

Gladman Developments Ltd

Representations on

Warwick District Council

Local Plan Revised Development Strategy



July 2013

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Gladman specialise in the promotion of strategic land for residential development with associated community infrastructure.
- 1.1.2 These representations provide Gladman’s comments on Warwick District’s Revised Development Strategy. They are structured as follows:
- National Planning Policy Framework
 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Meeting Warwick’s Housing Needs
 - Housing Development Strategy
 - Site Submission
- 1.1.3 Gladman note that the current consultation focuses on the overall development strategy for Warwick District rather than providing full suite of emerging policies for the authority’s Local Plan. Elements of the Strategy are still being formulated. We look forward to the opportunity of reviewing a more complete draft Local Plan in the future.
- 1.1.4 Through our representations Gladman highlight a number of concerns with Warwick’s development strategy as proposed. Most critical of these is that we question the Council’s decision to consult on a housing requirement when its evidence of objectively assessed needs is yet to be published.
- 1.1.5 The Framework is clear that authorities should identify and meet their full objectively assessed housing needs, informed by a SHMA that has been prepared with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The housing requirement and Core Strategy cannot be found sound if they are inconsistent with this requirement. Until the Joint SHMA for Warwick, Coventry, Nuneaton and Bedworth has been prepared the Council cannot know what their objectively assessed housing requirement should be. Relying on an interim figure in the meantime is considered unsound.
- 1.1.6 Notwithstanding the above issue, we submit that the interim housing requirement being progressed through the Revised Development Strategy is also arbitrarily low. There is no justification for deviating from the housing projections presented in the Council’s most recent 2012 Economic and Demographic Forecasts Study. Further the Council may be

ignoring the current shortfall of housing against their Regional Strategy requirements. This historic backlog cannot just be written off.

- 1.1.7 We support the Council's decision to direct development to the main urban areas and the sustainable Primary Service Villages. However this should not preclude development coming forward in lower order, but still sustainable settlements. We submit that proposals according with the Council's guidelines for village development should be considered acceptable. Where suitable, unconstrained sites are available this suggests that a village can support housing growth at the upper end of its allocated dwelling range. It may also be preferable to focus more growth in villages that are unconstrained by Green Belt designations.
- 1.1.8 We support the identification of Radford Semele as sustainable location for further development. We submit that land to the north of Southam Road, Radford Semele represents the best opportunity to provide further housing growth in the village.

2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (from here on known as the Framework) has been with us now for over a year and the industry is beginning to get to grips with its application and the need for some fundamental changes in the way in which planning operates.
- 2.1.2 One such change relates to the need to "*significantly boost the supply of housing*" and how this fundamental requirement of the Framework should be reflected in the plan making process.
- 2.1.3 Gladman, who operate on a national basis, have had the opportunity to become involved in a number of local plan preparation processes since the Framework was brought into force including participation in the Examination stage and have gained significant experience as a result.
- 2.1.4 What has been clear from this experience is that many local authorities have not fully addressed the requirements of the Framework when preparing their Local Plans and this has led to significant concerns being expressed by Inspector's on the soundness of their plans in their current format.
- 2.1.5 The main concerns centre upon the requirement in the Framework to "*use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area*" (§47).

- 2.1.6 The process of undertaking an objective assessment is clearly set out in the Framework principally in §14, §47, §152 and §159 and should be undertaken in a systematic and transparent way to ensure that the plan is based on a robust evidence base.
- 2.1.7 The starting point for this assessment is set out in §159 which requires local planning authorities to have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. This involves the preparation of a SHMA working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative areas. The Framework goes on to set out the factors that should be included in a SHMA including identifying *"the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which:*
- *Meets household and population projections taking account of migration and demographic change;*
 - *Addresses the need for all types of housing including affordable housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes); and*
 - *Caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand."*
- 2.1.8 Key points that are worth noting from the above is that the objective assessment should identify the full need for housing before the Council consider undertaking any process of assessing the ability to deliver this figure. In addition, §159 specifically relates to catering for both housing need and housing demand within the authority area. It is worth pointing out that any assessment of housing need and demand within a SHMA must also consider the following factors; falling household formation rates, net inward migration, the need to address the under provision of housing from the previous local plan period, the preliminary results of the Census 2011, housing vacancy rates including the need to factor in a 3% housing vacancy rate for churn in the housing market, economic factors to ensure that the economic forecasts for an area are supported by sufficient housing to deliver economic growth, off-setting a falling working age population by providing enough housing to ensure retiring workers can be replaced by incoming residents, addressing affordability and delivering the full need for affordable housing in an area.
- 2.1.9 It is our understanding that a majority of the SHMAs that were prepared under the current guidance on SHMA preparation are not Framework compliant and do not consider the full

