

Mr Dave Barber
Planning Policy Manager
Warwick District Council
Riverside House
Milverton Hill
Leamington Spa
CV32 5HZ

25717/A3/VL/KV

22nd April 2016

Dear Mr Barber

REPRESENTATIONS TO WARWICK DISTRICT DRAFT LOCAL PLAN (PART 1) MAIN MODIFICATIONS: BISHOPS TACHBROOK

We write on behalf of Sharba Homes Ltd in respect of their land interests on land east of Oakley Wood Road, Bishops Tachbrook. A site location plan is enclosed with these representations at **Appendix 1**.

The site is not proposed for allocation within the Draft Local Plan (Part 1), however we consider that it offers an additional and better potential for allocation than Site H49 as currently proposed.

The site occupies a sustainable location situated to the east of Bishops Tachbrook. The village is categorised as one of ten "Growth Villages" and is one of only three which falls outside of the Green Belt.

Mod 4 – Policy DS6

Whilst we are generally supportive of the Council's approach to increasing the housing target, taking account of unmet needs to assist the HMA in meeting the requirements of the NPPF and satisfying the Duty to Cooperate, we remain concerned that the level of uplift at the HMA and District levels is insufficient.

We enclose at **Appendix 2** a critique of the Council's position. For the reasons set out in the abovementioned review, we consider that the housing requirement for the HMA over the period (2011-2031) should be a minimum of 100,200 dwellings (5,010 dpa) and for Warwick District a minimum of between 20,800 and 23,400 dwellings (1,040 – 1,170dpa).

Mod 6 – Policy DS7

Notwithstanding our response to Mod 4, and the contention that the housing requirement should be increased further to a minimum of 20,800 dwellings, we wish to comment on the amended Policy DS7, which sets out how the housing requirement will be met.

The Council propose to deliver an additional 811 dwellings, over and above the proposed requirement of 16,766 dwellings for the Plan period. Regardless of the housing requirement, we support the approach of the Council in seeking to allocate additional land; as such an approach provides a positively prepared Plan that will be more effective in delivering the minimum requirements of the area, and is flexible to changing demands over the Plan period. This is supported in the NPPF at paragraph 14 where national policy supports the objective of meeting the OAHN with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change.

Such an approach will also assist the Council in demonstrating that they have been both aspirational and realistic in progressing the Plan (in accordance with paragraph 154 of the NPPF), with the slight overprovision allowing for any slippages in the provision of wider strategic sites within the District – which may be particularly helpful given the proximity of a number of allocations to the south of Warwick/Leamington Spa – and maximise the chance of a five year housing land supply being demonstrable over the Plan period.

However as per our submissions to Mod 4, this support is predicted on the correct level of OAN having been identified which, in our opinion, has yet to be demonstrated.

Mod 7 – Para's 2.21 to 2.24

Further to our suggestion for the provision of appropriate flexibility in the Plan, we note the housing trajectory that sits behind Policy DS7, which depicts the timeline for the delivery of housing over the Plan period. The trajectory is seeking a sharp increase, from circa 850 forecast completions in 2015/16 to a minimum of circa 1,400 dpa over the period 2017/18 to 2022/23. We have reviewed the Council's past completion rates and note that such a level of annual housing growth has never been previously achieved.

Such an increase is considerable, and to maximise the chances of this being delivered then the Council will require as many deliverable sites as possible to come forward to help meet this need.

We are therefore of the opinion that the land east of Oakley Wood Road should be considered for allocation given its capability of early delivery and assistance in meeting the OAHN.

Mods 10 and 11 – Policy DS11 and Para's 2.41 to 2.53

We refer to the Council's 'Distribution of Development Strategy Paper' – 2016 where it is stated:

The allocated sites in the Draft Local Plan [the previous version] were entirely consistent with the Plan's strategy in the focus on brownfield sites; edge of urban sites and growth villages. Policy DS11 of the Draft Local Plan set out the specific Allocated Housing Sites. As would be expected given the nature of the District and the strategy set out in Policy DS4, about 88% of the houses allocated in the Plan are located within or adjacent to the District's four Towns (Warwick, Whitnash, Leamington Spa and Kenilworth).

