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Date: 27th June 2014

Development Policy Manager
Development Services
Warwick District Council
Riverside House
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Leamington Spa
CV32 5QH

Dear Sir or Madam,

Representations on behalf of Hatton Estates to the Warwick District Publication Draft Local Plan April 2014

RPS has been instructed on behalf of Hatton Estates (hereafter “our client”) to submit representations to Warwick District Council (hereafter “the Council”), as part of the current consultation on the draft Local Plan, ending on the 27th June 2014. This letter seeks to set out our client’s objections to certain policies within the Warwick District Publication Draft Local Plan April 2014 (hereafter “Local Plan”). This letter is accompanied by Publication Draft Representation Forms, as required by the Council, which has been completed in line with the guidelines set out in the Representation Form Guidance Notes.

These representations follow on from previous representations submitted by the Hatton Estate and Linden Homes both in respect to consultation on Revised Development Strategy (2013) and the Village Housing Options and Settlement Boundaries report (2013). In both cases the representations looked to further promote Hatton Station as a sustainable location for residential development and to support the allocation of land west of Station Road in the Local Plan.

The basis of our client’s specific objections to the Local Plan relates to the Council’s approach to the distribution of housing within the District. Specifically, it is considered that there is an issue in relation to rural housing. Our objections are twofold:

1. That we consider that Hatton Station should be moved into the ‘Growth Village’ category on the basis of the station, which makes the settlement highly accessible to higher order services and facilities in the main towns, and accordingly there should be an allocation for residential development within the settlement.
2. That the infill policy is unsound by virtue of the fact that imposing an infill boundary drawn too tightly around the identified settlement actively prevents apparent infill development opportunities. We believe this policy should be either a boundary/allocations-based policy or a criteria-based infill policy, not both as is currently the position. In addition the limiting of infill to two dwellings is far too restrictive and is effectively limiting the benefits that could be delivered through new

housing development in the village, and potentially impacting upon the ongoing viability of the station at Hatton Station. In order to address this RPS recommend that the limit of 2 dwellings should either be increased to allow greater flexibility and responsiveness or, preferably, this should be assessed on a case by case basis.

Set out below are our detailed objections in respect to the designation ‘Growth Villages’ and ‘Limited Village Infill Housing Villages’ and the implications these have on Hatton Station and suitable housing sites within the village which have not been allocated as a result.

Growth Villages

Section 1 of the Local Plan provides an introduction to the document and sets out the Vision, Strategy and Objectives for the District. Paragraph 1.30 of the Local Plan identifies a number of opportunities and issues that the district faces over the plan period. One such issue is:

“b) Relatively high house prices limiting the ability of local people to buy or rent property in the area, creating the need for more affordable housing for families in towns and villages and the need to provide more housing to meet future needs, particularly those of older people.”

In order to address this issue the Local Plan sets out a number of specific objectives. ‘Objective 1: Providing sustainable levels of growth in the District’ sets out that the Council will provide a sustainable level of housing growth (and balance this with economic growth) to reduce the number of people who are currently homeless or living in unsatisfactory accommodation, to meet future housing needs, and to help deal with the issues of need for affordable housing (paragraph 1.46). This objective goes further, stating that the Council will:

“...identify and maintain supply of land for housing to meet the objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing ensuring this is of the right size, has the right tenure, and is in the right location;”

This objective is supported by additional guidance which seeks to ensure that the Local Plan provides well-designed new developments that are in the right location and address climate change. In line with this, paragraph 1.48 states that the Local Plan will:

“Make sure that new developments are in places that will reduce the need for people to use their cars. This will minimise air pollution and help address climate change by reducing road congestion and carbon emissions, and will encourage people to live more healthy lifestyles by walking and cycling more.”

Hatton Station is considered to comply with this aspiration due to its very high accessibility credentials, by virtue of the train station. This provides a regular service on weekdays and weekends into Warwick, Leamington Spa and Birmingham, and would in RPS’s view be highly complementary to additional accommodate housing growth consistent with the Local Plan’s vision, strategy and objectives, as set out above. A railway station is an unusual facility in a village of this size, and brings jobs, shopping and other services within reach of the village’s residents without the need to use their cars. The station alone is, in our view, justification for increasing the status of this village, which in turn will help to reinforce the village as a community, provide opportunities to improve the village through the provision of additional

housing and other facilities that are currently not available (e.g. village green, play areas, improved footpaths). Despite this, Hatton Station has not been brought forward as a location for new sustainable housing development, which we believe to be inconsistent with the overall intentions of the Local Plan.