range of factors that are outlined in §159. This is causing significant problems for authorities currently at Examination and therefore, to avoid this issue, SHMAs should be updated to take account of the Framework and ensure plans are based on robust and up-to-date evidence. Indeed, the Government have noted the deficiency in SHMAs and are updating the guidance on SHMA preparation to fully reflect the guidance given in the Framework.

- 2.1.10 Following the exercise to identify the full, objectively assessed need for housing in an area, the local planning authority should then seek to undertake the assessment outlined in §152 of the Framework. This states that *“Local planning authorities should seek opportunities to achieve each of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and net gains across all three. Significant adverse impacts on any of these dimensions should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, measures to mitigate the impact should be considered. Where adequate mitigation measures are not possible, compensatory measures may be appropriate.”* This statement clearly sets out that local planning authorities should seek to deliver the full, objectively assessed need and that this should be tested through the evidence base. Only where the evidence shows that this is not achievable should they then test other options to see if any significant adverse impacts could be reduced or eliminated by pursuing these options. If this is not possible then they should test if the significant adverse impacts could be mitigated and where this is not possible, where compensatory measures may be appropriate.
- 2.1.11 The final stage of the process is outlined in §14 and involves a planning judgement as to whether, following all of the stages of the process outlined above, *“any adverse impacts of meeting the objectively assessed needs would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this framework taken as a whole or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.”* It is also worth noting that the final part of this sentence refers to footnote 9 which sets out the types of policies that the Government consider to be restrictive. These include “sites protected under the Birds and Habitat Directive (see paragraph 119) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or within a National Park (or the Broads Authority); designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding or coastal erosion”. Although this list is not exhaustive it is clear that local landscape designations, intrinsic value of the countryside, the character of areas, green gaps etc are not specifically mentioned as constraints.

- 2.1.12 As outlined through this process, it is integral that the Council identify their full objectively assessed housing need and that this forms the starting point for determining the housing requirements for the Local Plan.

3 PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1.1 At the heart of the Framework is the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development. The Framework sets out that this should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking. The Framework outlines that all Plans should be based on and reflect the Presumption with clear policies that will guide how the presumption will be applied locally.
- 3.1.2 The Local Plan should clearly set out how the Presumption will be applied locally in Warwick District. We submit that this should be included in a policy at the beginning of the document to show that the Presumption underpins the Council’s development strategy. This would make it clear that development which is sustainable should go ahead.
- 3.1.3 The Council may consider using the model Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development policy published by the Planning Inspectorate:

