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Dear Sir / Madam

## **SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE JOINT LOCAL PLAN – SCOPING CONSULTATION**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the above-mentioned consultation. The HBF is the principal representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales. Our representations reflect the views of our membership, which includes multi-national PLC's, regional developers and small, local builders. In any one year, our members account for over 80% of all new "for sale" market housing built in England and Wales as well as a large proportion of newly built affordable housing. We would like to submit the following responses to specific questions in the Scoping consultation document.

### **Section 3 : About The Plan**

#### **Q1. Do you agree that we should prepare a Local Plan for South Warwickshire?**

The HBF is supportive of the preparation by Stratford upon Avon and Warwick District Councils of a joint Local Plan for South Warwickshire.

#### **Q2. Do you agree with our approach of starting with a high-level, strategic Part 1 Local Plan? If not, why not?**

The HBF's preference is a single comprehensive Joint Local Plan with a clear distinction between strategic and non-strategic policies. This approach has been successfully implemented in Plymouth & South West Devon and South Worcestershire. Elsewhere, the HBF have found the Part 1 / Part 2 approach complex, cumbersome and untimely as experienced in West Northamptonshire, North Northamptonshire and Gloucester Cheltenham & Tewkesbury.

#### **Q3. Do you agree that the Local Plan should run to 2050?**



As set out in the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from the date of adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities (para 22), therefore the proposed end date of 2050 provides an appropriate long-term timeframe for strategic planning. However, if the preferred Growth Option includes new settlements (see HBF answer to Q51 below), it is noted that the Government's consultation on Draft Revisions to the NPPF (ended on 27th March 2021) proposes that "*where larger-scale development such as new settlements form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take into account the likely timescale for delivery*" (para 22). The proposed end date of 2050 is less than 30 years.

#### **Q4. Do you agree that this is the right evidence that we need to inform the Local Plan?**

As set out in the 2019 NPPF, all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence, which should be adequate, proportionate and focussed tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned (para 31). The supporting evidence listed by the Councils is considered necessary to inform the plan making process. The Councils should also be reviewing the Green Belt to meet future development needs of South Warwickshire (see HBF answer to Q52 below).

As set out in the Planning for the Future White Paper a simpler planning process improves certainty. If the Councils are proposing to adopt optional technical standards (see HBF answer to Q9 below) and / or to set other policy requirements, robust justifying evidence should be provided. As confirmed by the 2019 NPPF, the Joint Local Plan should also avoid unnecessary duplication (para 16f). When considering specific policy requirements, the Councils are referred to the Government's proposed changes to Parts L (Conservation of Fuel & Power), F (Ventilation), M (Access to & Use of Buildings), R (Physical Infrastructure for High-Speed Electronic Communications Networks) & S (Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential & Non-residential Buildings) of the Building Regulations and the Government's proposals for biodiversity gain set out in the Environment Bill.

As stated in the 2019 NPPF, the contributions expected from development including the level & types of affordable housing provision required and other infrastructure for education, health, transport, flood & water management, open space, digital communication, etc. should be set out. In plan-making, viability is inseparable from the deliverability of development. The viability of individual developments and policy requirements should be tested at the plan making stage. As set out in the 2019 NPPF, development should not be subject to such a scale of obligations that the deliverability of the Joint Local Plan is threatened (para 34). Viability assessment should not be conducted on the margins of viability especially in the aftermath of uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit. Without a robust approach to viability assessment, land will be withheld from the market particularly if the resultant Benchmark Land

Value (BLV) is lower than the market value at which land will trade, resulting in non-delivery of housing targets. At Examination, viability will be a key issue in determining the soundness of the Joint Local Plan.

