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16967/A3/RC/sjz

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2012

Dear Sir or Madam,

## **REPRESENTATIONS TO THE NEW LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED OPTIONS (MAY 2012)**

Barton Willmore is instructed by Taylor Wimpey UK Limited to submit representations to Warwick District Council in response to the New Local Plan Preferred Options (May 2012). Taylor Wimpey is committed to the successful delivery of a mixed use development within Warwick District and our representations to the Preferred Options document for the New Local Plan reflect this objective.

Taylor Wimpey has an interest in land to the south of Sandy Lane and west of Kenilworth Road, to the northern edge of Leamington Spa. The total site area is approximately 83 hectares, with a mix of uses being promoted on the site. The site is made up of green field land and is bounded on the eastern side by the A452 Kenilworth Road, on the northern side by Sandy Lane, to the west is the railway line and the southern edge of the site is characterised by residential development.

The site being promoted by Taylor Wimpey and is capable, as part of wider strategic growth on the northern side of Leamington Spa, of delivering:

- approximately 1,000 dwellings;
- a new local centre;
- areas of multifunctional green spaces (sport pitches, community allotments, orchards and a countryside park);
- a primary school;
- a care village for the elderly; and
- an employment area.

The at Blackdown, although not controlled by Taylor Wimpey is included in the Promotional Document to demonstrate the potential of the two sites working together, as shown in the accompanying document. The combined two sites have the potential to deliver:

- up to 2,000 new homes;
- primary school;
- care village;
- park and ride facilities;
- 5-10 ha of employment uses; and
- new connections and green infrastructure.

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Our response is predominantly made up of a vision document for the site, with some of the main topics covered by the document including:

- Historic context;
- Visual assessment;
- Transport and movement;
- Facilities and services;
- Landscape;
- Local Character;
- Topography;
- Ecology;
- Flooding and drainage;
- Heritage and archaeology; and
- Design.

We attach our representations to the Warwick District New Local Plan Preferred Options with the accompanying Document giving greater detail in respect of this site.

We would be grateful if you could give consideration to our comments and continue to advise us of progress on the New Local Plan document for Warwick District. In the meantime if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact either Kathryn Ventham or myself.

Yours sincerely,



**RUSSELL CROW**  
Senior Planner

Cc Sarah Milward – Taylor Wimpey

We write on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd in respect of their interests at Land North of Milverton.

We respond to the respective policy areas and chapters below:

## **1. Part 1: Setting the Strategy**

- In setting the strategy, it should be made clear the time period that the plan is proposed to cover. For example, at 1.2, there is reference to the next 15 years and only later in the document is confirmed that that the plan period covers 2011 to 2029.
- It is noted that paragraph 4.2 makes reference to the fact that the District could grow by as much as 15% over the next 15 years (from a current population of 138,800) – this represents an increase of some 20,820 residents. We highlight that the 2008 based household projections shows growth from 62,938 households in 2011 to 77,955 households in 2029. This represents an increase of 15,557 households. The 2006 based projections showed 17,110 households over the same period. The 2010 based population projections show very similar population growth to the 2008 based projections and although the latter remain the most up to date, it is expected that the 2010 based CLG household projections will be very similar.
- Paragraph 4.10 should be revised to make reference to the need to ensure that Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing as required by the NPPF.

## **2. Delivering Growth – Housing / PO1: Preferred Level of Growth**

- The preferred level of housing growth is proposed to be 600 dwellings per annum (totalling 10,800 dwellings) over the plan period, which when deducting commitments, small SHLAA sites and windfalls results in a need to identify and allocate land for 6,986 dwellings. The Council have disregarded Option 2 (employment led growth and 700 dwellings per annum) seemingly solely on the basis that there is a lack of certainty that a sufficient number of homes on strategic sites could be delivered within the plan period. Using the Council's own calculations, delivering 700 dwellings per annum would result in the need for an additional 1,800 dwellings to be found on allocated sites. Part of the justification relates to the perceived lead in times for the delivery of the larger sites, however the Council's own phasing programme is a self fulfilling prophecy in this regard. Phasing the larger allocations

in Phases 2 and 3 (i.e. post 2019) could result in a significant number of dwellings coming to the market at the same time and making it difficult to therefore deliver an additional 1,800 dwellings in full within the plan period. We would suggest that the Council allows the market and the development industry to regulate itself in respect of the phasing and the timing of the delivery of development. To allow the larger allocations to make a start earlier in the plan period will ensure steady delivery of housing over the life of the plan. It is not in a developer's own interest to saturate the market however steady delivery on a number of sites over a number of years will promote healthy competition and ensure sufficient time to allow such sites to be built out in full. Furthermore, in doing this, there would exist the opportunity to allocate land for the 'missing' 1,800 dwellings which would make a bigger step towards meeting the Council's housing need.