“When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*
- or*

- *Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted'*

4 MEETING WARWICK'S HOUSING NEEDS

Policy RSD1 – Level of Housing Growth 2011-2029

- 4.1.1 Policy RDS1 sets out that the Council is adopting an interim level of growth of 12,300 homes between 2011 and 2029. The supporting text behind the policy states that an interim figure is being pursued after the Inspector examining the Coventry Core Strategy recommended that the City carry out a joint SHMA with Warwick District, Rugby, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Councils. This is to ensure housing growth in the sub-region is considered strategically and all needs are met. The first stage of the joint SHMA is due to report in August 2013.
- 4.1.2 Gladman raise significant concerns with the Council's approach. Firstly we question why the authority is consulting on a revised development strategy now when the evidence base for its housing requirement are yet to be finalised. Secondly we are opposed to the Council's decision to adopt an interim housing requirement until the joint SHMA has been prepared.
- 4.1.3 The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should identify and meet their full objectively assessed housing needs, informed by a SHMA that has been prepared with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The housing requirement and Core Strategy cannot be found sound if they are inconsistent with this requirement. Gladman submit that until the joint SHMA has been prepared the Council cannot know what their objectively assessed housing requirement should be. Relying on an interim figure in the meantime is considered unsound.
- 4.1.4 Notwithstanding the above issues, whilst recognising that the interim requirement is an increase on the Council's Regional Strategy requirement Gladman further question the process for identifying this target and submit that it is arbitrarily low. The 2012 Warwick SHMA set out a range of projections for future housing requirements in the District. In December 2012 this work was updated by the Warwick and Coventry Economic and Demographic Forecasts Study to take account of a now approved major technology and business park adjacent to Coventry airport, updated economic forecasts and the 2011 Census. Housing projections from both studies are set out in Table 1.

Table 1 Warwick District Housing Projections

	Annual Requirement	Requirement 2011-2031

2012 SHMA		
PROJ1 Main Trend Based	596	11,920
PROJ2 Higher Net In-Migration	693	13,860
PROJ3 Lower Net In-Migration	470	9,400
PROJ7 Projected Employment Growth	698	13,960
PROJ8 Projected Labour Force Growth	555	11,100
PROJ9 5% Employment Growth	404	8,080
PROJ10 10% Employment Growth	526	10,520
2012 Economic and Demographic Forecasts Study		
PROJ1 Revised Baseline	754	13,572 (2011-29)
PROJ2 Gateway Scenario 1	772	13,896 (2011-29)
PROJ3 Gateway Scenario 2	742	13,356 (2011-29)
PROJ4 Gateway Scenario 3	726	14,520 (2011-29)
PROJ5 Past Demographic Trends	430	7,740 (2011-29)

- 4.1.5 The Council's interim requirement does not align to any of the projections presented in its evidence. Whilst recognising that it is an increase on the Council's Regional Strategy requirements it is noticeably lower than the economic-based housing projections prepared for the Economic and Demographic Forecasts Study, including the revised baseline economic scenario. It appears to be predicated on 2011 ONS household and population projections and an assumed GVA rate of 2.4%. There is no justification for the Council's decision to ignore its objectively assessed housing needs. It has not demonstrated that there would be any adverse impacts of delivering a higher housing requirement to support its full economic potential.

Housing Backlog

- 4.1.6 Another concern raised by Gladman is in relation to the housing backlog within Warwick District. Many authorities have consistently under-provided housing against their Regional Strategy targets. These documents were subject to significant scrutiny and were found to be based on robust evidence. If the local planning authority has not provided sufficient homes to meet its RSS target, then there is a need to ensure that the housing requirement in the forthcoming Local Plan includes an element to address this backlog.
- 4.1.7 The under supply of housing against the RSS target of 550 dpa in Warwick District equates to a shortfall of 1,281 units for the period 2006/07-2010/11. It is not clear from the Council's evidence or Revised Development Strategy whether this shortfall has been taken into account when proposing the interim housing requirement, which has a base date of

2011. Unmet need will not just disappear and therefore it is fundamental that it is taken into account in the targets moving forwards. It cannot just be written off.

- 4.1.8 The failure to include past shortfall in housing delivery in the proposed housing target should be considered unsound. The delivery of any shortfall should be made up as soon as possible, and in the absence of evidence to suggest a longer timescale, the shortfall should be caught up within the first 5 years of the plan.

