

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

25840/A3/VL/KV

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016

Dear Mr Barber

**REPRESENTATIONS TO WARWICK DISTRICT DRAFT LOCAL PLAN (PART 1) MAIN  
MODIFICATIONS: RADFORD SEMELE**

We write on behalf of Sharba Homes Ltd in respect of their land interests on land south of Offchurch Lane, Radford Semele. The proposed layout enclosed at **Appendix 1**.

The site is not proposed for allocation within the Draft Local Plan (Part 1), however we consider that it offers a sustainable addition to the largest non-Green Belt Growth Village. Proposed allocation Site H52 is situated within an "Area of Restraint" where the Council had previously argued on appeal that an adjacent site would harm the village identity and have an unacceptable impact upon school lane traffic. The allocation of Site H52 can only constitute a worsening of such an impact whereas the site south of Offchurch Lane will have no such detrimental impact.

The site occupies a sustainable location situated to the north-east of Radford Semele. The village is categorised as one of ten "Growth Villages" and indeed it is the largest of three of the villages which fall outside of the Green Belt. The site is bounded to the north and west by existing residential development. To the east lies further agricultural land and to the south lies Site H38 (allocated for residential development) which has a recent planning consent (Ref: W/14/0322) and is currently under construction for 60 dwellings. The site does not lie within or adjacent to any designated landscapes, heritage assets, or any other protected designations, and is comprised of Grades 3b and 4 agricultural land, therefore not considered to be Best and

Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVL). The site itself is currently subject to a live outline planning application for up to 150 dwellings with all matters reserved except access (Ref: W/16/0196).

With regard to this application, it is being presented to Planning Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> April with an Officer recommendation for approval. The concluding comments of the Officers are as follows:

**The site would deliver economic benefits through the generation of employment during the construction phase, and from the increased population which would contribute towards increased expenditure in the local area and dependence on local facilities. Social benefits would include the provision of a mix of types and sizes of market and affordable housing to meet identified local needs, the provision of open space and footpaths, and improvements to shared infrastructure. Environmental benefits would arise from measures to increase biodiversity, sustainable transport improvements, more efficient use of land, and enhancement to existing open spaces. The site is in a sustainable location adjacent to the village where residents can access a range of services. It is therefore concluded that the development represents sustainable development by satisfying the three dimensions identified in the NPPF.**

**It has been concluded that any issues of concern that have been raised can be satisfactorily addressed through the assessment of reserved matters applications, the provision of new facilities, and the provision of new infrastructure by way of financial contributions. The development would have some adverse impact on the surrounding landscape in terms of the loss of openness and rural character, however, these impacts need to be balanced against the wider benefits of the development listed above. In the particular circumstances of this application, it is not considered that the adverse impacts on the landscape in terms of the area of restraint and the rural area significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.**

**The development is considered to comply with all current Local Plan policies aside from RAP1, which the NPPF advises cannot carry any weight. Furthermore the development is considered to comply with the policies of the NPPF, taken as a whole. The presumption in favour of sustainable development carries substantial weight, as does the**

**contribution the development would make to the provision of housing to meet the needs of the District.**

Taking the Main Modifications to the Plan we would comment as follows:

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 south of Offchurch Lane should be considered for allocation in conjunction with Site H38, given its capability of early delivery and assistance in meeting the OAHN. The Site (as set out earlier) is currently subject to a live outline planning application (Ref: W/16/0196) for up to 150 dwellings.

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

As set out previously, we consider that the Site south of Offchurch Lane could be sufficiently allocated as part of a more comprehensive allocation in conjunction with Site H38.

The Site is currently the subject of a live outline planning application for up to 150 dwellings with the primary access being through the Site H38. It would therefore be logical to allocate the sites as a whole entity to ensure comprehensive delivery and assist in meeting the OAHN for the District.

The sole justification with the draft Plan for the 'non-allocation' of this site was a concern about the capacity of the village school to accommodate additional development. It is understood that the County Council (in their capacity as education authority) had potentially considered this might represent a bar to anything over 60 dwellings (either individually or cumulatively) within the village.

However the County Council's consultation response to the planning application is one of no objections subject to payment of a financial contribution through the Section 106 Agreement to finance the expansion of education facilities to accommodate the inevitable household growth in the area. We agree that infrastructure and services should be adjusted to meet identified needs and not be a bar to it. This has been agreed in principle between all parties. As such the perceived 'bar' to development within the village has now been removed and we should be seeing housing focussed towards this non-Green Belt village.

In this respect 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, not just, the wider District needs, but specifically the lack of alternatives which is evidentially flawed.

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. Radford Semele was a primary settlement and yet smaller Green Belt settlements (Cubbington) for example are proposed to take a greater number of dwellings.

In the light of the clear acceptance by Officers of the sustainability of Land South of Offchurch Lane, we request that consideration be given to additional allocations at Radford Semele commensurate with its status as a well served, sustainable, non Green Belt Growth Village.

#### 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 highly 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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