- An example of this is the site to the north of Milverton which is listed in policy PO4 as having capacity for 810 dwellings; however, the document submitted alongside this response demonstrates that the site is capable of delivering up to 1,000 dwellings. Promoting wider areas such as this, which can provide for sustainable growth within the plan period, is consistent with the NPPF's requirement to allocate enough land to ensure flexibility within the Core Strategy.
- In addition, we highlight that the NPPF makes reference to development which is sustainable going ahead without delay. It follows that in order for a site to have secured an allocation in what will be an adopted Local Plan, that site must be sustainable and therefore in accordance with the NPPF, there is no need for that site to be held back by an arbitrary phasing policy.
- The Localism Act enshrines a Duty to Cooperate on Local Authorities when preparing plans. In the event that Warwick District does not meet its own housing need in full, we see no evidence of adjoining LPA's being prepared to take on and meet that need. The District is bounded by the following LPA's:
  - Stratford District: Latest draft Core Strategy did not propose to accommodate sufficient growth to meet its own needs. No proposals to meet unmet need from Warwick District.
  - Coventry: Latest draft Local Plan does not propose to accommodate sufficient growth to meet its own needs. No proposals to meet unmet need from Warwick District.
  - Rugby Borough: Adopted Core Strategy does not include any proposals to accommodate unmet need from Warwick District.

- It is not therefore clear the way in which the Duty to Cooperate has been carried forward or the way in which the District's housing need will be met in full, particularly given that the household increase is projected to be closer to 15,557 households rather than the 10,800 households currently being planned for.
- Further justification for using lower housing targets is provided in paragraph 5.22 where it is stated that using Option 2 would meet the projected change in employment between 2011 and 2031 as identified in the West Midlands Integrated Policy Model. However the Council consider this to now be optimistic as it was carried out in 2010 and forecast an increase in employment growth from 2011. We highlight however that throughout the NPPF there is reference to the need to 'plan positively' and the need to stimulate and secure economic growth. It would appear that the Council are revising their growth for the period to 2029 (i.e. the long term) because short term growth has failed to materialise. This cannot be said to be planning positively or assisting in securing economic growth.
- The West Midlands Integrated Policy Model projection was carried out in 2010, and as such can be expected to have taken into account the economic climate mid-recession. Whilst it is apparent that their short-term predictions to this period have not been shown to be accurate, these short-term results should not be used to reduce the long-term significance of the results.
- The NPPF requires Local Plans to be consistent with the principles and policies set out in the NPPF (Para. 151, NPPF) and should be 'aspirational but realistic' (Para. 154, NPPF). An increase of 100 dwellings per annum to meet the projected employment growth is considered to fit this 'aspirational but realistic' requirement.
- Strategic policies are required in Local Plans to deliver the homes and jobs needed in an area and there is a concern that by not planning for the level of employment growth required for the period to 2031 there is a risk that the sustainability of the strategy will be undermined by the increased levels of inward commuting.

### **3. PO3: Location of Growth**

- The components of growth are reviewed below:
- Committed Housing Sites (1,224 dwellings): whilst clearly committed sites, we question whether it is appropriate to include all of these sites and not include any allowance for non-implementation. A 10% non-implementation rate is the industry 'norm' which we consider should be applied here, thus reducing the commitments to 1,102 dwellings.

- Small Urban SHLAA sites (290): We seek clarification as to where these sites fall within Table 7.2 of the Draft Local Plan (DLP).
- Other Windfall Housing Sites (2,300): Paragraph 7.25 of the DLP confirms that the Council consider there to be a limited supply of land within the existing built up areas of the towns. Windfalls can be included if the Council can demonstrate that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to form a reliable source of supply having regard to the SHLAA. The Council's SHLAA methodology confirms that a minimum site size of 5 dwellings was used and that Officer's did not rely solely on sites which supplied to them by developers or landowners but also conducted their own research including reviewing areas currently in non residential use and looking at small scale developments such as change of use of existing buildings. It would therefore appear that the Council have had every opportunity to identify suitable residential sites and include them in the SHLAA. With the removal of rear garden land from the definition of previously developed land, we consider that the scope for new windfall development is much reduced and that windfalls will no longer continue to make up a significant element of future supply. Furthermore, under the banner of the NPPF and the requirement to plan positively, windfalls should be seen as a 'bonus' rather than forming approximately 20% of the overall supply.

#### **4. PO4**

- The inclusion of the site for 810 dwellings and associated uses as set out in policy PO4 is broadly supported, although as can be seen in the attached report it is, the site is capable of delivering up to 1,000 dwellings alongside a range of associated uses with a change to the site boundary.
- Furthermore, this development could come forward as part of a wider development with the Blackdown site. Whilst the Blackdown site could assist in achieving a strategic sustainable development alongside the site to the north of Milverton, the site to the north of Milverton can also come forward as a sustainable standalone development.
- The document submitted alongside this response shows how the two sites could work together to deliver a significant development on the northern side of Leamington Spa.