Duty to Co-operate

- 4.1.9 It is important to stress that the process of identifying objectively assessed housing needs should be undertaken with full regard to the Duty to Cooperate as set out in §110 of the Localism Act. This ensures that if the needs of Warwick cannot be fully met within the District then surrounding authorities should agree to accommodate this shortfall. Likewise, if surrounding authorities cannot meet their full need, then the shortfall should be picked up within your authority area.
- 4.1.10 Gladman submit that until a jointly prepared SHMA for Warwick, Coventry, Nuneaton and Bedworth has been published the Council cannot fulfil its Duty to Co-Operate requirement. This may reveal a requirement for the Council to meet the housing needs of these adjacent authorities, and vice versa. The importance of complying with the Duty to Co-operate is clear from the preliminary hearings on the Coventry City Core Strategy held in December 2012.

Policy RDS2 – Meeting the Housing Requirement

- 3.1.11 Policy RDS2 sets out the components of the Council’s housing land supply. In particular it makes a windfall allowance of 2,800 dwellings over the Plan period. In this regard Gladman remind the Council of the guidance set out in §48 of the Framework, which states that *“Local planning authorities may make an allowance for windfall sites in the five-year supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply”*

5 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Policies RDS3, RDS4 and RDS5 – Broad Location of Development and Allocations

- 5.1.1 Policies RDS3 and RDS4 outline the principles and direction of the Council’s strategy for housing growth. Policy RDS5 then details the allocations that will be made to meet these development needs. Table 2 shows the broad locations for growth.

Table 2 Broad Locations for Growth

Location	Total Dwellings	% Total
Urban Brownfield Sites	380	5.7
Sites on Edge of Warwick, Leamington and Whitnash	4,550	68.6
Sites on the edge of Kenilworth	700	10.6
Village Development	1,000	15.1
Total	6,630	100

- 5.1.2 The Council's preferred approach directs development to within and the edge of exiting urban areas. It allows for a higher level of growth in more sustainable villages with a reasonable level of services, and limited growth to smaller villages and hamlets of a scale appropriate to the existing settlement. It recognises that development directed towards villages may need to be located within or adjacent to the existing village envelope, and in some instances within the Green Belt.
- 5.1.3 In principle Gladman support the Council's distribution strategy. It recognises that growth should be directed to key towns and villages with established sustainability credentials, ensuring the creation of sustainable communities that have good access to a range of jobs, housing, community facilities and key services and infrastructure. However, it should be noted that whilst the main settlements should accommodate a larger proportion of housing growth, this should not prevent development coming forward in lower order, sustainable settlements, which could also help to sustain existing facilities and services.
- 5.1.4 One of the principles of the Council's development strategy is to avoid development which could potentially result in the coalescence of settlements. Gladman would welcome further clarification on the decision making criteria that would be used to implement this policy. In particular it should be recognised that development which results in a physical loss in separation can often be accommodated without eroding the character and identity of individual towns and villages.

Sustainable Urban Extensions and Housing Supply

- 5.1.5 A significant proportion – 66% - of the of the Council's proposed housing requirement is to be met through the allocation of sustainable urban extensions (SUE). Whilst recognising the sustainability benefits that can arise from SUEs, Gladman submit that placing too much emphasis on these sites could further result in an under-supply of housing in the District. Large SUEs often require extensive infrastructure and planning prior to housing being delivered. As a result often they fail to come forward as anticipated, or only start to deliver in the medium to longer term.

- 5.1.6 The Council is already unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply as required by §47 of the Framework. If the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply upon adoption of its Local Plan there's a risk that its housing policies will be out-of-date as soon as the Plan comes into effect.
- 5.1.7 In light of the above, and to ensure housing comes forward as anticipated, Gladman submit that the Council need to allow for the release of additional housing sites, and earlier in the Plan period to meet its housing needs. In doing so it should consider sites that result in sustainable development and continue to support the Plan's strategy.