### **Is there further evidence that you think will be required?**

As set out in the 2019 NPPF, the Councils are under a Duty to Co-operate with other Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and prescribed bodies on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries (para 24). To maximise the effectiveness of plan-making and fully meet the legal requirements of the Duty to Co-operate, the Councils engagement should be constructive, active and on-going. This collaboration should identify the relevant strategic matters to be addressed (para 25). Effective and on-going joint working is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy (para 26). The Joint Local Plan should be positively prepared and provide a strategy, which as a minimum seeks to meet its own Local Housing Needs (LHN) in full and is informed by agreements with other authorities so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated (para 35a). The South Warwickshire Joint Local Plan will have a fundamental role to play in meeting unmet housing needs from both the Greater Birmingham & Black Country Housing Market Area (GB&BCHMA) and the Coventry & Warwickshire HMA (C&WHMA) (see HBF answer to Q43 below). The Councils should demonstrate such working by the preparation and maintenance of one or more Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) identifying the cross-boundary matters to be addressed and the progress of co-operation in addressing these matters.

## **Section 4 : Key Strategic Issues**

### **Housing**

#### **Q9. Do you agree that the Local Plan should seek to address these issues?**

All households should have access to different types of dwellings to meet their housing needs. As set out in 2019 NPPF, the housing needs for different groups should be assessed to justify any policies on the size, type and tenure of housing (paras 61 & 62). Therefore, the Joint Local Plan should address the identified issues (see HBF answers to Q4 above & Q42 below).

#### **Are there any particular approaches that we should consider?**

It should be acknowledged that market signals are important in determining the size and type of housing needed. The Councils should ensure that appropriate sites are allocated to meet the needs of identified groups of households rather than prescribing specific housing mixes for individual sites. The Joint Local Plan should ensure that suitable sites are available for a wide range of different types of development across a wide choice of appropriate locations. The Councils should consider allocating sites for older persons and other specialist housing subject to criteria such as the proximity of sites to public transport, local

amenities, health services and town centres. The Councils should also support Self & Custom Build Housing. The NPPG sets out the key role that the Councils should play in bringing forward suitable land for self & custom build housing (ID 57-025-20210508).

## **Transport**

### **Q15. Do you agree that the Local Plan should seek to improve infrastructure, such as charging points, for electric vehicles and e-bikes?**

It is recognised that electric vehicles will be part of the solution to transitioning to a low carbon future. As set out in the Department of Transport consultation on Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential & Non-Residential Buildings (ended on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019), the Government's preferred option is the introduction of a new requirement for Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) under Part S of the Building Regulations. The inclusion of EVCP requirements within the Building Regulations will introduce a standardised consistent approach to EVCPs in new buildings across the country. It is the HBF's opinion that it is unnecessary for the Councils to set the provision of EVCPs as a policy requirement in the Joint Local Plan.

## **Utilities**

### **Q26. Do you agree that the Local Plan should encourage the use of the 'energy hierarchy' in developments, aiming to reduce the use of energy in the first instance wherever possible?**

The HBF agree that the reduction of energy use should be encouraged by the use of an "energy hierarchy". The HBF recognise the need to move towards greater energy efficiency via a nationally consistent set of standards and timetable, which is universally understood and technically implementable. The Government Response to The Future Homes Standard : 2019 Consultation on changes to Part L (conservation of fuel and power) and Part F (ventilation) of the Building Regulations for new dwellings dated January 2021 provides an implementation roadmap, the Government's aim is for the interim Part L (Conservation of fuel and power), Part F (Ventilation) & Overheating Regulations to be regulated for in late 2021 and to come into effect in 2022. The 2021 interim uplift will deliver homes that are expected to produce 31% less CO2 emissions compared to current standards. To ensure as many homes as possible are built in line with new energy efficiency standards, transitional arrangements will apply to individual homes rather than an entire development and the transitional period will be one year. This approach will support successful implementation of the 2021 interim uplift and the wider implementation timeline for the Future Homes Standard from 2025. The Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes will produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions than one built to current energy efficiency requirements. By delivering carbon reductions through the fabric and building services in a home rather than relying on wider carbon offsetting, the Future Homes Standard will ensure new homes have a smaller carbon footprint than any previous

Government policy. In addition, this footprint will continue to reduce over time as the electricity grid decarbonises.

