



South Warwickshire Local Plan Part 1: Stage 2 Issues and Options Consultation

**Representations by
Richborough Estates**

Land at Bidford-on-Avon

March 2023

South Warwickshire Local Plan Part 1: Stage 2 Issues and Options Consultation

Representations by Richborough Estates Limited

1. These representations to the South Warwickshire Local Plan Part 1: Stage 2 Issues and Options Consultation have been prepared on behalf of Richborough Estates Limited. The focus of these representations concern the potential for other identified settlements, outside the Main Towns, to accommodate growth. Richborough Estates' considerations about growth potential of Main Towns are addressed in a separate representation submitted by Marrons.

General Comments

2. As a starting point, it is recognised that the Part 1 Local Plan is intended to set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places in South Warwickshire. The Part 1 Local Plan is also intended to make sufficient provision for housing and employment. However, there is a lack of clarity about where specific allocations for growth, of whatever scale, will be made. This comment arises because at page 2 of the Consultation document reference is made to a Part 2 Local Plan "*...could include allocating sites and the provision at a local level...*". Clarity is required about whether the Part 1 or Part 2 Local Plan (or indeed Neighbourhood Plans) will be positively identifying allocations outside the Main Towns.

Q-V3.1 and Q-3.2

3. An important contextual point for the Vision and Objectives is that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 7 states that the objective of achieving sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Richborough Estates does not take issue with the generic Vision for South Warwickshire. However, there does need to be greater clarity in the Vision concerning the Local Plan delivering the necessary opportunities over the plan period to meet the current housing and employment needs.
4. There are specific objectives which do not obviously follow from the Vision such as reference to net zero carbon targets, creating attractive places and a healthy, safe and

inclusive South Warwickshire. Having homes for people to live in and the availability of jobs is also an important part of sustainable growth, meeting the needs of the community and reducing the need to travel outside South Warwickshire.

Q-11

5. Richborough Estates is concerned with the quality of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA), specifically the Evaluation of Small Settlement Locations (Chapter 5 and Appendix C).
6. The first issue is the lack of transparency about the methodology to identify Small Settlement Locations which appears just to be based upon a list of locations provided by the Councils. There is not a background paper nor a technical note which assists in understanding the criteria relating to accessibility and positioning in the settlement hierarchy. As an example, how does South of Coventry qualify as one of the "*....22 small settlement locations....*" identified by the Council (paragraph 3.7.1). This is a general location not a settlement. Having said this, Richborough Estates is fully supportive of Bidford-on-Avon being a chosen Small Settlement Location for growth.
7. The second issue relates to how the scale of growth and the locations identified on the settlement plans included at SA Appendix C were assessed. Was it reasonable that "*The small settlement locations are designed to accommodate between 50 and 500 units at a dwelling per hectare scale of 35dph*" (Figure 3.4). This upper end of the scale of growth assessed is more appropriate to Main Settlements and not Smaller Settlement Locations. The maximum scale of growth assessed should be commensurate with size of the settlement.
8. Potentially assessing a significant scale of the growth at a single settlement, or location at a settlement, is unrealistic and has skewed or distorted the outcome of the assessment process. Such an outcome is unhelpful in circumstances where there are clearly opportunities for lower levels of growth at the Smaller Settlement Locations, including on smaller and discrete sizes of site, which would not result in the same negative outcomes. Indeed, choices about the suitability and appropriateness of some sites have already been established through Neighbourhood Plans and these choices should be embedded into the Local Plan.
9. Having read through the SA there are also some concerns about its content and conclusions. Just as simple examples, SA Figure 6.1 identifies Wilmcote as a Main Town which is clearly not the case. There are other examples which raise significant concerns

about the approach and judgements reached in the SA and whether they have contributed towards objectively supported outcomes rather than skewed and distorted conclusions.

10. Although not unique to this SA and it is accepted there will be a transition period, the phasing out of internal combustion engines in favour of electric propulsion will have an effect on the assessment process where the concern is to minimise travel because of carbon reductions, whether for carbon or air quality reasons. The SA should at least recognise this trend, especially where new homes and business will have electric vehicle charging opportunities built-in at the outset.

