

Shropshire Local Plan Examination

Stage 2 Matters, Issues and Questions

Matter 27 Statement: General housing policies, including affordable housing (Policies DP1, DP1A, DP2, DP3, DP4, DP5, DP6, DP7, DP8)



Prepared for:
Yareal Llanforda Ltd

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Prepared by:
Ben Cook

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Shropshire Local Plan Examination, Stage 2 Matters, Issues and Options

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Prepared by

Reviewed by

Approved by



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Acronyms / Abbreviations

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NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment



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Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

This Matter 27 Statement has been prepared by Stantec on behalf of Yareal Llandforda Limited (our Client) who are promoting Land to the north of Market Drayton at Longslow Farm (the 'site'), and Land to the north of Trefonen, for residential development.

Representations have previously been submitted on behalf of our Client to the 'Strategic Sites Consultation' (2019), 'Preferred Sites Consultation (2019), the Regulation 18 Pre-Submission Draft Shropshire Local Plan (2020), and Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (2021) in relation to the Local Plan Review process. These representations have been prepared by Stantec (formerly Barton Willmore – representor ID **A0387**) and David Parker Planning Associates (representor ID **A0430**). Stantec is now representing Yareal Llanforda in respect of both responses.

It is submitted that our Client's sites are suitable for meeting the housing needs of Market Drayton/ Trefonen and the wider County in the Plan period and should be identified as residential allocations in the Shropshire Local Plan.

Outlined in Section 2 of this Statement are responses to a select number of the Inspectors' questions which set out why we consider changes to the Local Plan are necessary to ensure the soundness of the Plan.

Reference to supporting documents are contained within bold square brackets e.g **[SD001]**.

This Statement has been prepared in line with the Guidance Note **[ID41]** for the Examination.

1.2 Yareal Llanforda

Yareal Llanforda Ltd is a subsidiary of Yareal UK Ltd; a farming and property business with two hubs: Lincolnshire in the East and Shropshire in the West. The business was established in 2015 as a vehicle to invest in the sector and develop a modern and sustainable agricultural, property and food business based on owned and rented land with diversity in location and activity. The Shropshire farms have livestock as their focus in the main. However, at the farm in Longslow, the activities are now mainly arable as the previous dairy was old-fashioned and uneconomical to run. The long-term dairy use at the farm is under consideration and various options are being explored to understand what is feasible, including the possibility of building a new dairy elsewhere within the estate. The development of Land at Longslow Farm would undoubtedly help to facilitate a new dairy as well as bringing a range of associated benefits to the local economy.

In the meantime, the crops grown on the estate provide feed for the cattle and other animals at their other farms in Shropshire.



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Policy DP1 – Residential mix

2 Policy DP1 – Residential mix

Question 1 – Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?

In our Regulation 19 Representation, we argued that the requirement to meet the nationally described space standards, M4(3) wheelchair user dwellings and M4(2) accessible and adaptable dwellings standards and requiring specialist housing to meet the needs of older people and those with disability or special needs to be provided on-site should be fully evidenced, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (Footnote 46) and Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') (Housing: Optional Technical Standards section).

The Schedule of Main Modifications [**GC4M**] removes the requirement to achieve M4(3) and M4(2) dwellings from both the Policy and the supporting text, as well as the requirement for sites of 50 or more dwellings to provide specialist housing on site. However, it is noted that these requirements have simply been separated into newly created Policy DP1A (comments are made in respect of this Policy below).

In respect of Policy DP1, it remains that open market dwellings are "*strongly encouraged*". Whilst this clearly is not an absolute Policy requirement, its inclusion still is a cause for ambiguity and it is unnecessary within the Policy. It is evident that the Council is unable to justify the imposition of the optional standard, as detailed information on the accessibility and adaptability of the existing stock and the size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed has not been provided, as required by PPG. The 'strong encouragement' of the use of the national space standard should be removed as it is not justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

Question 3 - Is there sufficient evidence in relation to the viability of sites with this policy applied?

See response to Question 1.



Proposed new Policy DP1A - Housing Provision for Older People and those with Disabilities and Special Needs

3 Proposed new Policy DP1A - Housing Provision for Older People and those with Disabilities and Special Needs

Question 1 – Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?

As referenced above in respect of Policy DP1, the imposition of optional technical standards through planning policy should be thoroughly evidenced. In relation to accessibility optional technical standards PPG (Paragraph 005 Reference ID: 56-005-20150327 to Paragraph 011 Reference ID: 56-011-20150327) sets out the necessary evidence to justify policies incorporating the standards, including detailed information on the accessibility and adaptability of the existing stock and the size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed.

Whilst the supporting text to the proposed new Policy provides some commentary on the justification for the standards and references the Strategic Housing Market Assessment ('SHMA') [EV097.01] evidence that Shropshire is subject to an ageing population, it is not clear from the analysis within the SHMA if all of the PPG relevant considerations have been fully taken into account in justifying the policy requirements. For example, it is not clear how an ageing population directly necessitates the need to provide specialist housing, including why these persons could not be accommodated within the existing and proposed housing stock. Similarly, the various threshold requirements within the Policy (e.g sites over 5 dwellings, allocations between 150-249 dwellings etc.) appear arbitrary and have not been justified.

In addition, the *Viability Study* (July, 2020) [EV115.01] assesses the financial impact of various Policy requirements, including the imposition of M4(2) and M4(3) standards within Section 10. The results are concerning in that, for example, the Study concludes that "*the results clearly show a challenging viability context in Shropshire.*" (Paragraph 10.87).

The Council should accordingly make clear upon what basis it feels these policies are viable and deliverable.

