



DRAFT BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL PLAN NO. 4

**REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF MILLER
STRATEGIC LAND, SOUTHERN & REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENTS AND PERSIMMON HOMES SOUTH
MIDLANDS IN RESPECT OF
LAND AT BROCKHILL WEST**

MAY 2013

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Our Ref: JBB7661.C1342

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 RPS Planning & Development (RPS) has been retained jointly by Persimmon Homes South Midlands, Miller Strategic Land and Southern & Regional Developments (the Companies) who control land at Brockhill West, to make representations to the Draft Redditch Borough Local Plan No. 4. The land in question straddles the Borough boundary with Bromsgrove District and lies to the north west of Redditch and the A448/B4096 (See appended Plan RPS1). RPS1 also identifies the Borough boundary for clarity.
- 1.2 Previous representations were made on behalf of the Companies to the Redditch Growth consultation in March 2010, a consultation which was run jointly by Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils identifying the need for a contribution of some 3,000 dwellings to be provided in Bromsgrove District on the edge of the Redditch urban area to meet the needs of the town. Representations were also made by the Companies to the Redditch Revised Preferred Draft Core Strategy in March 2011 in support of development at the Brockhill West location as well as on behalf of Persimmon at all stages in respect of land at Brockhill East.
- 1.3 RPS has also made separate representations on behalf of Persimmon to the draft Local Plan No 4 in relation to land at Brockhill East, Redditch, and also for Persimmon jointly with Miller Strategic Land and Southern & Regional Developments in relation to the Housing Growth consultation in relation to cross-boundary land at Brockhill West and in objection to the strategic proposal at Foxlydiate of some 2,800 dwellings in Bromsgrove District.

Scope of representations

- 1.4 These representations are made in advance of the revocation of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, the Orders for which were laid before Parliament in April 2013 and will come into force on 20 May 2013. However the evidence base in relation to district-level housing requirements underpinning the West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Revision remains, and has some weight, having been through formal independent scrutiny and reported on by the Examination Panel in 2009.
- 1.5 The representations focus on those relevant to housing land requirements and supply, to the omission of a site for housing within the Borough Boundary at Brockhill West, the need for Green Belt release and to individual policies requiring increased flexibility to enable their successful implementation. The Redditch Local Plan should also emphasise the suitability of land at Brockhill West to provide a comprehensively planned cross-boundary urban extension to contribute deliverable development to meeting the strategic housing requirement of the town.
- 1.6 In brief, RPS has identified the acceptance in the evidence that Brockhill West is a particularly sustainable and logical location for the extension of the Redditch urban area. The only reason why the site or location has not been selected appears to relate to concerns over the impact development at Brockhill West could have on significant historic assets at Hewell Grange in respect of the designated Conservation Area and registered Historic Park and Garden.
- 1.7 The Companies have retained CgMs Historic Environment consultants to advise on the nature of the potential impact of their proposals at Brockhill West on the historic heritage assets in this area, identify how any impact can appropriately be mitigated in accordance with relevant national

and local policies, and also to appraise the soundness of the evidence base on which the decision not to allocate the site for strategic growth at this stage has been made.

- 1.8 It is demonstrated in the Companies' response that development can be acceptably designed and implemented at Brockhill West, maintaining an appropriate relationship with the adjacent heritage assets. Brockhill West is a significantly more sustainable development option than the current Foxlydiate proposals in respect of accessibility, integration with the town, landscape impact and containment and, particularly, impact on the Green Belt.
- 1.9 In place of 2,800 dwellings at Foxlydiate and no development at Brockhill West, RPS's objections to the cross-boundary allocation commend 1,550 dwellings in the eastern part of Foxlydiate adjacent to the A448 and 1,200 dwellings at Brockhill West of which 250 can be provided within Redditch Borough adjacent to Brockhill Drive and approximately 950 within Bromsgrove District. Subject to these proposals, any shortfall can be accommodated within the ADR.
- 1.10 The full case for the cross-boundary allocation is made in a separate submission on behalf of the Companies.

2 REPRESENTATIONS

- 2.11 This Section provides specific responses to elements of the Draft Redditch Borough Local Plan No. 4.