Q-15

11. Viability is a critical issue and should not be underestimated, especially for new settlement proposals where the infrastructure required is both significant in scale and cost. However, it is not just infrastructure costs which affect viability but the increasing cost of construction whether caused by inflationary pressure or regulations. There are also costs associated with, for example, providing on-site Biodiversity Net Gain, not just monetary but also reducing the extent of built development which affects the value of the overall site. Further, there may be additional cost burdens for all development associated with policies which will be included in the Local Plan or there is an unreasonable expectation about the proportion of affordable homes provided as part of allocated housing schemes.
12. In addition, there is an increasing desire at national and local level to push the infrastructure cost burden onto the landowner to mitigate all impacts and for a proposal to make an ever greater contribution, in whatever form, to the wider community. Alongside any Planning Obligations (assuming this regime remains in its current form), there also is the payment of the Community Infrastructure Levy. All these costs, combined with capital gains tax being paid on land transactions (which may well increase), is increasingly raising a question with landowners about whether it is worthwhile for their land to be developed for much needed housing or employment rather than retain a long term income for the current use?
13. For clarity, through this response Richborough Estates recognises that a fair and reasonable contribution should be paid towards appropriate infrastructure, but the Councils equally need to recognise that there are increasingly significant cost burdens associated with the development of land, whether inside or outside the control of the Councils.

Q-S1

14. At this stage, reliance should be placed upon the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Q-S2

15. Richborough Estates is aware of the potential changes to the NPPF concerning increasing density of development and protecting the character or areas by not having too greater density of development.
16. Richborough Estates is supportive of intensification of development in the right locations which are generally geographically within the urban areas. However, the consequence of intensification is twofold. First, the nature of the accommodation provided tends to be smaller dwellings, usually flats, rather than providing a cross section of new homes which is easier to achieve on medium/large sites. Secondly, and although design codes are mentioned, the character of the area inevitably changes, if the density of development is higher than the existing urban fabric, especially within suburban areas.
17. In reality, the density of development should be driven by the character of the surrounding area not just an attempt through specific density targets to potentially overdevelop land within urban areas which leads to unattractive developments and housing types of the wrong type. Having said this, there is scope for medium/large sites, especially greenfield sites, to create their own character and be able to accommodate a different density of development from that which prevails in the surrounding area.

Q-3.2

18. There is merit in directing growth to previously developed land within the built-up areas for housing purposes but not at the expense of diluting the employment land offer. Having employment opportunities available within urban areas is important to delivering a 20-minute neighbourhood concept. If employment land is lost to housing within the urban areas then all that happens is the future residents have to commute to the new employment allocations on the edges of settlements or, especially for logistics, remote locations adjacent to transport nodes.

Q-S4.1 and Q4.2

19. As part of a sound spatial strategy there will inevitably be a need for growth to occur at existing settlements, including Smaller Settlement Locations, which possess a range of local facilities and connectivity by sustainable/active modes of travel to other locations. Such settlements represent the most sustainable locations for growth.
20. Concerns about the settlement analysis and the SA have already been raised and are not repeated. However, it is worth noting that here is a balancing act required whereby some environmental concerns may need to be managed to deliver sustainable growth. Not everything needs to be fully protected provide suitable and appropriate mitigation is available. A finer scale settlement analysis is required than currently undertaken.

Q-S5.2

21. NPPF paragraph 72 refers to the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities. "Significant" can mean a different scale of growth dependent upon the size of the settlement. However, a balanced approach to the dispersal of growth to range of settlements rather than just directing new development to a new settlement is to be preferred.
22. As has become increasingly evident through the Government's Garden Communities Programme, the aspiration to deliver new garden communities is laudable but the cost of delivering a scheme is increasingly difficult without significant intervention in the form of financial assistance. Further, a new settlement is often in a more remote location away from existing settlements or seeks to expand a smaller settlement (e.g. Long Marston) but there is the need for investment by the public sector in delivering the services required to support a community (e.g.M40 improvements at Gaydon). As simple points, a school or healthcare building can be built but it requires the people to operate the facility.
23. By reason of the financial and implementation difficulties, which can extend to securing all the necessary land, a new settlement is not a logical or appropriate option for South Warwickshire at this time.

Q-S5.3

24. Some growth along the rail corridors provides a sustainable strategy but consideration needs to be given to the scale of any development at particular settlements. For example, although both are suitable to accommodate new homes, the scale of growth at Kenilworth will inevitably be greater than at other settlements because of the level of facilities and services available.
25. Further, with the exceptions of parts of Warwick, Leamington Spa and Stratford upon Avon, the majority of the railway stations within South Warwickshire are associated with smaller scale villages located in the Green Belt and both the lack of facilities and Green Belt policy (especially as proposed to be amended in the NPPF) will act as a constraint to significant growth at these villages.