Question 4 – Has the policy been viability tested to ensure it does not prevent development coming forward?

See response to Question 1.



Policy DP2 – Self-Build and Custom-Build Housing

4 Policy DP2 – Self-Build and Custom-Build Housing

Question 1 – Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?

Whilst we are supportive of the principle of the policy to address the specific local housing needs of Shropshire, we consider that the policy as drafted is unsound as it is not fully justified, effective or consistent with national planning policy.

This draft Policy states that all sites of 5 or more dwellings in designated rural areas and 10 or more dwellings elsewhere (or sites of 0.5ha) are “*encouraged*” to make 10% of the dwellings available as serviced plots for Self Build and Custom Build Housing. This is based on evidence from the SHMA [EV097.01] which calculates around 2,400 applications will be made for inclusion on the Self-Build Register over the Local Plan period which equates to around 9% of the calculated local housing need.

However, it is inappropriate to introduce a percentage-based policy for self-build, as demand for self-build is not consistent year on year, nor is it geographically universal across the County. The self-build register could, for example, demonstrate that the need is focused around settlements such as Shrewsbury and not elsewhere.

This is particularly relevant given that the criteria for expressing an interest on the Self Build Register are relatively limited i.e. whilst an individual may express an interest the degree to which it is a realistic ambition cannot be determined.

It is considered that the draft Policy should continue to encourage self-build but remove the specified percentage of 10% of plots. It should instead refer to the most up to date Self Build Register for evidence of demand within a locality to inform any need to provide for such plots on specific sites. The PPG (Paragraph 025 Reference ID: 57-025-201760728) sets out a number of ways in which Local Authorities can support self and custom build. Whilst Local Plan policies should be supportive, there is no necessity to include a specific threshold as currently proposed and the proposed approach places the burden of delivering self-build upon developers.

Recommended changes to Draft Policy DP2 Self Build and Custom Build Housing

In order for the draft SLP to be justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy we suggest the following changes are necessary:

- Remove the specified percentage of 10% and continue to encourage the provision of self build housing where it is appropriate and viable, with reference to the most up to date evidence of need within the Self Build Register.
- Insert clause allowing the reversion of the self build plots to affordable/market housing after the identified period of marketing, if no genuine prospective purchasers attempt to purchase the plots.



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Question 2 – Is the timescale for marketing of plots justified?

No. The Policy requires marketing to occur for “at least 24 months”, but no justification or explanation is provided for this duration, either in the Policy or supporting text. The typical marketing period for such properties is 12 months.

Question 3 – Does the policy or explanation need to be clearer about what a developer needs to do if they have marketed the plots without success before they can sell them as market homes?

Yes. As described above in response to Question 1, the Policy is not clear in respect of the reasonable disposal of Plots following the marketing period (it currently does not allow for disposal after the identified marketing period).



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Policy DP7 – Cross-Subsidy Exception Scheme

5 Policy DP7 – Cross-Subsidy Exception Scheme

Question 1 – Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?

As set out in the Regulation 19 Representation prepared by David Parker on behalf of our Client, Yareal Llanforda, we are supportive of the principle of the policy to address the specific local housing needs of Shropshire. However, we consider that Policy DP7 (now DP8 as per the *Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications [GC4M]*) is unsound as it is not fully justified, effective or consistent with national planning policy.

This draft Policy is grounded within the Council's current policies (Core Strategy Policies CS5 and CS11) which allow for the cross subsidy of affordable housing split between 33% social rented affordable housing, 33% intermediate affordable housing, and 33% open market housing.

Despite this allowance however, no cross subsidy sites have come forward for development since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2011.

Moreover, Policy DP8 now introduces a maximum site size through criterion e. (*"the scale of the development will solely be dictated by the evidence of local affordable housing need but will not normally exceed 10 dwellings"*). and an increased percentage of affordable housing through criterion f (*"at least" 70%*). Our client is therefore duly concerned that this will make it even more difficult for such sites to come forward.

In respect of our Client's interest at Trefonen, the approach through Policy DP8 is at odd with Policies, SP8 *Managing Development in Countryside Hubs* and S14.2 *Community Hubs: Oswestry Place Plan Area* (as set out in our Matter 20 Statement).

It would accordingly require at least three sites to come forward under Policy DP8 in order to meet the identified residential guideline¹, if these sites would *"not normally exceed 10 dwellings"*. Given no cross subsidy sites have come forward since 2011, it seems unrealistic to expect five to come forward during the Plan period to 2038. Similarly, it is unrealistic to expect 35² dwellings to be delivered through infill development.

Furthermore, as set out within our Client's Regulation 19 Representation, this policy is not supported by any evidence to demonstrate that these improvements will lead to the delivery of local needs affordable housing across the county, thereby undermining its ability to ensure there is adequate housing opportunities for households with a local connection.

¹ Trefonen is identified as one of 11 Community Hubs for the Oswestry Place Plan area which had a residential guideline of 55 dwellings in the submission Local Plan [SD002]. However, through the Updated Schedule of Main Modifications July 2024 [GC4M] this has been reduced to 35 dwellings, although no explanation is provided as to why.

² Or 55.



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In order for Policy DP8 to be justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy we suggest the following changes are necessary:

- Reduce the percentage of 70% to less than 66% to ensure greater flexibility is built in respond to Shropshire's diverse range and type of settlements and to ensure cross subsidy exception sites come forward over the course of the Local Plan period.
- Any percentage should be fully justified by the evidence base to ensure its effectiveness.

However, this does not mitigate the wider issue in respect of Trefonen, which is linked to a failure to allocate additional housing sites through Policy S14, as set out in our Matter 20 Statement.





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