Policies Map

- 2.1 The Companies object to the omission of a 7.1 ha site, lying within the Redditch Borough boundary to the north east of A448. This land has previously been promoted by the Companies as the part of 'Brockhill West' within Redditch Borough. The land was identified in the Revised Draft Preferred Redditch Plan in March 2011 as a strategic allocation named 'Brockhill West'.
- 2.2 RPS has submitted a comprehensive portfolio of information about the wider Brockhill West site to both Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils, and also a separate addendum focussing on the viable delivery of the Redditch Borough part in isolation in the event there was not effective cross-boundary joint-working with Bromsgrove District.
- 2.3 The RPS/FPCR Green Belt Review Study¹ found the limited extent of the Brockhill West site would not compromise Green Belt purposes but would provide topographical containment, limited visibility from public vantage points and relatively low landscape sensitivity to accommodating development. It would have the advantage of being able to address the raw urban edge of the existing development at Brockhill and tone down *"that jarring interface between town and country"* (as recognised by the Bromsgrove District Local Plan Modifications Inquiry Inspector).
- 2.4 The Brockhill West site has the additional advantage of potentially being considered in conjunction with an appropriate cross-boundary land allocation to the south west of the A448, and/or a wider area of land extending between A448 and Brockhill East.
- 2.5 Significantly, when English Heritage was consulted on the Revised Draft Preferred Redditch Plan in March 2011, the statutory consultee made no objection to the Brockhill West site in the submission which clearly opted to provide general comment on the strategic site allocations. It is essential if there is to be public confidence in statutory consultees that a consistent, fair and objective approach is taken in responding to development plan proposals.
- 2.6 This objection seeks the allocation of the Brockhill West land in Redditch Borough as a strategic site for approximately 250 dwellings, recognising the clear additional scope for there to be cross-boundary growth to the north in Bromsgrove District as part of a comprehensively planned urban extension. It is accepted that the Plan should make a reference to the need for appropriate design in the masterplanning to ensure there is an acceptable relationship between new development on the edge of the Redditch urban area and the designated Hewell Grange Conservation Area and the registered Historic Park and Garden.

¹ Redditch Green Belt Review, December 2009. RPS Planning and Development and FPCR (previously submitted to both Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils).

Key Diagram

- 2.7 The Companies cannot be support the identification of the very large portion of the Cross Boundary Housing Site to the south west of the A448 (Housing Growth Site 1). The December 2009 RPS/FPCR Green Belt Review Study discounted the majority of this site to the north west of an alignment with B4096 junction as it would very significantly reduce the existing 4.8km open gap between Redditch and Bromsgrove south of the A448 to some 2.8km and thereby would introduce coalescence; it would give a perception of unrestricted sprawl and would constitute inappropriate encroachment into a wide area of open countryside. Land to the north east of the A448 performed significantly better in the Study in terms of avoiding coalescence, giving a lessened perception of urban sprawl, being more self contained and thereby having less impact on open countryside. The land to the north east of the A448 also performs better in terms of access to facilities and the town centre, forming on the whole a more sustainable and logical extension to the urban area of Redditch. Representations by the Companies to the Housing Growth Consultation elaborate on the merits of the wider Brockhill West site to the north east of the A448.
- 2.8 As identified in the Green Belt Review study, only the eastern central part of the Site 1 proposal can be considered suitable for development. This area is concluded to have capacity for approximately 1,550 dwellings. The north western and south western 'wings' of development should be deleted from the proposal due to unacceptable impact on Green Belt purposes, encroachment into open countryside, landscape impact and comparatively poorer integration with the Redditch urban area given its remoteness from the town centre.
- 2.9 Additionally, land to the north east of the A448 at Brockhill West should be identified as a cross boundary housing site of about 1,200 dwellings and associated green space and community facilities, given its clear comparative advantages and having regard to objective evidence in respect of the Heritage Assets at Hewell Grange and potential impacts and scope for mitigation.

Policy 2: Settlement Hierarchy

- 2.10 The Companies support the general settlement hierarchy set out in the policy. However with respect to the Redditch urban area, and the given that cross-boundary Green Belt urban extensions are required for release to meet identified housing requirements, the policy should be explicit in acknowledging this. RPS suggests the following text to substitute for the second sentence of bullet one of the policy:
- “As not all needs can be met within the Borough, some development will be focussed within previously identified Green Belt adjacent to the Borough boundary in urban extensions.”***
- 2.11 Additionally, the Reasoned Justification to the policy should be similarly explicit in the known facts that neither the urban area nor the Borough itself can appropriately accommodate Redditch's housing needs, as was recognised in the submitted West Midlands RSS Preferred Option in 2007, by the West Midlands RSS Panel in September 2009, and by the Council in 2010 in the joint 'Redditch Growth Consultation' published with Bromsgrove District Council.
- 2.12 This recognition should also extend to the need for all sites to contribute early to providing housing and necessary strategic infrastructure in order to maintain the Council's rolling 5-year housing land supply. The justification text should refer to the development strategy in Policy 3

which states that Strategic Sites can come forward immediately rather than allow a suggestion that there is an intention to phase urban sites before non-urban allocations.

