

**Matter 3: Development Strategy (Policies SP1 - SP15)**

Response on behalf of

**Persimmon Homes (West Midlands) Ltd**

Representor ID: A0201

**MATTER 3**

**Introduction**

- 1) Harris Lamb Property Consultancy (HLPC) are instructed by Persimmon Homes (West Midlands) Ltd (Persimmon Homes) to prepare a response to the Inspector's issues and questions in relation to Matter 3. Persimmon Homes are promoting land at Whitchurch for residential development, the majority of which currently benefits from the draft allocation in the Pre-submission draft Local Plan, with a small amount outside but immediately adjacent to the allocation. At this stage our representations relate to Matter 3 and the questions raised by the Planning Inspector. We will set out our support for the draft allocation and the reasons why we consider the remainder of their land should be included within the allocation in response to the relevant Matter in the next part of the Local Plan examination.

***Q1 How do the strategic policies in the Local Plan accord with paragraphs 20 to 23 of the Framework?***

- 2) It is considered that the strategic policies in the Local Plan generally accord with the guidance in paragraphs 20 to 23 of the Framework. Specifically, they set out in overall strategy as advised by paragraph 20, the Plan Period runs to 2038 and assuming it is adopted this year or next would meet the minimum 15 year time period from adoption as advised by paragraph 22, whilst the Pre-submission draft includes draft allocations identified on a proposals map and therefore in accordance with paragraph 23.

***Q2 Does Policy SP1 include criteria to assess development proposals against? Does it replicate other policies in the Local Plan? Is it necessary and effective?***

- 3) Policy SP1 in our view does not include criteria to assess development proposals against, thereby undermining its application for developmental management purposes. The content of the policy replicates other policies within the Plan and as such is not considered necessary or effective.

***Q3 What is the basis for the overall spatial strategy and broad distribution of growth set out in Policy SP2? What options were considered and why was this chosen?***

- 4) The Council undertook consultation on Issues and Strategic Options as part of the preparation of the Local Plan. The consultation identified four key strategic options including the housing requirement, strategic distribution of future growth, strategies for employment growth and delivering development in rural settlements. Following consultation on the Issues and Options a Preferred Option was identified and this was subject to sustainability appraisal. The supporting text at paragraph 3.22 of the Pre-

submission draft Local Plan confirms that “the strategic approach was to accommodate development in such a way that help makes more sustainable, balanced, vibrant, resilient and self-reliant places in which to live and work”. The Plan goes on at paragraph 3.23 to state that “it represents a sustainable pattern of growth, directing the majority of new development towards the large settlements with the most extensive range of services, facilities and infrastructure to support new development”. Whilst the findings of the sustainability appraisal (SD006.01) highlight the reasons why the preferred strategy was chosen it is not explicit as to why the other development options were discounted.

**Q4 *Should Policy SP2 define the scale of development expected in the various urban locations and rural settlements?***

- 5) Paragraph 60 of the Framework sets out the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The housing requirement as set out in Policy SP2 states that ‘around’ 30,800 dwellings are to be delivered over the Plan Period. The use of the ‘around’ is unusual and we would typically expect that ‘minimum’ would be used instead. Whilst the choice of terminology is down to the Council it does not indicate a desire to significantly boost the supply of housing and could be inferred that delivering less than 30,800 houses would be acceptable, which is clearly contrary to National Planning Policy.
- 6) Whilst the Plan sets out the overall housing requirement we agree that it would be of assistance if the Plan did define the scale of development expected in the various urban locations. Indeed, this is essential if draft policy SP7.4 is going to function as intended. Without the scale being identified, there would be no way of knowing if the number of dwellings intended for that settlement were going to be delivered or whether there was an issue with delivery that need to be positively resolved through the mechanism provided in policy SP7.4.
- 7) In accordance with provision of SP7.4, the number of new homes should be defined for all settlements where the settlement boundaries are defined.