Village Development

- 5.1.8 The Revised Development Strategy identifies ten villages that could accommodate further housing growth over the Plan period. It separates these villages into the more sustainable Primary Service Villages and lower tier, but still sustainable Secondary Service Villages. The Council's 2013 Settlement Hierarchy describes how the Primary Service Villages score highest for sustainability. They each have a primary school, village or community hall, and generally good access to other services. They are therefore considered to be sustainable locations for further development.
- 5.1.9 The Strategy allocates an initial range of housing growth to each of the Primary and Secondary Services Villages. It describes how these initial figures have been based on feedback from Parish Council's and Neighbourhood Plan teams, apportioning housing based on existing settlement size, and an outline assessment of key delivery factors, e.g. services and facilities, environmental impacts and the suitability of sites. The initial dwelling ranges for the District's Primary Service Villages are set out in Table 3.

Table 3 Primary Service Village Housing Requirements

Village	Number of Dwellings
Bishop's Tachbrook	100-150
Cubbington	100-150
Hampton Magna	100-150
Kingswood (Lapworth)	100-150
Radford Semele	100-150
Total Allocations	Circa 600

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- 5.1.10 Reviewing the distribution strategy for the Primary and Secondary Service Villages Gladman remind the Council that it should not be progressing a political strategy to apportion development to settlements where people do not want to (and will not) live.
- 5.1.11 Whilst recognising the role of parish council's and local communities in shaping the development of their areas Gladman submit that first and foremost growth should be distributed on the basis of meeting housing needs. There may also be a need to update the village dwelling allocations in light of the Joint SHMA findings and our representations that the Council is progressing an arbitrarily low housing requirement.
- 5.1.12 The Strategy goes on to state that the initial dwelling ranges for each village will be reviewed in light of ongoing work on Green Belt assessment, habitat and landscape impact and identifying the most appropriate sites – that minimise environmental impacts, contribute to the built quality of the village and deliver an appropriate scale of development – which could deliver housing in each village. This suggests that where suitable, unconstrained sites are available a village can support housing growth at the upper end of its allocated range. It may also be preferable to focus more growth in villages that are unconstrained by Green Belt designations.
- 5.1.13 Policy RDS5 provides further guidelines on how housing within the villages should be accommodated. These criteria include:
- Ensuring an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes, including affordable housing
 - Ensuring acceptable design, layout and scale through a collaborative approach involving Parish Council's, Neighbourhood Plan teams and residents
 - Carefully considering the quality of development and how this relates to local vernaculars; and
 - Ensuring landscaping will be used positively to contribute to and protect the quality of place
- 5.1.14 Gladman submit that where a proposal accords with these criteria it should be considered acceptable and sustainable. However we note that two further guidelines for village development set out that housing growth should be located within the village envelope and give priority to the redevelopment of brownfield and previously used sites. Gladman object to these guidelines in their current form.
- 5.1.15 Whilst locating sites within existing village envelopes is desirable, under Policy RDS4 the Strategy recognises that there may be a need to locate further village growth adjacent to

existing settlements. This should be emphasised in Policy RDS5. Further, whilst it is recognised that the development of brownfield sites is important, a priority should not be placed on this which would act to arbitrarily restrict development on sustainable Greenfield sites. It is also worth noting that there are likely to be brownfield sites that are less sustainable than Greenfield land options.

Infrastructure Requirements

5.1.16 The Revised Development Strategy sets out requirements for the provision of infrastructure where it has identified specific site allocations and a range of Borough-wide highway improvements. In this regard Gladman remind the Council of the guidance on viability set out in §173 of the Framework, which states that “Plans should be deliverable. Therefore, the sites and scale of development identified in the Plan should not be subject to such a scale of burdens that their ability to be developed viably is threatened”.

5.1.17 Gladman note that the Council is yet to publish an Infrastructure Delivery Plan or test the viability of its infrastructure requirements. We therefore question the robustness of these requirements in their current form. Gladman further submit that the requirement to provide new infrastructure should only apply where there is a clear and evidenced deficiency in the provision of existing facilities to accommodate a development.

6 SITE SUBMISSION – RADFORD SEMELE

Land North of Southam Road, Radford Semele

6.1.1 Gladman have an interest in land north of Southam Road in Radford Semele. We therefore support the identification of the settlement as a Primary Service Village and sustainable location for further development.