Policy 3: Development Strategy

- 2.13 There is concern that the final paragraph of the policy is the only monitoring or implementation policy in the draft Local Plan (see subsequent comments on the Monitoring and Implementation section). As currently drafted the policy is not strong enough in its measures to ensure delivery of the Plan's Development Strategy; to 'endeavour' is merely to 'try' or 'attempt', whereas the Council will need to ensure delivery. RPS suggests that the word 'endeavour' is replaced by:

"... actively engage with developers..."

Policy 4: Housing Provision and Appendix 2

- 2.14 The West Midlands RSS Review 2 Panel recommended that housing provision for 2006-2026 within Redditch should be at least 4,000 dwellings, with an additional 3,000 provision needed to meet the needs of Redditch adjoining the town's boundary where Green Belt adjustment would be required.
- 2.15 It must also be noted that the NPPF seeks Local Planning Authorities to boost housing growth, i.e. not to restrain growth, and that in the absence of Regional Plans there is a duty to co-operate including within the context of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). RPS commends the more recent co-operation between Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils in this context. However, there should be recognition within the wider Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP that in the context of currently emerging plans, there is likely to be a housing shortfall of about 50,000 homes over the 20 year period to 2033 below the objectively assessed need, due principally to under-provision within Birmingham. It is a matter for the Bromsgrove Local Plan to address cross-boundary issues with Birmingham City Council.
- 2.16 Given the reduction of the provision from that recommended in the Panel Report, and the above factors, and the need to provide sufficient new homes to meet needs, RPS suggest that the housing requirement on the policy is stated as a minimum figure. RPS therefore suggests that paragraph 1 of Policy 4 is revised as follows:

"Provision is made for the construction and completion of at least 6,380 dwellings between 2011 and 2030 to meet the local housing requirements identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment."

- 2.17 The Companies consider that Policy 4 is onerous in requiring that all new residential development is expected to comply with the Lifetime Homes Standard. The issue for Persimmon is in concerns to viability in the context of other expected costs including affordable housing and infrastructure costs, including potentially a Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 2.18 In meeting Redditch's growth requirements to 2030 there will need to be a revision of the Green Belt boundary. In altering the Green Belt boundary, a permanent change should be made which addresses foreseeable future growth needs without the need to alter the boundary again at the end of the plan period. Accordingly, there should be a cross-reference in this Local Plan to the expectation that the Bromsgrove Plan will both allocate land for cross-boundary growth and identify safeguarded land for longer term development needs.

2.19 **Appendix 2** shows that the despite active allocation of available housing sites within the Borough, the Council is 3,434 below strategic housing target. This is clear justification of need for significant Green Belt releases and cross-boundary development.

2.20 As noted in the comments to the Policies' Map, the Companies object to the omission of a 7.1 ha site lying within the Redditch Borough boundary to the east of A448. This land has previously been promoted by the Companies as 'Brockhill West' which could accommodate approximately 230 dwellings on a sustainable extension to the urban area. It can also form part of a sustainable wider urban extension on a cross-boundary basis of approximately 1,200 dwellings in the Plan period to 2030.

Policy 6: Affordable Housing

2.21 The Companies consider the expectation of a 30% affordable housing contribution as likely to be reasonable, subject to site-by-site viability considerations and evidence.

Policy 8: Green Belt

2.22 The Companies support the position that all the remaining designated Green Belt will be in the south west of the Borough. This will be consistent with the appropriate allocation for development of land to the north west of the town for planned sustainable housing led growth at Brockhill West and also Brockhill East.

2.23 The Companies welcome the acknowledgement in the policy that the exceptional circumstances that are required to amend the Green Belt boundary have been demonstrated in the wealth of evidence demonstrating the sustainability of the Brockhill East land and its limited contribution to Green Belt purposes, as also reflected in the RPS/FPCR Green Belt Review document of December 2009. This same conclusion can be drawn for Brockhill West. It cannot be drawn in the context of the entirety of the Site 1 cross-boundary proposal south west of A448 at Foxlydiate.