Q-S7.2

26. Option 1: Commentary on the rail corridors spatial strategy have already been provided and it is also noted that there is a reliance being placed on a remote new settlement which brings with it concerns about delivery, in addition to the extent of land which would be required to be removed from the Green Belt in the vicinities of Wood End and Lapworth. If growth was to be directed to the rail corridors then the concerns already expressed about small Green Belt villages lacking facilities arise..
27. However, because of the location of the railway corridors, local communities in a significant part of South Warwickshire would not have their housing and employment needs met. Bidford-on-Avon and is an example of a settlement which has its own needs that will not be catered for because it is not on a railway corridor.
28. Option 2: The sustainable travel spatial option has significant merit but it inexplicably does not indicate the growth potential of all the Smaller Settlement Locations such as Bidford-on-Avon, but prefers a new settlement in a remote location.
29. As part of the evidence base, the Main Bus Corridors Map for the Bus Accessibility Mapping should include all the other bus routes which would contribute to the more detailed and effective accessibility mapping. There is an obvious option that the existing bus routes can be augmented to support growth at some other settlement such as Bidford-on-Avon

rather than introduce additional services to serve a new settlement. There is no realistic consideration of this reasonable alternative sub-option.

30. Option 3: Directing growth to existing economic hubs has merit but a concern here is the potential to promote large levels of growth in more rural location such as at Gaydon and Long Marston is not sustainable given the locational merits and housing needs of other settlements are ignored.
31. Option 4: Suffers from the weaknesses of the underlying Options 2 and 3.
32. Option 5: If the intention is to provide a balanced portfolio of housing and employment sites which can meet the local needs of the community then some dispersal of growth to settlements, such as Category 1 and 2 Local Service Villages identified in the Stratford upon Avon Core Strategy should be part of any spatial strategy (alongside Main Towns and Smaller Settlement Locations excluding South of Coventry). However, the level of growth should not be encouraged at smaller settlements below category 3 villages which lack a range of day-to-day facilities. Growth at these villages should be considered through Neighbourhood Plans and be in addition to meeting the housing need of South Warwickshire.

Q-S8.1

33. The opportunity should be taken as part of this Local Plan to consider the growth needs and capacity of individual smaller settlements to accommodate growth. In this context, the approach is directed towards growth at the Category 1 and 2 Local Service Villages as identified in the Stratford upon Avon Core Strategy. Growth at Category 3 settlements and below should be a matter for Neighbourhood Plans.

Q-S9

34. Settlement boundaries will need to be reviewed to accommodate development.

Q-H1-1 and H1-2

35. Richborough Estates' comments on the HEDNA and the general housing requirement are included in the submission made by Marrons and are not repeated.

Q-H2-1

36. The best way to increase the supply of affordable housing is to increase the supply of viable and deliverable residential sites. The majority of affordable homes are delivered as part of housing schemes. Accordingly, the greater the level of housing to be provided across South Warwickshire the greater the prospect of delivering more affordable homes.
37. However, if the new settlement option is to be adopted then the concerns would be the viability of the scheme would inevitably squeeze the delivery of affordable homes. Similarly, the concerns about the costs of delivering housing schemes which have already been highlighted affect viability and have the potential to squeeze the delivery of affordable homes.
38. Richborough Estates commend a specific affordable housing target based upon the two constituent authorities because each has different circumstances. However, if there is to be a single target then it may well be that a higher localised target is adopted in the AONB given the affordability difficulties of purchasing homes in this particular area.

Q-H2-3

39. Richborough Estates recommend that specific allocations are made to meet the specialist housing needs for older people.

Q-H3

40. The space and construction standards for new homes should accord with national policy and regulations rather than specific standards seeking to be imposed by this Local Plan with the attendant higher costs which would inevitably be incurred and affecting the affordability of the dwelling.

Q-H4-1 to H4-3

41. Richborough Estates' comments on this Local Plan helping to meet the housing needs from outside South Warwickshire are included in the submission made by Marrons and are not repeated.

Q-H5

42. Delivering custom homes, or self-build plots, has been awkward on general housing sites because those seeking to build their new home do not want to be on such developments. In most cases, the demand for these types of plots has been low. Such developments can have design constraints imposed through, for example, Design and Access Statements and Design Codes, which stifle the aspirations of the self-builder (e.g. their Grand Design). Instead, the more successful custom and self-build schemes have been smaller sites and it would, therefore, be appropriate for the Local Plan to establish a policy framework for the allocation of such sites in Part 2 Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.

Q-C3.1

43. It would be appropriate for a carbon off-setting approach to be established in South Warwickshire as a whole. There is an advantage to this approach because the opportunity exists to improve biodiversity thereby reinforcing the green and blue infrastructure network which are being considered.

