2030-35. PCC highlighted that although the homes are anticipated for delivery in 2030-35, it does not prevent them from coming forward earlier in the Plan period.

City & Regional Ltd are content with the information and rationale provided by PCC in regards to the anticipated housing yield and phasing for the site. Thus, there are no unresolved matters between PCC and City & Regional Ltd in regards to this key matter.

(b) Provision of C2 accommodation

City & Regional Ltd have stated that they are seeking to provide C2 accommodation¹ on the site, as well as C3 accommodation². In a meeting between both parties (11/09/25), City & Regional asked if there would be scope to amend Policy PLP14 to reference C2 accommodation. PCC suggested an amendment to the supporting text (paragraph 5.80) instead. Following a review, both parties have agreed to the following wording:

'The site may be suitable to also meet the housing needs of older people and other specialist needs. Such accommodation may include a care home, and/or extra care/assisted living units within the meaning of Use Class C2 Residential Institution. ~~The design will be required to address the provisions of the FRA and the flood risk management measures as required through compliance with criteria (i) and (j) above. A care home may incorporate in the design community uses at ground floor level in the design.~~

Thus, there are no unresolved matters between PCC and City & Regional Ltd in regards to this key matter. This additional wording to paragraph 5.80 will be included in the Schedule of Changes that PCC will submit to PINS for examination along with the Local Plan.

¹ Use Class C2 (Residential institutions) - residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.

² Use Class C3 (Dwellinghouses) - this class is formed of three parts: C3(a), C3(b) and C3(c). Further detail can be found here <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1987/764/schedule/part/C>.

(c) Deliverability and Viability

As stated in appendix 2, City & Regional Ltd are confident that the development of the site will be viable, subject to the requirements of PCC as the LPA. They are not aware of any abnormal or exceptional build costs that would impact the viability of the site.

City and Regional Ltd have acknowledged that they will need to meet nutrient neutrality requirements; however, it is difficult to assess the exact requirements until the design is fixed.

Based on the above, there are no unresolved matters between PCC and City & Regional Ltd in regards to this key matter.

(d) Policy compliance

Draft Policy PLP14 of the Pre-Submission Local Plan 2024 sets out the development requirements for the News Centre. City & Regional Ltd does not currently know of any material considerations that would make it impossible to meet the relevant development requirements and will endeavour to submit a policy compliant planning application for the site.

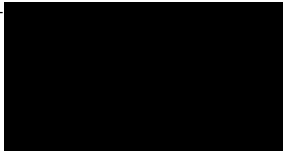
City & Regional Ltd are aware of the tidal risk of flooding, which will be addressed through the requirement to submit a site specific flood risk assessment that has been informed by the SFRA Level 1 and 2 that support the emerging Portsmouth Local Plan.

City & Regional Ltd are aware of the presence of mature trees on and/or adjoining the site and that an Arboricultural Assessment should be submitted as part of a planning application to retain and enhance the site's existing green infrastructure.

4. Signatories

Both parties agree that this statement is an accurate representation of matters discussed, and issues agreed upon.

Both parties agree that there are no substantial areas of disagreement between the parties relating to the emerging Portsmouth Local Plan and will both continue to work proactively on any key strategic issues identified in this SCG.

Signed:	Signed:
	
Name: Lucy Howard	Name: Benjamin A A Blowers
Position: Head of Planning Policy	Position: Director
Date: 12-11-25	Date: 17.11.25

Appendix 1 - Draft Policy PLP14: The News Centre of the Pre-Submission Portsmouth Local Plan 2024 (including tracked changes that will be included in the Schedule of Changes that PCC will submit to PINS along with the Local Plan)

The News Centre

Introduction

5.59 The site is a former printing press centre, which has been vacant since July 2022. It is **strategically** situated on a prominent junction of the A3 and London Road (A2047) in Hilsea and in very close proximity to the M27 and Portsbridge roundabout. ~~As such, this~~ **This** is a busy gateway location surrounded by a mix of residential (generally low density semi-detached and detached houses, with flatted development opposite and to the north of the site on London Road), education, army barracks, small scale commercial uses including local shops and open space. A map of the site is shown as figure 5.6.