Policy 12: Open Space provision

2.24 It is unreasonable for the policy to defer what should be a local plan policy requirement to SPD or worse to "*... any other form of planning obligation the Council adopts.*". The purpose of SPD is not to make policy but instead to add detail to enable applicants to make successful applications (NPPF paragraph 153). That the policy deregulates any future requirement to as yet unknown "planning obligation" or indeed to an as yet unspecified CIL, is quite unreasonable. The Local Plan policy should provide clear parameters which can then be elaborated in subordinate and later documents.

2.25 Insofar as this SPD is concerned, it is somewhat out of date having been produced to provide more detailed guidance on the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 Policy R.3 'Provision of Informal Unrestricted Open Spaces', Policy R.4 'Provision and Location of Children's Play Areas', and Policy R.5 'Playing Pitch Provision'. It has not been through independent examination and should not form the Council's policy. If the Local Plan is to rely on CIL to enable its implementation, then the CIL documents should be consulted upon alongside the Local Plan.

Policy 16: Natural Environment

- 2.26 Criteria iv and v could well be onerous and indeed unachievable for some developments. RPS firstly suggest the substitution of the word “expected” in the first paragraph of the policy with the words **“developers will be encouraged”**, and secondly replacement of criteria as follows:

“iv. avoid any significant adverse impact on skylines and hill features, including established views of those features;

v. where possible retain existing trees (including Ancient Trees), woodlands and hedgerows:”

Policy 20: Transport Requirements for New Development

- 2.27 The requirement in criterion iv for all proposals to be located within 250 m of local services (a parade of local shops or a district centre) and a public transport link (bus stop or railway station) may not be achievable for all developments or parts of developments, either preventing otherwise exemplary schemes or rendering the policy incapable of implementation. To avoid this, RPS suggests the following rewording of the criterion:

“iv. all proposals should strive to ensure that they are located within 250m of local services ... etc.”

Policy 22: Employment Land Provision

- 2.28 The Companies welcome the acknowledgement that cross-boundary provision is required to make up the employment requirement.

Policy 27: Supporting Education, Training and Skills

- 2.29 It is difficult to see how the requirement on developers to educate or train local residents in essential employability skills is justified in terms of CIL Regulation 122, or indeed implementable in development management terms. The requirement fails in terms of CIL Regulation 122 in not being:

- a. necessary to make to any development acceptable in planning terms;
- b. directly related to the development; and
- c. unable to be fairly and reasonably related to the scale and kind to the development.

- 2.30 RPS therefore seeks deletion of the policy.

Policy Omission

- 2.31 Objection is made to the omission of a Strategic Site Policy relating to land at Brockhill West. Regard should be given to the draft policy in the Revised Draft Preferred Option Local Plan and comments made on that policy by RPS on behalf of the Companies in March 2011.