#### **5. P05: Affordable Housing**

- Whilst we do not object to the provision of affordable housing in principle, we do not see any up to date evidence of the way in which the appropriateness of the target as been assessed

in terms of the financial viability of development in accordance with paragraphs 173 and 174 of the NPPF. Paragraph 7.43 of the DLP makes reference to a November 2011 document and an Addendum dated May 2012. The May 2012 document does not feature in the Evidence Base on the Council's web-site and therefore we reserve the right to make further representations in this respect upon publication of this document.

## **6. P06: Mixed Communities and a Wide Choice of Housing**

- We consider that sufficient flexibility should be included within any policy to ensure that account is taken of up to date market demand in addition to the SHMA's. The latter can become obsolete very quickly and clearly, if developers feel there is no demand for a particular type of property then they will not build it, which can result in stalled sites and lower rates of housing delivery.
- Lifetime Homes: there is no national policy which requires the provision of Lifetime Homes and we see no justification which supports 25% provision.
- Homes for Older People: whilst the provision of extra care housing is supported, these have very site specific criteria with operators having specific requirements in respect of site location and suitability. A site which is suitable for market housing may not be suitable for extra care housing and it is important to ensure that this policy is not applied so rigidly so as to sterilise areas of land or stall sites.

## **7. P10: Built Environment**

- The Council's Garden Towns, Suburbs and Villages prospectus is supported.

## **8. P012: Climate Change**

- We have reviewed the Council's evidence base and do not see any case for the introduction of a 20% climate change policy. We are also disappointed to see a continued emphasis on renewable energy provision within new developments (when the Council themselves acknowledge the disadvantages with some renewable technologies) as opposed to the emphasis being placed on energy efficiency. If the overall aim is seek a reduction in carbon emissions, we fail to see why this should be achieved through renewable energy rather than energy efficiency measures.

## 9. PO16: Green Belt

- We support the amendment of the Green Belt boundaries in order to deliver the most sustainable development sites, such as the site to the north of Milverton. As the Council acknowledges, Green Belt's should take account of the need to deliver sustainable development when considering amendments to the Green Belt and should only amend the Green Belt through the Local Plan process.
- Section 7 of the Council's Preferred Options document is clear that the need to accommodate 'housing and employment growth to meet the needs of a community where there are insufficient suitable and available sites outside of the Green Belt' amount to the exceptional circumstances required to amend the Green Belt boundary.
- The Council was involved in a Joint Green Belt Study carried out in January 2009 which considered the quality of the Green belt across the District, and it is apparent from that report that the quality and importance of the Green Belt is varied when measured against the five purposes of Green Belt as set out in NPPF paragraph 80.
- The Green Belt has a significant impact on several of the main urban areas within Warwick, with the northern, western and eastern edges of Warwick and Leamington and the whole of Kenilworth are bounded by Green Belt.
- Whilst there is the in principal the possibility to meet Warwick's housing needs without using Green Belt land this would result in an undeliverable, unsustainable and ultimately unsound Local Plan. Such an approach would significantly impact the Council's ability to meet future infrastructure requirements due to the nature of the sites outside of the Green Belt.
- The development of the site to the north of Milverton would not lead to a significant adverse impact on the Green Belt as it has strong defensible Green Belt boundaries and would provide a sustainable location for growth within Warwick District.
- In order to adopt the most robust approach the Council should consider the potential development sites based on their suitability sustainability and, provided that the development of the most sustainable sites would not lead to a significant adverse impact on the Green Belt, these should form the basis of the strategic allocations.



## **10. P018: Flooding and Water**

- Whilst the policy as a whole is supported it is noted that much of this replicates national guidance and is therefore superfluous. Furthermore, the requirement that all new developments include SUDS is unfeasible. There are some instances where SUDS schemes are not feasible or viable and this should be recognised within the policy.

## **11. Draft Infrastructure Planning**

- Whilst the provision of a draft Infrastructure Plan is supported to assist in providing certainty to developers when bringing forward new sites, particularly in respect of the larger strategic sites. We consider that further refinement of this plan may be needed. For example, within Warwick and Leamington Spa, 6 new primary schools are currently being considered at the same time as capacity in a number of existing schools is also identified. It is noted that the NPPF advocates a CIL charging schedule being prepared in tandem with a Local Plan if possible and we consider this may be appropriate in this case to assist in determining the total cost of items identified in the Draft Infrastructure Plan. This is of particular importance when reviewing the Strategic Transport Assessment Overview Report which identifies a requirement of up to circa £5,000 per property for transport infrastructure without taking into account any other infrastructure requirements or planning obligations.

