

Tracy Harvey
Planning Department
Swindon Borough Council
Wat Tyler House
Beckhampton Street
Swindon
SN1 2JG

20 September 2023

Dear Tracy

Lotmead Farm, Swindon

Following the email sent to you on the 13th September by Darren Dancy at Countryside, I am writing to you to express Sovereign's deepest concern about the direction of travel with the S73 application on Lotmead Farm. It appears that despite having agreed a course of action with you in our meeting back in January – to submit a S73 application to amend the drainage strategy – nine months on we are no closer to resolving the issue and we do not know when or if the Council will positively determine the application.

As you will be aware Sovereign is a joint venture partner with Countryside on this project, operating as Countryside Sovereign Swindon LLP (CSS). Sovereign invested in this project because it presents a fantastic opportunity to deliver a high quality, landscape led development, achieving the placemaking aspirations which we have established in our Homes and Place Standard. Sovereign is also the Registered Provider for the site. In that capacity Sovereign will own and manage all of the S106 affordable homes and the 200 additional grant funded affordable homes which we are committed to deliver on the site. Unfortunately, because of the S73 application remaining undetermined both the number of S106 affordable homes and the deliverability of 200 much needed additional affordable homes are at risk.

CSS have stated in the S73 submission that the 'Revised' FRA Addendum would facilitate the construction of circa 211 dwellings – which includes 20% S106 affordable units – more than the 'Original' Addendum. If the S73 is not approved, then the delivery of these much-needed S106 units will be lost.

More significantly, the delay to the determination of the S73 application may lead to Sovereign being unable to deliver the 200 additional affordable homes. These homes will be funded with £11M of capital grant from Sovereign's Homes England Strategic Partnership 2021-26 programme. Under this programme all homes must start on site by March 2026 and be completed by March 2028. The 200 additional affordable homes will be delivered across the first five phases on Lotmead to achieve an even spread of tenures on the site. In our original delivery programme for Lotmead Farm we felt we could comfortably deliver all 200 homes within the Homes England timescales. However, this

relied on us being able to start on site in late 2022 so we are already a good nine months behind programme.

It is therefore essential that we can achieve reserved matters approvals and to start on site on these phases without delay, but unfortunately this is all held up pending approval of the S73 application. If CSS is unable to deliver these homes within the Homes England deadline Sovereign will have to reallocate the £11M to deliver these affordable homes elsewhere. This would mean a loss of 200 new affordable homes in Swindon at a time when there is greater need than ever for good quality affordable homes and when the council has a significant shortfall in delivery of affordable homes across the borough. Sovereign is under no obligation to allocate its Homes England funding to specific local authorities and we are under a great deal of pressure to deliver on our spending commitments to Homes England. As such we have to prioritise local authorities that support housing and affordable housing delivery through the planning process.

We cannot stress strongly enough our desire to commence construction at Lotmead Farm to create a high-quality new community on the edge of Swindon and to deliver much need new affordable homes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Titherington', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Tom Titherington
Chief Investment and Development Officer