5.60 The News Centre site is owned by First Bus, who intend to develop a new purpose built 'super depot' to accommodate a fleet of electric buses. This use aligns well with the Council's aim to prioritise sustainable transport and will help make a real contribution to climate change mitigation **in the City**. The site's location on a major road with good links to the rest of the City and the strategic road network makes it suitable for a sustainable transport hub.

5.61 The site presents an opportunity to maximise development as a gateway location to Portsea Island, with potential for residential and community uses to complement the bus depot.

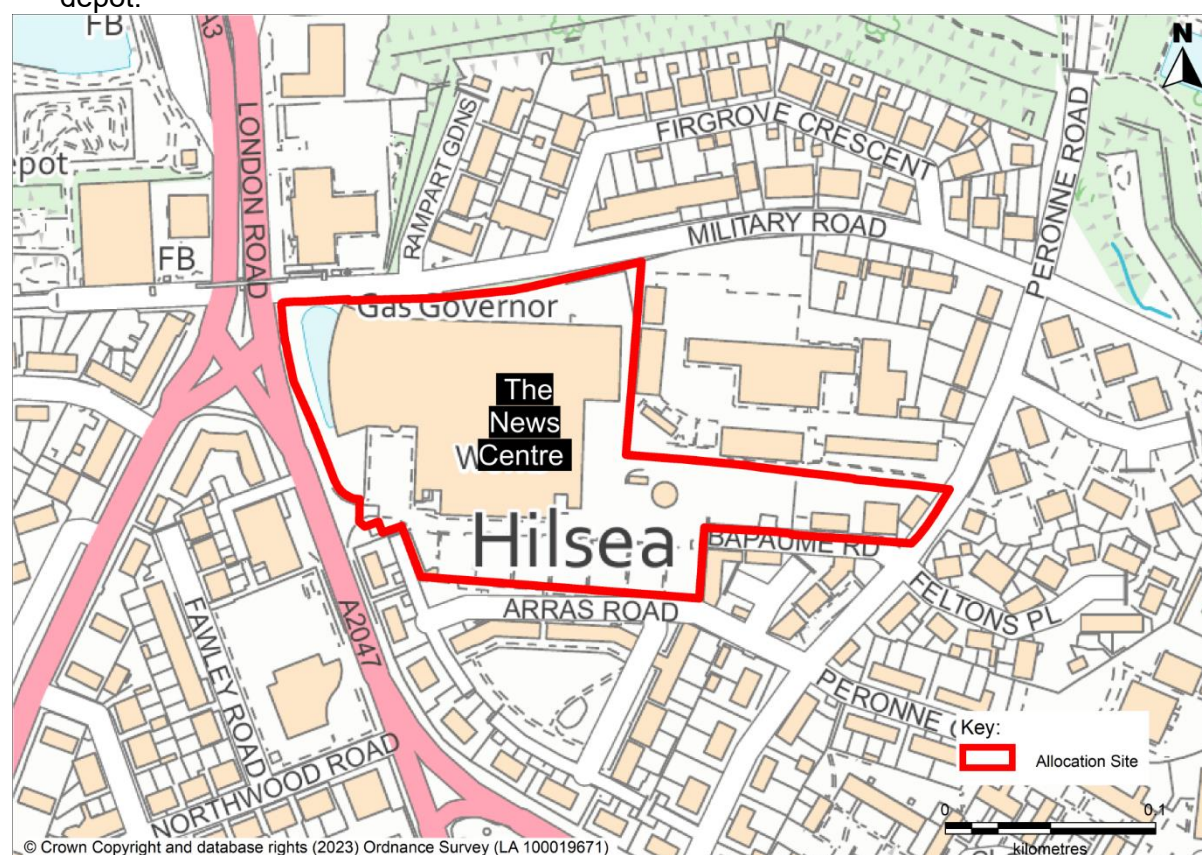


Figure 5.6: Map of the News Centre, Hilsea

5.73 The News Centre was a 1960s modernist style building, designed by local architects, Cogswell & Sons, with a pond and landscaping facing onto London Road. The building was ~~and site still is~~ locally distinct. The western part of the site contains a cluster of mature trees fronting London Road, and it is bordered to the north, south and east by trees, contributing to local character and green infrastructure. A Tree Protection Order (TPO) is in place at the Territorial Army Centre adjoining the east of the site.

5.74 The site and surrounding area is located within flood zone 3 ~~and 2~~. It should be noted however that this is an undefended scenario. The final phase (Phase 5) of the North Portsea Island scheme, which is expected to be delivered by 2026 ~~should~~ is expected to reduce the flood risk at the News Centre to an acceptable level.

5.75 The location on a busy main road means that noise-sensitive development such as housing will need appropriate mitigation and design to protect the amenity of occupiers. In addition, the level of traffic at the junction and the proposed electric bus garage will need thorough assessment and transport modelling. Improvements may be required to ensure appropriate and safe access for electric buses, residential occupiers and ~~for~~ any other uses put forward at the site.

5.76 Historic Environment Records show the site is in close proximity ~~of the site~~ to a number of sensitive archaeological and historic assets, including the Hilsea Lines Scheduled Monument and a number of Listed Buildings. The setting of these assets should be considered as part of the design of any development of the site.

5.77 Prior approval for demolition of the News Centre and associated ancillary buildings was approved in August 2023. Demolition of the former News Centre building was completed in spring 2024. A planning application for a new Bus Depot (23/01470/FUL) on the southern part of the site was approved in summer 2025. ~~There is no other relevant planning history on the site.~~

~~5.78 The main evidence based studies supporting the allocation are the HELAA, the SFRA levels 1 and 2, the Historic Environment Records and the Transport Study.~~



