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L 130720 RL Revised Development Strategy Reps



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Dear Sir/Madam

**Local Plan – Revised Development Strategy
Representations on behalf of Gleeson Developments Ltd and The Sundial Group Ltd**

Savills is instructed by Gleeson Developments Ltd (Gleeson) and the Sundial Group Ltd (Sundial) to submit the following representations in relation to the above consultation.

Background:

Gleeson and Sundial control the land at Southcrest Farm (K17) and Woodside Training Centre (K19), to the east of Kenilworth. Representations have previously been submitted to the Council highlighting the lack of constraints on this land, its suitability for development and its deliverability. We previously submitted comments on the Preferred Options document, May 2012. The comments below raise similar issues to our previous submissions. The Council has failed to take on board or address the issues raised in our previous submissions which are fundamental to the soundness of the Local Plan.

The assessment of K17/K19 by the Council has assumed that the land will come forward separately to land at Thickthorn. This is not the case. K17/K19 should be seen as an extension to the land at Thickthorn and not separate from it. Our main issue is that the capacity of the Thickthorn land is unable to accommodate the extent of development proposed. This is clearly demonstrated in the Revised Development Strategy (RDS) as will be set out below.

These representations maintain our view that a wider, long term, approach to development at Kenilworth should be taken, including the land at Thickthorn and K17/K19. This will enable a comprehensive approach that will meet the aims and objectives of Garden Suburbs. It will provide better linkages into the town, provide improved services and maintain the existing playing fields/sporting facilities in the area.

In addition, the whole area of land should be taken out of the Green Belt and safeguarded in accordance with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 85.

The comments that are set out below specifically relate to Kenilworth and are informed by in depth technical work that has been undertaken on sites K17 and K19, including archaeology, highways, drainage/flood risk, landscape, air quality, noise and ecology.



Comments on the Revised Development Strategy, June 2013

Paragraph 1.2 - Comment

This paragraph confirms the importance of taking account of the evidence and representations submitted on the Local Plan. To date the Council has failed to consider the fundamental issues that our Client's have raised regarding the deliverability of the land at Thickthorn. This includes issues regarding land ownership, collaboration, alternative playing field provision, the capacity of the land to deliver the required development at appropriate densities to reflect the Garden Suburbs approach and the site's identified technical constraints.

Paragraph 1.3 - Comment

It is noted that Warwick along with other Council's in the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region are preparing a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This is in response to the comments made by the Inspector examining the Coventry Core Strategy that the Council had failed in its duty to co-operate. The preparation of an up to date SHMA is fully supported.

In addition, the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a formal "duty to cooperate" on planning issues and strategic priorities that cross administrative boundaries. The duty requires these issues to be coordinated and reflected in individual Local Plans. Indeed, Inspector's at recent Local Plan and Core Strategy examinations, most noticeably Coventry, have attached considerable weight to the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities and have found plans unsound where the evidence is lacking of such cooperation. In addition, the Inspector considering the North London Waste Plan recently set out a clear distinction between consultation and engagement (see attached note). The Council should take account of the Inspector's findings regarding active engagement rather than simply consulting.

This is an important aspect of preparing the Local Plan and one which should be adequately addressed.

In this context it is encouraging to see that the Revised Development Strategy acknowledges this issue. However, paragraph 181 of the NPPF reiterates a need for ongoing dialogue stating "*Cooperation should be a continuous process of engagement*". Most of the surrounding authorities are also in the process of producing or updating their development plans. As such whilst, cross boundary issues may not have been identified thus far, the situation may change over the period up to and including the submission of the Local Plan. Indeed, the ongoing update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment that is due to be published shortly may raise cross boundary issues that should be taken into account. We would encourage the Council to be proactive in meeting the Duty to Cooperate and be flexible enough to respond to issues as and when they may arise.

Given the above, we are concerned by the statement at paragraph 1.3 of the Strategy that the "*housing growth requirements are unlikely to change substantially as a result of the new assessment*." Whilst changes to housing requirements in Warwick District may not change, the need to accommodate housing growth from neighbouring authorities may. Under the Duty to Cooperate on going dialogue and active engagement is required. The implication of this may be a need to consult further, either on the updated housing figure or a completely revised development strategy. The Council should maintain a flexible and open mind to deal with any issues that may arise.

Strategic Vision - Support

Gleeson and Sundial general support the Council's Vision for Warwick District and the aim of the Strategy to "*ensure that by the end of the Plan period, the District will be known as a place of sustainable "Garden Towns, Suburbs and Villages" with a successful, dynamic broad based economy, catering for the needs of its growing and diverse communities.*"

However, whilst supporting the need to meet the housing requirement of the existing and future population of the District they do not support the specific principle of only identifying land for around 683 new homes per year. This issue will be discussed in more detail below.

In addition, it is noted that there is no reference in any of the specific principles to the need to maintain and improve the quality and provision of sporting and leisure facilities in the District. This was a key theme set out in the previous Preferred Options document and one that should be taken forward in the updated Local Plan as it is in line with advice produced by the Government and Sport England to improve the general health of communities through improvements to sport and recreation facilities and protecting playing fields.