**Q5 *The spatial strategy in the Core Strategy has a rural focus, while the submitted Local Plan’s spatial strategy is urban focused. The latter holds a list of ‘saved sites’ in appendix 2 which the council intends to rely upon to meet the new spatial strategy and development requirements. Do the ‘saved sites’ accord with the spatial distribution of the submitted Local Plan? What will be the policy basis for these ‘saved sites’? Are you relying upon such an approach, is the Local Plan positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy?***

- 8) In changing from a rural to an urban focused strategy, it would be reasonable to expect that the amount of development aimed at the towns would be greater than that in the adopted strategy. However, this does not appear to be the case. One example would be Shrewsbury. In the adopted strategy, Shrewsbury, Minsterley and Pointesbury were targeted to deliver 8250-8800 dwellings against a housing requirement of 27,500 dwellings. By contrast, the combined guidelines for these settlement in the emerging plan is 8925 dwellings. An increase of 125 dwellings does not indicate a definitive switch between a rural focus to an urban focus.

- 9) The saved sites that are included appear to be in a variety of locations being both urban rural. As such, it is not clear whether they accord with the spatial strategy as their inclusion in the Appendix appears to be on the basis of that they have not been developed to date and as such, are still available to be developed in the new Plan. We do not consider this a sound approach on the basis that if the Council are seeking to rely on the sites as part of its supply then they should be included in the Plan as allocations rather than just as a list of possible sites in an appendix. Furthermore, if the sites are intended to form part of the supply and to be allocations then the Council should reassess all of the saved sites in order to determine their continued suitability for allocation.
- 10) Whilst we are not here to talk about individual sites, the representations submitted at Pre-submission consultation have highlighted a number of examples, specifically in Whitchurch, where allocated sites that have the benefit of planning permission and which are allocated in the SAMDEV Plan, are still yet to come forward for development. This indicates there is an issue with their delivery and whilst not all 'saved sites' will have question marks over their deliverability our representations have highlighted that there are issues with certain sites in the SAMDEV Plan. Notwithstanding an allocation in an adopted development plan and planning permission, if sites have not come forward for development this could be an indication that there are more fundamental issue about bringing them forward. In light of this, it would indicate that a review of the saved sites should have been undertaken in order to determine their continued suitability for allocation/development in the Development Plan. Reliance on such sites could, therefore, undermine the delivery of the housing requirement if sites included in the supply do not come forward as expected. This would increase the risk of other sites coming forward, on a speculative basis, that were not included as allocations within the plan.

**Q6 *Is it appropriate to show 'saved sites' on the proposals map given they are not site allocations in the submitted Local Plan, bearing in mind Regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012?***

- 11) No. Regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 refers to policies of the adopted development plan. If the Council are seeking to rely on these to form part of its supply then they should be assessed for their continued suitability for allocation in the Plan. If they are not allocated in the Plan based on an up to date assessment of their suitability then they should not be shown on the Proposals Map. Conversely, if they do through a rigorous assessment as to their continued suitability to deliver housing, then yes, we agree that they should in fact be included as allocations on the plan (please see answer to Q5).

**Q7 *What proportion of housing supply comes from 'saved sites'?***

- 12) The schedules in Appendix 5 of the Pre-submission draft Local Plan indicate that saved SAMDEV Plan allocations account for 3,557 dwellings of the total supply. Please see schedules A5(i) through to A5(ii). The proportion of housing supply that is intended to come from saved sites accounts for approximately 10% of the overall housing requirement.
- 13) This is a significant number of dwellings and emphasises the importance of these sites being re-examined now to ensure that they remain deliverable.

**Q9 Is Policy SP3 justified, effective and consistent with National Planning Policy and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)?**

14) No comment.

**Q10 Is Policy SP4 necessary as it rehearses National Planning Policy, contrary to the advice in PPG (Paragraph: 036, Reference ID: 61-036-20190723)?**

15) We do not consider that this policy is necessary as it seeks to replicate policy in the Framework. It is therefore unnecessary and should be deleted.

**Q11 Are Policies SP5 and SP6 strategic policies or development management policies?**

16) We do not consider that Policies SP5 or SP6 are strategic policies and are more akin to development management type policies. As such they should be moved to the development management section of the Plan.