Site Allocation Policy PLP14: The News Centre, Hilsea

1. The News Centre, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for **comprehensive** mixed use development for the following uses:

- a) A purpose built all-electric bus depot;
- b) 100 homes; and
- c) Community uses.

2. Small scale ancillary uses, including for commercial purposes, may be appropriate depending on their type and scale, impacts on the surrounding area and nearby centres designated in Portsmouth's Town Centre Hierarchy, and where they do not compromise the site's allocated uses.

3. Development proposals for the above named uses will be permitted provided that they meet all of the following site specific development requirements:

- a) Achieves exemplar design that maximises the site's gateway location and provides comprehensive redevelopment of the site;
- b) Retains and enhances the distinct character and green infrastructure of the site, to include protection of the cluster of mature trees fronting London Road, a pair of pine trees in the south-west of the site adjacent to the electric substation, trees bordering the site to the north and east, and a TPO located at the Territorial Army Centre. An Arboricultural Assessment should be submitted to demonstrate that this can be satisfactorily achieved;
- c) The design of the site should seek to respond to and celebrate distinct elements of the original building's historic presence and architecture, while respecting the setting of nearby heritage assets ;
- d) Delivery of new homes towards the higher end of the medium density range, to maximise use of land in this core residential area;
- e) Incorporates appropriate mitigation and design measures to minimise and protect future occupiers of residential development from harmful levels of noise and air pollution from nearby roads;
- f) Achieves appropriate, efficient and safe access for a high level of use from buses, to and from the site onto the London Road (A2047) and the A3;
- g) Provide safe, permeable and convenient local pedestrian and cycle links, particularly north-south along main roads;
- h) Submit a Travel Plan and Transport Assessment to analyse the potential transport impacts and implications on the local highway network, propose mitigation measures and identify opportunities to implement effective sustainable transport initiatives;
- i) The site falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3a and a site specific Flood Risk Assessment will be prepared and submitted in accordance with the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Levels 1 and 2 supporting this Local Plan; and
- j) Flood management measures should be incorporated within the site in accordance with the SFRA Level 1 and 2 to reduce the risk to more vulnerable development and key infrastructure, now and in the future.