The focus (as part of the distribution strategy) upon the growth villages is therefore clear.

The report then states (with regard to Green Belt release) that:

The Council has used a three stage approach to assessing Exceptional Circumstances on any particular site:

is there an essential need that has to be met? If yes,

are there any suitable sites outside the green belt that can meet this need? If no

is this the best site within the Green Belt to meet the need (taking account of the Green Belt study as well as other aspects of the site assessments)? If yes, then there are exceptional circumstances to release a site from the green belt and allocate it in the Local Plan.

It is the second of these which is most interesting. Whilst there is no in principle objection to Green Belt release as this is clearly required to meet the needs arising from the HMA, it is fundamentally incorrect to say that there are no suitable sites outside of the Green Belt. The justification for the release of additional land within the Green Belt villages is predicated in part upon the local needs of the village (accepted) but also partly on the wider District needs.

The aforementioned Council paper clearly states:

At a smaller scale, the Council is also seeking to support the growth of the largest and best served villages in the District.

The strategy therefore seeks to provide for the proportionate growth of 10 rural settlements that can best provide sustainable locations. The Council previously divided the 10 Growth Villages into primary and secondary settlements – the former being the larger most sustainable settlements. Bishops Tachbrook was a primary settlement and yet smaller Green Belt settlements (Cubington) for example are proposed to take a greater number of dwellings.

We object to the inclusion of site H49 within the Plan. There is clear and apparent discord between the developers, the District Council, the County Council (as Highway Authority) and the Parish Council in respect of this site.

- The District Council propose an allocation of 30 dwellings.
- The Parish Council (in the Neighbourhood Plan) propose that the site form part of an 'Area of Coalescence Protection' (or possibly a Rural Exception Site). We enclose a copy of the Parish Council objection to the proposal along with a copy of a letter from them to the Chief Executive setting out their significant concerns with the allocation of this site.
- The developers have submitted an application for 50 dwellings.
- The County Council have objected to the proposal on highway grounds (copy enclosed) following a previous reason for refusal for 25 dwellings. The highway issues raised for the larger scheme are equally applicable for a smaller scheme and have yet to be dealt with to the satisfaction of the County Council. It should also be noted that the County Councils landscape team has also expressed concern.

It is apparent that there is no certainty in respect of the suitability or deliverability of this site. As such we suggest that this site be deleted and replaced with land east of Oakley Wood Road. The latter site has an 'unfettered' planning history; has a suitable point of access; does not serve to exacerbate an existing problem of a decreasing gap between the village edge and south Warwick; does not form part of a proposed 'Area of Coalescence Protection; is in an area where the landscape impact has already been considered acceptable by the Parish Council, District Council and planning committee in granting the adjacent site; and importantly is of sufficient size to deliver some form of real community benefit to the village alongside a proportion of residential development.

Mods 17 and 18 – Policy DS20 and Para's 2.82 to 2.87

We would support the revised wording to this Policy which details the review (partial or whole) of the Local Plan. It is considered important to review the Plan particularly if it transpires through monitoring that the overall development strategy is not being met.

Mod 20 – Policy DSNEW1

In relation to this Policy, we would wish to note that Sharba Homes are in agreement with the capping of the assumed delivery of the Westwood Heath and Kings Hill sites due to infrastructure and delivery rates respectively as well as the lack of demonstrable delivery on these highly sensitive and constrained sites that have yet to be properly assessed for their suitability and capacity.

It is important in meeting the needs of the HMA that the Council are realistic in this regard to ensure that the Plan is effective and deliverable by 2029. Given the timescales for adoption of the Plan and progressing of a site the scale of Kings Hill, 1,800 dwellings by 2029 should be considered aspirational.

Conclusion

We trust that you will take these comments as being helpful in progressing the Plan. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



KATHRYN VENTHAM

Partner

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