Section 2 sets out the ‘Development Strategy’ for the growth of the District through to 2029, along with the strategic policies and site allocations to support the delivery of the strategy. The Strategy has been designed to deliver the vision and the objectives set out in the previous chapter. Policy DS10 (Broad Location of Allocated Sites for Housing) sets out the broad location of allocated housing sites and states that sites within Growth Villages and the rural area will provide 763 houses over the plan period.

Policy DS11 (Allocated Housing Sites) of the Local Plan identifies the allocated housing sites within the District. Included in these allocations are 20 sites located in ‘Growth Villages’. The supporting text states that the majority of the village housing allocations are located on the edge of the existing limits to the built up areas of the village in locations which will provide natural extensions to those settlements.

This strategic policy is supported by specific housing policies set out in section 4 of the Local Plan. Policy H0 (Housing), the overarching housing policy, echoes that which is set out in the objectives in Section 1. The policy states that the plan will ensure that:

“...new housing development is in locations which enable sustainable lifestyles, protect the aspects of the District that are most highly valued and which, where appropriate, support and regenerate existing communities;”

Policy H1 (Directing New Housing) provides guidance on the distribution of new housing and states that Housing development will be permitted within the Urban Areas, and within the Growth Villages and Limited Infill Villages. The supporting text identifies the settlements defined as Growth Villages and Limited Infill Villages, reproduced below. Hatton Station is identified in the table as a Limited Infill Village where the type and scale of development will be more limited.

Growth Villages	Limited Infill Villages
Baginton Barford Bishop’s Tachbrook Burton Green Cubbington Hampton Magna Hatton Park Kingswood Leek Wootton Radford Semele	Ashow Baddesley Clinton Beausale Bubbenhall Chessetts Wood Eathorpe Hampton-on-the-Hill Haseley Knob Hatton Green Hatton Station Hill wootton Lapworth Little Shrewley

	Lawsonford Norton Lindsey Offchurch Old Milverton Rowington Rowington Green Sherbourne Shrewley Common Stoneleigh Wasperton Weston-under-Wetherley
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Paragraph 4.7 states, in respect to Growth Villages, that:

“The Development Strategy also recognises the value of directing some growth to those villages which have a reasonable range of services and facilities. The Settlement Hierarchy Report 2014 identifies Growth Villages as being the most suitable for housing growth according to a range of sustainability indicators...The Limited Infill Villages are identified as having a lower level of services and facilities but limited infill development in these villages will help to deliver a wider choice of housing and help to support services in any nearby Growth Villages.”

Having reviewed the Settlement Hierarchy Report 2014, which forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, it is apparent that the Growth Villages are those identified in the hierarchy as ‘Primary’ and ‘Secondary Service Villages’. Hatton Station is identified in the category of ‘Very Small Villages and Hamlets’.

Paragraph 4.12 of the Settlement Hierarchy Report 2014 defines a Secondary Service Village as having either a good range of services and facilities or good accessibility to services and facilities. Accordingly, we believe that Hatton Station has been wrongly classified and that not enough weight has been given to the fact that there is a station within the village which provides a sustainable transport option to higher order services and facilities, which would otherwise be inaccessible other than by private car. By virtue of the station, residents will be able to access facilities that would not normally be available in villages, including the Growth Villages. Hatton Station is therefore unique amongst the Limited Infill Villages of the District and indeed the Growth Villages. Hatton Station could accommodate a higher level of housing development (indeed, we would argue that it needs a higher level of housing in order to protect the future viability of the station) and therefore there should be a housing allocation in the settlement to allow for this level of growth. In Appendix VI of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA), that accompanies the Local Plan in considering the sites submitted for Hatton Station, it states:

“With regard to travel and transport, all the potential allocations have excellent access to public transport with a bus stop within 0 - 400 m and all are within 400 m of Hatton railway station.”

However, in contrast to that which is set out in the Settlement Hierarchy Report 2014, the SA goes on to state that:

“It is acknowledged that given the location of the potential allocations within a village, there will be a need to travel either to other villages or towns to obtain access to employment as well as services and facilities to meet peoples’ needs. Therefore, the effects on SA Objective 3 [Reduce Need to Travel] are considered to be minor negative.”

As previously stated the Settlement Hierarchy Report defines Secondary Service Villages as those with good accessibility to services and facilities. Accordingly, to score the Hatton Station sites as minor negative in respect to reducing the need to travel appears to be inconsistent with the evidence base.