**Q12** No comment.

**Q13** No comment.

**Q14 Is Policy SP7 positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with National Policy? How have the residential guidelines been derived? Do these policies duplicate parts of other policies?**

17) We support the inclusion of Policy SP7, which provides flexibility in meeting the housing guidelines. In particular, we support sub section SP7.4 which states that additional market housing development outside of settlement boundaries will be considered acceptable where there is clear evidence that the residential guideline for that settlement appears unlikely to be met over the Plan Period, or where there are specific considerations set out in the settlement policies.

18) If the development guideline is not being met for a particular settlement Policy SP7 provides flexibility to consider alternative sites for development, even those that are located outside of the settlement development boundary. The policy as worded, we consider is helpful as it allows the Council a degree of flexibility to respond to issues of under delivery in specific settlements to deliver more housing on sustainable sites around these settlements that are not necessarily located within a settlement boundary. We consider this is a pragmatic way to address those situations where preferred allocations or sites do not come forward as expected thus allowing the Council to meet its housing needs without having to go against the policies of its own plan, an approach that is much welcomed.

*Residential guidelines*

- 19) it is not entirely clear how the residential development guidelines for each of these settlements have been established. It would appear that having established what the overall requirement for the County is this then has been apportioned up across the different settlements having regard to their size and relative sustainability. Having established what the overall requirement is for each settlement an assessment has then been made as to the completions and/or commitments in that settlement, which are then deducted from the overall total resulting in a requirement for that settlement. It is not clear from the Plan or the evidence why a higher or lower figure has been proposed for a particular settlement, other than having regard to the past performance in delivery of housing in that settlement.

**Q15 No comment.**

**Q16 *Is the approach to development in the countryside set out in Policy SP10, justified and effective and consistent with National Planning Policy? Should it be more flexible and less restrictive? Is the policy overly long and complicated and does some of it duplicate other policies? Would this policy be more effective as several shorter, targeted development management policies?***

- 20) In light of our comments to the residential development guidelines set out above, we consider that the policies should be more flexible in order to account for situations where market housing is needed but where proposed allocations in the identified settlements are not delivering as anticipated. . To achieve this reference should be made to housing outside, but adjacent to the settlement boundaries will be supported in accordance with Policy SP7.
- 21) The policy as currently worded is very restrictive and is unduly long. It would in our view benefit from being split up into smaller, development management type policies instead.

**Q17 – 20 No comment.**

**Q21 *Does the Local Plan strategy rely on windfall development and is the windfall allowance based on paragraph 71 of the Framework? Does the windfall allowance for housing need to be set out in the Local Plan?***

- 22) Yes, the Local Plan strategy does rely on windfall development as part of its strategy. Turning to Appendix 5 of the Pre-submission draft Local Plan the schedules in the appendix identify a windfall allowance for the individual settlements. The windfalls when totalled up account for 2,682 dwellings (just under 10% of the overall housing requirement). . This is a significant amount when there are sites available with willing landowners/housebuilders to identify additional allocations and reduce the reliance on this less certain source of supply. We will set out in our responses to the Stage 2 of the Examination why alternative sites, particularly in Whitchurch, would be suitable for inclusion in the Plan to meet the housing needs.

**Q22 No comment**

**Q23 *Should the Local Plan include more small and medium size sites to provide greater choice, flexibility and certainty?***

- 23) Smaller and medium size sites would help with delivery as they typically are easier to develop and can be brought forward without needing significant supporting infrastructure to facilitate their development. The inclusion of a greater range of small and medium size sites could help supplement the proposed allocation and help deliver the housing supply, particularly in the early part of the Plan Period.

***Q24 How have settlement boundaries been decided and were they reviewed when preparing this Local Plan?***

- 24) Yes, settlement boundaries have been reviewed as part of the current Local Plan review. Using Whitchurch as an example, proposed draft allocations around the periphery of the settlement had been proposed which if confirmed will result in an amendment to the settlement boundary. The amendments to the settlement boundaries appear to have been informed by the choice of potential sites as there appears to be little if any remaining capacity within the existing settlement boundaries to accommodate further development. We will say more in our comments on the Stage 2 Examination about whether we agree or not with the proposed allocations and/or whether alternative sites should be included instead.