The HBF consider that the Council should comply with the Government's intention of setting standards for energy efficiency through the Building Regulations. The key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Council's specifying their own policy approach to energy efficiency, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers. The Councils should not need to set local energy efficiency standards to achieve the shared net zero goal because of the higher levels of energy efficiency standards for new homes proposed in the 2021 Part L uplift and the Future Homes Standard 2025.

## **Section 6 : Options For Growth**

### **Q42. How do you think we should best address the affordability of housing?**

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that total affordable housing need should be considered in the context of its likely delivery as a proportion of mixed market and affordable housing developments. As set out in the NPPG, an increase in the total housing figures may be considered where it could help deliver affordable housing (ID 2a-024-20190220). The NPPG also sets out that households whose needs are not met by the market, who are eligible for one or more of the types of affordable housing as defined in Annex 2 : Glossary of the 2019 NPPF, should be considered in need of affordable housing (ID 67-005-20190722). The Councils calculation of affordable housing need may be significant in comparison to the minimum LHN. The HBF acknowledge that the Council may not be able to meet all affordable housing needs but a housing requirement above the minimum LHN will make a greater contribution to delivering more affordable housing.

The Councils affordable housing tenure mix should also accord with national policy. The 2019 NPPF expects at least 10% of homes to be available for affordable home ownership (para 64). The Written Ministerial Statement dated 24 May 2021 also requires 25% of affordable housing to be First Homes with further detail on implementation provided in the latest NPPG (ID 70-001-20210524 to 70-029-20210524).

### **Q43. If we are required to meet housing shortfalls from elsewhere, how best should we accommodate such shortfalls?**

As set out in the 2019 NPPF, strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas can be met over the plan period (para 65). The South Warwickshire Joint Local Plan will have a fundamental role to play in meeting unmet housing needs from both the GB&BCHMA and the C&WHMA (see HBF

answer to Q4 above). It is noted that Growth Option F - Main Urban Areas includes development adjacent to urban areas of Coventry and Redditch.

**Q44. Do you agree with prioritising jobs by increasing employment opportunities and therefore potentially increasing the minimum housing requirement for South Warwickshire?**

The HBF agree that the Councils should prioritise jobs by increasing employment opportunities and increase the housing requirement above the minimum LHN. The 2019 NPPF seeks to achieve sustainable development by pursuing economic, social and environmental objectives in mutually supportive ways (para 8). The Councils should be seeking to support the long-term sustainability of South Warwickshire by achieving a sustainable balance between employment and housing growth.

The Joint Local Plan should build upon South Warwickshire's existing strengths in the automotive sector, advanced manufacturing & engineering, the computer games & software industry, tourism & hospitality, heritage & culture, education and research & development. The Joint Local Plan should also build upon strategic locational strengths to nurture the growth of new and existing industries by capitalising on South Warwickshire's locational proximity to the Midlands "Golden Triangle" (the area within the M42, M1 & M6), where there is a high demand for business space for advanced manufacturing & engineering and logistics. The local economy should be helped to diversify by innovation in green technologies and the knowledge economy assisted to grow.

The determination of the minimum number of homes needed should be informed by LHN assessment using the Government's standard methodology unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach (para 60). For South Warwickshire, the minimum LHN is 1,230 dwellings per annum. However, the NPPG clearly states that the standard methodology is the minimum starting point in determining the number of homes needed. The NPPG explains that "*circumstances*" may exist to justify a housing requirement figure higher than the minimum LHN. A higher housing requirement supports economic growth as well as addressing affordability (see HBF answer to Q42 above) and unmet needs from elsewhere (see HBF answer to Q43 above).

**Q48. What is your favourite Growth Option and what do you particularly like about this option?**

The HBF do not have a "favourite" Growth Option because there are disadvantages associated with pursuing any one Growth Option in isolation. The preferred Growth Option for South Warwickshire is likely to be a combination of Option A - Rail Corridors, Option B - Main Bus Corridors, Option C - Main Road Corridors, Option D - Enterprise Hubs, Option E - Socio Economic, Option F - Main Urban Areas and Option G - Dispersed.