Supporting text

5.79 The purpose of this policy is to ensure comprehensive redevelopment of this gateway site for mixed use development that delivers significant sustainable transport in the City and creates high quality homes to meet the needs of local people.

5.80 The location is suitable for residential development that makes efficient and effective use of land while fitting with the context and character of the area. Therefore a density towards the higher end of the medium density range described in Policy PLP21: Residential Density is appropriate. Exemplar design which meets or exceeds the high standard and quality required by Policy PLP1 - Design is sought on the site. The site's design should positively relate to the site's context, local character and identity. The site may be suitable to also meet the housing needs of older people and other specialist needs. Such accommodation may include a care home and/or extra care/assisted living units within the meaning of Use Class C2 Residential Institution. A care home may incorporate community uses at ground floor level in the design.

5.81 The former News Centre building ~~is was~~ a distinctive example of twentieth century architecture. ~~and w~~While not formally designated, it ~~is was~~ locally important in terms of its historical presence. Criteria 3.c iii. of Policy PLP14 seeks to ensure that where possible, development proposals retain and incorporates remaining elements historical reference to of the former site and building. by celebrating its distinct elements, where possible. This ~~should may~~ be through retention of the three Concrete 'News' totems, the landscaped pond at the north west part of the site, and the conservation and imaginative re-purposing of any of the abstract pre-cast concrete panels which formed part of ~~the construction of~~ the original print works.

5.82 Community uses are included in the allocation to support the needs of new residents on the site and the local community more widely. The space for community use would be provided at ground floor level with residential development on upper floors. Community uses may include healthcare uses such as doctors and dentists, community meetings places, learning and non-residential institutions such as a public library and/or a small local shop. A safe space could also be provided for vulnerable people.

5.83 Due regard should be given to conserveing the significance ~~conserving the setting~~ of a number of sensitive archaeological and historic assets, including the Hilsea Lines and a number of Listed Buildings, which fall within a 500m radius of the site. Applicants should consult the Historic Environment Records held by the City Council.

5.84 The site currently contains a pond and landscaping, and a cluster of trees fronting London Road, which adds an important element of greening to the surrounding, largely urban environment. The News Centre is bordered by trees which provide screening to adjacent residential occupiers and other uses. Retaining and protecting trees, including their root zones, where they fall either within or outside the site boundary, and enhancing green infrastructure should be integral to the site's design. An Arboricultural impact Assessment should be submitted to the Council as part of any application for development.

5.85 As a mixed use allocation, development may include small scale ancillary uses, including for commercial purposes. These should complement the allocated uses of the site, and will not be permitted where they are out of scale to the point of undermining delivery of those allocated uses, or where they are considered to have a significant adverse impact on centres designated within the City's Town Centre Hierarchy, in line with Policies PLP28: Town Centres and PLP23 PLP29 Small Local Shops.

5.86 The proposed mixed use development including an electric bus depot will need further detailed transport modelling and assessment, with regard to junction and local highway

capacity, to ensure that the scheme can be delivered without creating substantial adverse impacts on the Highways network.

5.87 The site currently falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3a, and evidence will need to be submitted in a site specific Flood Risk Assessment in support any application. This is to ensure flood risk can be appropriately dealt and future residents made safe through appropriate design and mitigation.