Monitoring & Implementation

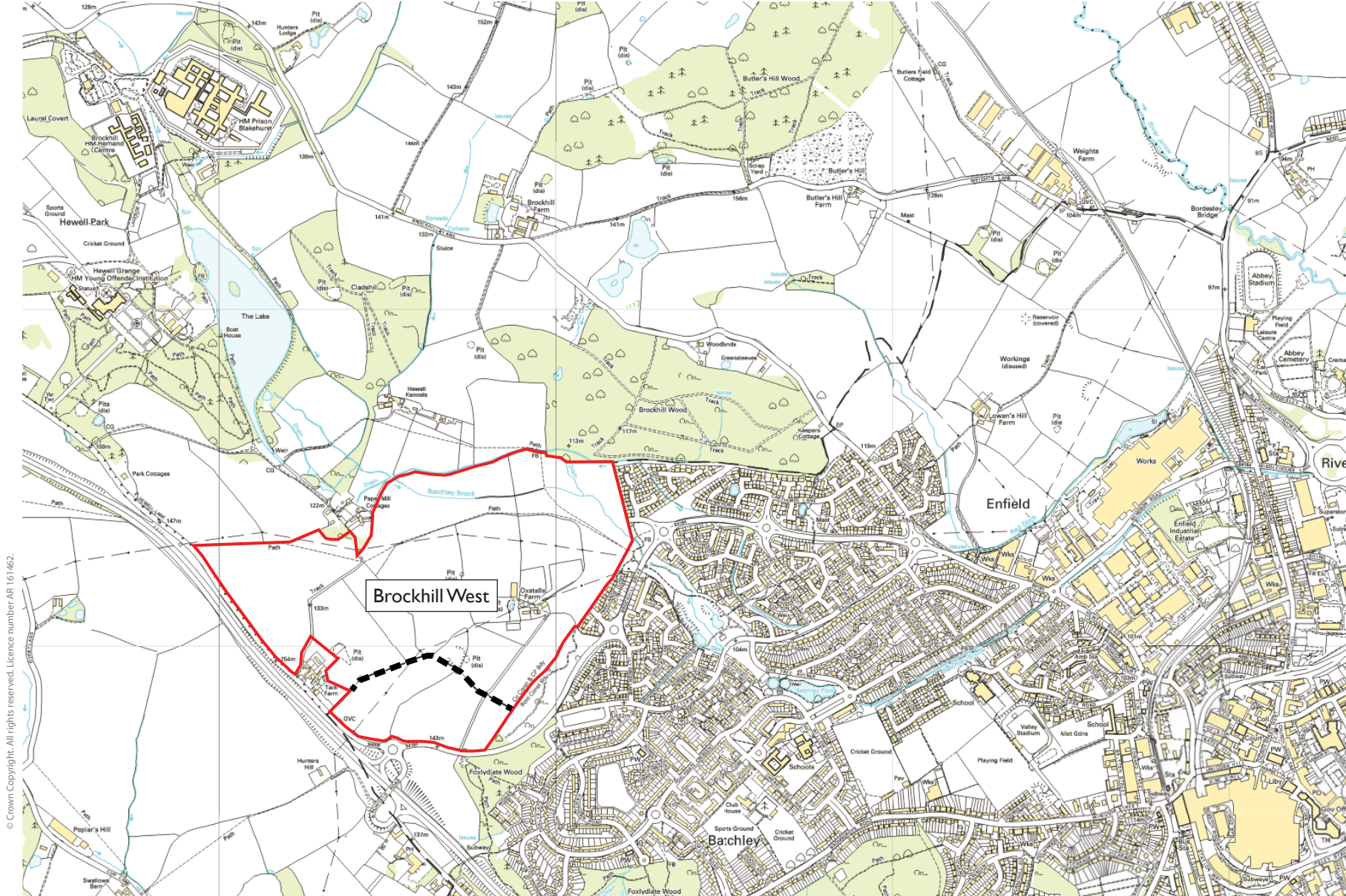
- 2.32 The implementation of the Local Plan is crucial to the health and well-being of the local population. It therefore warrants a Local Plan policy that sets out the actions that will be taken not only to monitor delivery but also to set out the circumstances when it will be judged that a partial or total review of the plan will be undertaken.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The Companies object to the omission of land identified within the Redditch Borough boundary at Brockhill West and object to the scale and extent of the proposed cross-boundary development south west of the A448.
- 3.2 The Companies support the acknowledgment given to cross-boundary land requirements and to the fact that the exceptional circumstances needed to remove land from the Green Belt have been demonstrated. These circumstances apply to land at Brockhill West and Brockhill East. They are concluded not to apply to the full extent of the Foxlydiate proposals where only the eastern central part of the proposal is concluded to be appropriate for consideration for exclusion from the Green Belt.
- 3.3 The Local Plan should express the expectation that the Bromsgrove District Local Plan will both allocate the Brockhill West land as part of the required cross-boundary provision and also identify safeguarded land for longer-term development needs between Brockhill West and Brockhill East in accordance with the Green Belt Review Study findings in November 2009 (RPS & FPCR, previously submitted to both Local Planning Authorities).
- 3.4 Objection is made to the omission of a site at Brockhill West within the Redditch Borough boundary which would form a logical and sustainable urban extension to the urban area on either a stand-alone basis or in conjunction with cross-boundary land to the north.
- 3.5 Suggestions are made to introduce flexibility to various policies to aid their successful implementation.

APPENDIX 1

Site Location Plan RPS1



SCALE: NTS

REF: JBB7661
CLIENT: Miller Homes Ltd
DATE: May 2013
STATUS: Final

CHECKED BY: MS
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PREPARED BY: JP

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