Q-C4.1

44. Net zero carbon and construction standards for new homes should accord with national policy and regulations rather than specific standards seeking to be imposed by this Local Plan with the attendant higher costs which would inevitably be incurred and affecting the affordability of the dwelling.

Q-6.1

45. Achieving 100% reduction in embodied emissions for new developments is not an easy proposition for any developer or authority to establish. As is noted in the Issues and Options document, a number of the factors are outside the direct control of the developer, occupier and authority (e.g. decarbonisation of the national grid). As is also noted, there are significant cost considerations if this approach is adopted which will impact upon viability. The sorts of concerns do need to be taken into account if a viable and deliverable Local Plan is to be prepared.

46. If 100% reduction in embodied emissions is sought then there is a need for the wider technologies with the construction sector to fully adjust and it would be appropriate for a phased approach to be adopted if this type of policy is to be carried forward.

Q-C8

47. Standards concerning flooding and sustainable drainage for new homes should accord with national policy and regulations rather than specific standards seeking to be imposed by this Local Plan with the attendant higher costs which would inevitably be incurred and affecting the affordability of the dwelling.

Q-C9.1

48. Richborough Estates is supportive of new development including appropriate green and blue infrastructure which provides for sustainable drainage and biodiversity opportunities, alongside creating a scheme where people want to live. However, any biodiversity standards for housing schemes should accord with national policy rather than specific standards seeking to be imposed by this Local Plan with the attendant higher costs which would inevitably be incurred and affecting the affordability of the dwelling.

Q-C10.1

49. The inclusion of a climate change risk assessment based upon a clear and relevant checklist for some larger planning applications is appropriate but not for all schemes. A threshold of 50 dwellings is proposed.

Q-D1.1

50. Any policy concerning design needs to be proportionate to the scale of the development proposed. It would be reasonable for the Local Plan to include a comprehensive strategic design policy for large scale proposals but such a policy would not be as effective for house extensions.

Q-D2

51. A Design Guide Framework for South Warwickshire could be devised providing clear principles and standards for new development. More detailed Design Guides for specific

areas, including character areas if intensification is to occur, can be produced, could be written by those bodies preparing Neighbourhood Plans if it was felt additional local guidance was required.

Q-D3

52. Inclusion of a minimum density policy needs some further thoughts because increasingly housing schemes are including larger areas of green and blue infrastructure to deliver sustainable drainage, retaining features on-site, play spaces, space for new trees, segregated foot/cycleways and providing for biodiversity gain. If a minimum density policy is to be introduced then it needs to be based upon the area which will accommodate the housing itself not the whole of the site. In any event, the density of development of a scheme should be design led, which also means having regard to the character of the area and whether the site could create its own character without harming the area within which it sits.

Q-D5

53. In reality there is little merit in having a strategic policy concerning heritage because this is already well addressed in the NPPF. As with Green Belt policy, a reference to the NPPF would be appropriate.

Q-W2

54. The threshold for any Health Impact Assessments being required should be a high threshold (e.g. 150 dwellings) because it is usually the scale of the proposal which has the greatest effect on healthcare provision.

Q-T1

55. As a point of clarification for paragraph 4.2.1(d), and although reference is made to the TCPA's Guide to 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, there needs to be clarity that the 20-minute time period is for a single journey and not a return journey. The only specific example of a 10-minute journey both out and back equating to 20 minutes is in Melbourne.
56. Other than for new communities, it is difficult to achieve a 20-minute neighbourhood for extensions to Main Settlements or Smaller Settlement Locations because the day-to-day

facilities are not always available with the immediate area. A typical example of this is a secondary school which are not a high frequency type of facility. The critical point is that there is good access to a range of day-to-day facilities on foot and cycle and, if appropriate, higher order facilities by public transport.

Q-T2

57. Richborough Estates is supportive of policies that support sustainable and active travel options. A hierarchical approach would, however, include the increasing role of mobility through technology and different modes of travel. For example, the role of the internet in meaning people do not actually need to travel to work or shops should be fully considered alongside e-scooters and e-bikes as reducing the effort needed for people to use active travel options, which more people are more willing to travel a longer distance compared to mechanical scooters and bikes.

Q-B3

58. As a matter of principle, there should be no Special Landscape Areas within South Warwickshire because normal countryside and landscape impact policies are sufficient to protect all landscapes.

Q-B4

59. National policy should be relied upon for the AONB because there is no specific need for local policies. There is no national basis for a buffer policy for the AONB. The setting of the AONB is a landscape judgement to be made on an individual basis not through a generic policy.

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