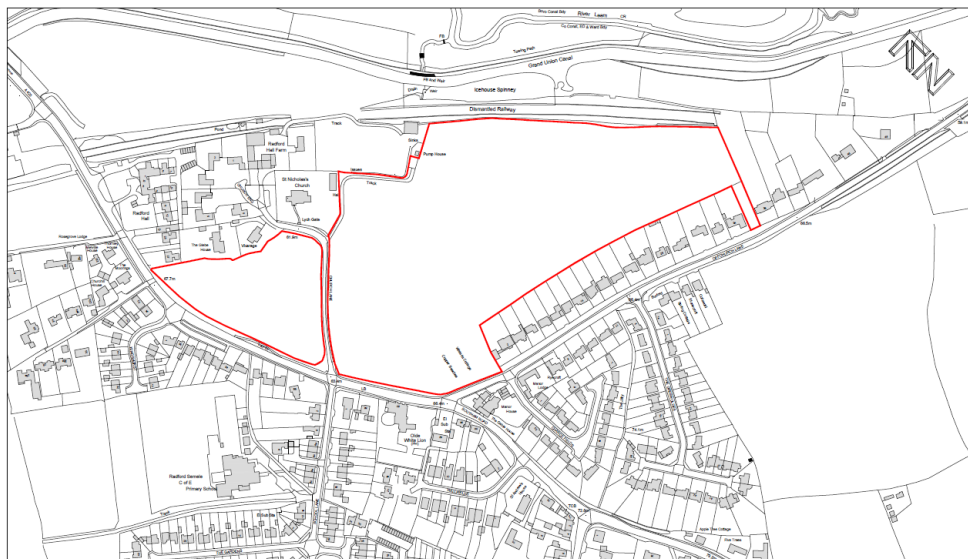


Figure 1 Land North of Southam Road, Radford Semele

- 6.1.2 Radford Semele is one the largest and more sustainable villages in the District. It benefits from a good range of service and facilities and regular public transport links to Leamington Spa and beyond. Land to the north of Southam Road is considered to represent the best opportunity to provide high quality housing growth in the village.
- 6.1.3 A supporting submission prepared by Stansgate Planning provides further details on the sustainability of Radford Semele and the suitability of the Southam Road site for housing development. A development framework plan is also submitted to illustrate how the site could be developed. The site is considered to be deliverable as it is available now, offers a suitable location for development, and is achievable.
- 6.1.4 The landowners and Gladman are keen to deliver a high quality residential scheme on the site and would welcome further discussions regarding this.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 What is clear from the Framework, and from the Government’s agenda to boost significantly the supply of housing, is that the premise of the whole process is the assessment and delivery of the full, objectively assessed needs for housing in an area unless there are adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. If the process set out in the Framework for meeting objectively assessed needs is not followed then the Council run the real risk of the plan being found unsound.
- 7.1.2 Gladman therefore question the Council’s decision to undertake the current consultation when the Joint SHMA is in the process of being prepared. Until this document has been finalised the Council cannot know what their objectively assessed housing needs should be. Notwithstanding this issue, we further submit that the interim housing requirement being progressed through the Revised Development Strategy is arbitrarily low. There is no justification for deviating from the housing projections presented in the most recent 2012 Economic and Demographic Forecasts Study.
- 7.1.3 Gladman support the principle of the Council’s distribution strategy. It recognising that growth should be directed to sustainable settlements with established sustainability credentials. However this should not preclude development in lower order, sustainable settlements which could also help to sustain existing facilities and services.
- 7.1.4 Proposals according with the Council’s guidelines for village development should be considered acceptable. Where suitable, unconstrained sites are available this suggests that a village can support housing growth at the upper end of its allocated dwelling range. It

may also be preferable to focus more growth in villages that are unconstrained by Green Belt designations.

- 7.1.5 The identification of Radford Semele a sustainable location for further development is supported. We submit that land to the north of Southam Road, Radford Semele represents the best opportunity to provide further housing growth in the village.