The preferred Growth Option should meet the housing needs of both urban and rural communities. Growth Options overly focussed on the five largest towns of

Leamington Spa, Warwick, Stratford upon Avon, Kenilworth and Whitnash will not meet the needs of rural communities. As set out in the 2019 NPPF “to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services” (para 78). Unless there are significant constraints or sustainability issues, all rural villages & settlements should be considered for appropriate levels of sustainable growth for homes and jobs.

The preferred Growth Option should ensure the availability of a sufficient supply of deliverable and developable land to deliver the housing requirement. This sufficiency of housing land supply (HLS) should meet the housing requirement, ensure the maintenance of 5 Years Housing Land Supply (YHLS) and achieve Housing Delivery Test (HDT) performance measurements. Housing delivery is optimised by the widest possible range of housing site sizes and market locations, which provides suitable land buying opportunities for small, medium and large housebuilding companies. The widest mix of sites provides choice for consumers, allows places to grow in sustainable ways, creates opportunities to diversify the construction sector, responds to changing circumstances, treats the housing requirement as a minimum rather than a maximum and provides competition in the land market. A diversified portfolio of housing sites also offers the widest possible range of products to households to access different types of dwellings to meet their housing needs. As set out in the 2019 NPPF at least 10% of the housing requirement should be accommodated on sites no larger than one hectare or else demonstrate strong reasons for not achieving this target (para 68a).

**Q49. What is your least favourite Growth Option and what do you particularly not like about this option?**

The HBF do not have a “least favourite” Growth Option (see HBF answer to Q48 above).

**Q50. Do you agree that we should be considering densification as part of our Growth Option? If not, why not?**

The Councils should make as much use as possible of Previously Developed Land (PDL) in existing urban areas as set out in 2019 NPPF (para 117). However, the promotion of an effective use of land set out in the 2019 NPPF is not a return to a brownfield first policy approach of the past. The Councils growth strategy should be a balanced rather than sequential approach. The Councils should avoid “town cramming”, which would provide insufficient variety in house typologies to create balanced communities with the right types of new homes to meet the housing needs of different groups. There will be a limited capacity for higher densities and more taller buildings, which will only be appropriate in certain locations. A blanket approach to the intensification of housing densities everywhere would be inappropriate as a range of differing densities will be needed to ensure development is in keeping with the character of the surrounding area. The setting of residential density standards should be

undertaken in accordance with the 2019 NPPF (para 123), whereby in the circumstances of an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs then a minimum net density in suitable locations such as town centres and those benefiting from good public transport connections may be appropriate. The future deliverability of intensely developed residential schemes will also be dependent on the viability of PDL and market demand for high density urban living post Covid-19. Densification alone will not meet all residential development needs given restricted capacity, insufficient availability of brownfield sites and competing demands from employment / residential uses in the existing urban areas.

**Q51. Do you agree that we should be considering new settlements as part of our Growth Option?**

If new settlements are considered as part of the preferred Growth Option, there may be long lead in times for the commencement of on-site development and build up to optimum delivery rates on such large-scale development sites. Such new settlements should be considered over a longer timeframe at least 30 years, which is beyond the proposed plan period for the South Warwickshire Local Plan (see HBF answer to Q3 above). To ensure a continuous HLS in the short to medium term, new settlements should be complimented with smaller non-strategic sites elsewhere.

**Q52. Notwithstanding your preferred Growth Option, do you agree that we should explore growth opportunities in Green Belt locations?**

The Councils should explore growth opportunities in the Green Belt locations (see HBF answer to Q4 above). As set out in 2019 NPPF, where fully evidenced and justified Green Belt boundaries can be altered in "*exceptional circumstances*" through the preparation or updating of Local Plans (para 136 & 137).

**Conclusions**

It is hoped that Stratford upon Avon and Warwick District Councils will find these responses are helpful in preparing the Joint Local Plan for South Warwickshire. In the meantime, if any further assistance or information is sought, please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully  
for and on behalf of **HBF**



**Susan E Green MRTPI**  
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