Section 4 - Revised Development Strategy - Object

Interim Housing Figure – Policy RDS1 – Object

It is noted that the document refers to the revised housing figures as an “*interim*” level. We therefore question why the Council has consulted on this Revised Development Strategy at this stage, rather than waiting for the updated SHMA to be completed? The comments below relate to the housing figure currently proposed. We reserve our right to comment on the revised housing figure when the new SHMA is published later in 2013 and encourage the Council to formerly consult once again at that time.

Level of Housing Growth 2011-2029

Policy RDS1 refers to an interim level of growth of 12,300 homes between 2011-2029. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should:

“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, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.”

Our previous representations on the Preferred Options Local Plan commented on the low level of housing proposed in the District. It is therefore encouraging to see that the Revised Development Strategy has proposed a higher (albeit interim) housing figure of 12,300 homes over the plan period. However, we maintain our objection to this level of housing growth in that it fails to accord with the requirements of the NPPF to meet the “*full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area.*”

Indeed, the Council’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), May 2012, concludes that:

“Forecast employment growth in the District is for 11,860 jobs over this period. Should the District wish to support this level of economic and employment growth, the projections indicate that provision of 14,300 homes would be required (2011-31), equivalent to 715 per annum.”

The SHMA also indicates a need for an annual supply of 698 affordable housing units alone over the plan period. Whilst it is accepted that affordable housing can be addressed through increased private sector accommodation, it will still have a significant impact on housing provision in the district.

Paragraph 4.1.5 of the RDS refers to ONS Sub-national Population & Household Projections. The value of these statistics is questioned in the context of paragraph 47 of the NPPF that refers to the need for consideration at the housing market area level and not just at District level.

Paragraph 4.1.6 of the RDS refers to the 2012 SHMA. The paragraph concludes “*The SHMA projections showed that between 11,300 and 14,300 new homes could be required between 2011 and 2028, depending on whether or not existing levels of commuting remained the same.*” Furthermore, demographic projections set out in the RDS (paragraph 4.1.8) which were based on more up to date economic forecasts than

considered in the SHMA have shown a need for between 13,300 and 13,800 new homes over the plan period.

The 'interim housing figure' set out in the RDS policy RDS1 fails to meet the full need in the housing market area. There is also no rationale or evidence as to how the housing figure has been arrived at and why the higher figures set out above and in the evidence base have been rejected. Such evidence is needed to ensure that the Local Plan is found sound by an Inspector. Moreover the 2012 SHMA is not NPPF compliant in that it only assesses housing and employment growth within Warwick District and not the wider housing market area. The final housing figure should await the findings of the 2013 update to the SHMA.

The housing numbers fail to refer to the need for a 5% or 20% buffer on the overall housing figure and as such is contrary to the requirements of paragraph 47 of the NPPF. Such a requirement is to provide "a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land." (Paragraph 47 NPPF). Choosing a housing figure that fails to meet the identified housing need in the area, along with the current five year land supply shortfall will result in an unsound plan. The NPPF requires a flexible approach in such instances to boost significantly the supply of housing.

Plan Period:

The plan period is confusing in that the 2012 SHMA refers to a 20 year period (2011 – 2031), the RDS document refers to an 18 year period (2011-2029) whilst the introduction to the RDS refers to a 15 year time period. The NPPF (paragraph 157) refers to a need for plans to be drawn up over an appropriate timescale "preferably a 15 year time horizon" and also to "take account of longer term requirements." This approach is supported by the evidence in the SHMA that refers to evidence of growth over the longer time period up to and post 2031. Given the on-going delays in the production of the Local Plan consideration should be given to extending the plan period accordingly. As such the housing figure would need to be increased to reflect the longer time period.

RDS3 - Broad Location of Development – Support/Object

Gleeson and Sundial generally support the Council's broad location of development in so far as it seeks to accommodate growth within and on the edge of the existing urban areas. However, whilst there is a need to protect the Green Belt it should be accepted that a large proportion of the District is Green Belt. In order to accommodate housing where it is needed there will be a requirement to review Green Belt boundaries, especially around key sustainable settlements for example, Kenilworth.

Furthermore, paragraph 85 of the NPPF states there is also a need to identify in the Local Plan "areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet the longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period." This issue has not been addressed in any of the evidence base documents or the RDS. In the case of Kenilworth, which is recognised as one of the most sustainable centres in the District, there will be a need to accommodate further growth beyond the current plan period. For the reasons set out in the current SHLAA and at paragraph 4.3.12 of the RDS it is accepted that there are limited opportunities for growth within the existing built up area of the Town. As such growth will have to take place on edge of the Town within the Green Belt. In such circumstances the NPPF requires that land be 'safeguarded' to avoid further reviews at the end of the development plan period (paragraph 85 NPPF).

Paragraph 4.3.12

No Evidence that Thickthorn is the Least Harmful in Green Belt Terms

As set out above this paragraph recognises the need to expand in to the Green Belt in Kenilworth due to the lack of non-Green Belt options. No justification has been set out as to why the "Land at Thickthorn" is the "least harmful alternative in terms of the purposes of Green Belt land." Indeed, in the Joint Green Belt Review, January 2009, all of the land to the east and north-east of Kenilworth is identified as being 'least constrained'. Table 6 of the Joint Green Belt Review assesses the various sites and the land at Thickthorn is