As it currently stands, with Hatton Station identified as a Limited Infill Village, policies DS11 and H1 Local Plan are considered to be unsound as they fail the tests in respect to being positively prepared, justified and effective. In addition they are considered to be inconsistent with national policy, namely paragraph 17 (Core Planning Principles) bullet 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); section 4 (Promoting Sustainable Transport) of the NPPF; and, Reference 50-001-20140306 (Rural Housing) of the Nation Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). In order for these policies, and accordingly the Local Plan, to be considered sound Hatton Station should be redefined as a Growth Village and for land to be allocated for housing development.

RPS considers that land west of Station Road (details submitted in the previous representations by Linden Homes and the Hatton Estate) provides the most logical extension of the village envelope and is less constrained than the other two sites considered in the Village Housing Options and Settlement Boundaries (2013) document. Land west of Station Road is also able to offer significant community benefits for use by the whole community, including the provision of a village green and formalisation of the footpath to Hatton Country World. In previous representations we have provided a Highways Access Report which sought to address concerns surrounding the site in respect to access. Please refer previous representations for further details and assessment of the site.

Limited Infill Villages

Policy H11 (Limited Village Infill Housing Development in the Green Belt) of the Local Plan sets out the Council’s guidance on limited village infill housing development in the green belt and states that:

“Limited village infill housing development in the Green Belt will be permitted where the site is located within a Limited Infill Village and the following criteria are satisfied:

- a) the development is for no more than 2 dwellings;*
- b) the development comprises the infilling of a small gap fronting the public highway between an otherwise largely uninterrupted built up frontage, which is visible as part of the street scene; and*
- c) the site does not form an important part of the integrity of the village, the loss of which would have a harmful impact upon the local character and distinctiveness of the area.”*

Paragraph 4.79, which provides further explanation for this policy, states:

“The Council’s approach to limited infilling is to allow very small developments within settlement boundaries where sites are appropriately located along street frontages and where the development does not have a harmful impact on the integrity and character of the village.”

The proposals maps which accompany the Local Plan provide infill village boundaries alongside this policy. As it currently stands we believe this policy is too restrictive as the specified boundaries for infill essentially trace the built up area of the settlements, leaving little realistically available land within the boundary for infill development. The imposing of such a tight infill boundary around the identified settlements appears to therefore actively prevent infill development, and is therefore not consistent with the strategy set out in the Local Plan.

A settlement boundary approach would be acceptable if the Council reverts to the allocation of specific sites. However, if the intention is to have a criteria-based approach (i.e. the filling of an otherwise built-up frontage) then the Infill boundary undermines this. In our view, to be effective, this policy should be either a boundary/allocation-based policy or a criteria-based infill policy, not both as is currently the position.

In addition Policy H11 seeks to limit any infilling to two dwellings, which we believe is far too restrictive and is effectively limiting benefits that could be delivered through new development in the village. This would potentially rule out development which may be acceptable and beneficial to a village. In relation to Hatton Station, it could prevent housing development that could itself provide facilities that are not currently available and could have a potential impact on the viability of the station. Accordingly, this limit of 2 dwellings should either be increased to allow greater flexibility and responsiveness or, preferably, this should be assessed on a case by case basis.

On this basis Policy H11 is considered to be unsound as it fails the tests in respect to being positively prepared, justified and effective. In addition Policy H11 is considered to be inconsistent with national policy, as set out above in respect to Policies DS11 and H1.

Conclusion

We believe that Policies DS11, H1 and H11 of the Local Plan are unsound as they fail the tests in respect to being positively prepared, justified, effective and are inconsistent with national policy. In order for the Local Plan to be considered sound we recommend, firstly that Hatton Station moved into the Growth Village category (largely on the basis of the station, which provides significant accessibility benefits), and land west of Station Road should be an allocation for residential development within the settlement (as set out in the previous representations of Linden Homes and Hatton Estate).

Secondly, in order to address the current issues with the Limited Infill Village policy we recommend that policy H11 should be either a village boundary/site allocation policy or a criteria-based infill policy, not both as is currently the position, as this essentially prevents any infill development. In addition the current policy is too restrictive on the number of dwellings allowed on any identified infill site, the limit of 2 dwellings should either be increased to allow greater flexibility and responsiveness or, preferably, this should be assessed on a case by case basis



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We would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this letter and keep us updated on the Local Plan process. We would also like to register our interest in taking part in the public examination when it takes place.

Yours sincerely
For RPS



Nick Laister
Senior Director

Enc. Publication Draft Representation Form