5.88 Flood management measures, such as land raising should be incorporated into the site. The North Portsea Island scheme, when complete, ~~are is~~ likely to reduce the flood risk to an acceptable level, although the assessment of residual risk from breach or overtopping would need to confirm this in a Flood Risk Assessment. ~~The North Portsea Island Scheme is due for completion in 2026 and therefore, where more vulnerable development is proposed prior to this, robust evidence must be provided demonstrating how more vulnerable development and residents are kept safe in the event of a flood.~~

Monitoring and Delivery Framework

Types & amounts of development	Timescale	Delivery	Monitoring	Triggers & potential actions
Transport - electric bus depot	2025-2030	Through the Development Management process; working in partnership with developer and land owner	Infrastructure monitoring in the AMR and future iterations of and engagement in the IDP	By 2028, contact the landowner if a planning application for this element of the site has not been forthcoming.
100 homes (net)	2030-2035	Through the Development Management process; working in partnership with developer and land owner	Housing monitoring in the AMR	By 2032, contact the landowner if a planning application for this element of the site has not been forthcoming

Table 5.6: Monitoring and Delivery Framework for The News Centre

Appendix 2 - Response from City & Regional on site deliverability and viability (northern parcel)

Site deliverability and viability - The News Centre (northern parcel)

Your details	
Name	Ben Blowers
Organisation (if relevant)	City & Regional LTD
Representing (if applicable)	
Address	Gothic House, Barker Gate, Nottingham, NG1 1JU
Telephone	
Email	

Please answer the following questions as comprehensively as possible and leave blank any questions that are not relevant.

Question	Response
Site availability and achievability	
What is your interest in the site? (e.g. are you a landowner, agent, developer, etc?)	In contract to purchase the site
If you are not the landowner, who owns the land?	First Group Plc
Is the site in multiple ownership? If yes, who else owns the site (please include contact details, if you have them).	No
Is the landowner(s) supportive of development of the site, and are they willing to make it available for development?	Yes, very supportive and disposing the site to us subject to planning
Is the land currently leased or sub-leased to another party? If so, please provide lease length, clauses etc	No
Where relevant, can you briefly describe your working relationship or partnership with other landowners and/or leaseholders on the site.	N/A
Is the land for sale or being sold to another party? If so, please provide detail of current marketing and acquisition status (e.g. is the site under an option agreement, land promotion agreement, exclusivity or joint venture, conditional or unconditional purchase, other?)	No
Are you aware of any constraints that could hinder land acquisition or assembly? e.g. ransom strips, right of way, compensation measures including Compulsory Purchase Orders?	No
Are there any other factors that would affect availability?	Planning approval
Deliverability	
Anticipated delivery of development 2025-2030. Please provide detail on all uses included in the proposal.	80 bed care home

Anticipated delivery of development 2030-2035. Please provide detail on all uses included in the proposal.	80 CC units
Anticipated delivery of development 2035-2040. Please provide detail on all uses included in the proposal.	0
Anticipated delivery of development after 2040. Please provide detail on uses.	0
Any further issues that may affect timing or phasing of development.	No
Is there a proposed indicative block plan or layout for the site? If so, please attach to your response.	Sketch plan attached
Is pre-application advice being sought? Please provide detail if so.	To be submitted shortly
Are you intending to submit a planning application, and if so, when?	Q1 2026
Viability	
Has economic viability of developing the site been assessed, and what was the outcome of that assessment?	In proceeding to purchase the site we are confident that the development will be viable, subject to the requirements of PCC as the LPA
Are there any abnormal or exceptional build costs?	No
Have you considered how the site will meet the 10% requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain? if so, how will this be done?	Yes. Currently 95% of the site is covered in concrete. New amenity spaces will provide BNG.
Have you considered how your site will meet requirements for Nutrient Neutrality? if so, how will this be done?	Until the design is fixed it is difficult to assess the requirement. However the issue is acknowledged.
Are there any further issues or constraints that may influence the achievability, feasibility or viability of development?	
Tidal flooding risk to be addressed through design to EA's satisfaction	
Do you have any further comments on the site or the draft proposal for its allocation?	
Discussions opened with PCC to provide accommodation required in policy and market positioning statement. Flexibility retained in the design to incorporate keyworker accommodation.	