



Planning Policy
Economy and Environment
Walsall Council
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Walsall
WS1 1DG

SENT BY E-MAIL AND POST

3 May 2016

Dear Sir / Madam

DRAFT WALSALL SITE ALLOCATIONS DOCUMENT (SAD) 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 representations and appear at future Examination Hearing Sessions to discuss these matters in greater detail.

As requested by the Council the HBF confirms that the representations set out in our letter dated 2nd November 2015 submitted in response to the Walsall SAD Preferred Options consultation remain valid (see attached copy).

Background Context

The Walsall SAD is based on the Black Country Core Strategy adopted in 2011 (pre-NPPF) which in the HBF's opinion is unsound because it is no longer positively prepared, justified, effective and therefore inconsistent with national policy due to :-

- failure to deliver full objectively assessed housing needs (OAHN) for market and affordable housing in the housing market area (HMA) including the unmet needs of neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with sustainable development ;
- prioritising a brownfield first approach to development ;

- a plan period expiring in 2026 leaving only 10 years remaining.

Housing Need

It is the HBF's opinion that the Walsall SAD should be planning for a housing requirement greater than 11,973 dwellings. The latest estimate of OAHN set out in the "Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and Black Country Local Authorities Strategic Housing Needs Study Stage 3 Report" by Peter Brett Associates dated August 2015 identifies demographic projections between 63,344 dwellings (ONS/PBA 2012 model) and 66,524 dwellings (CLG 2012 model) for the Black Country sub market comprising of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton which is greater than 63,000 dwellings in the adopted Core Strategy. As these demographic projections represent just the starting point for the calculation of OAHN (NPPG ID 2a-015-20140306) the figures may be even higher after consideration of other factors to support economic growth, upward adjustment for worsening trends in market signals and meeting affordable housing needs (NPPG ID 2a-018-20140306 -2a-020-20140306). In Walsall the demographic projections identify an OAHN between 14,412 dwellings (ONS/PBA 2012 model) and 15,875 dwellings (CLG 2012 model) which is significantly higher than the 11,973 dwellings in the adopted Core Strategy.

Housing Land Supply

Of the 11,973 dwellings proposed in Walsall to date there have been 5,238 completions, 669 dwellings are under construction, 4,034 dwellings have planning consent granted meaning 2,032 dwellings remain to be allocated. **Policy HC1** lists 98 development sites. The "Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and Black Country Local Authorities Strategic Housing Needs Study Stage 3 Report" identifies a deficit in land supply across the Black Country sub market. In Walsall a deficit of at least 173 dwellings per annum is identified. If as suggested above the Council should be planning for an OAHN greater than 11,973 dwellings then the deficit will be even larger. It is noted that the latest 5 YHLS position is set out in an Annual Monitoring Report for 2012/13 which is now somewhat dated it is suggested that the Council provides a more up to dated statement. If the Walsall SAD is not to be out of date on adoption it is critical that the land supply requirement is achieved because *"relevant policies for the supply of housing will not be considered up to date if the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites"* (NPPF para 49).

Other Policies

It is also noted that **Policy HC3 – Affordable Housing** refers to a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). As currently worded the Council risks conferring development plan status on an SPD which will not be subject to the same process of preparation, consultation and examination as the Local Plan. The Regulations require that policies intended to guide the determination of applications for planning permission should be in the Local Plan and not inappropriately hidden in an SPD. The NPPF also indicates that

SPDs should not add to the financial burden of development (para 154) and policies on local standards should be in the Plan (para 174).

Conclusion

For the Walsall SAD to be found sound under the four tests of soundness as defined by para 182 of the NPPF, the Plan should be positively prepared, justified, effective and compliant with national policy. It is considered necessary for the Council to review the Draft Walsall SAD with respect to the Duty to Co-operate, the plan period, objectively assessed housing needs / housing requirement, housing land supply and whole plan viability testing so that the resultant Plan is not unsound by failing to be consistent with national policy, positively prepared, properly justified and so ultimately ineffective.

The HBF raised the same concerns in response to the recent Dudley Development Strategy consultation. As a consequence proposed Main Modifications to the Dudley Development Strategy (Examination commencing on 17th May 2016) include an up-date of supporting evidence in the Council's Housing Supply Paper and insertion after 4th paragraph of "Housing Delivery" section on page 7-1. *"The Black Country Local Authorities are committed to a review of the Black Country Core Strategy from 2016. This will look at housing need beyond 2026 and will take account of wider needs across the wider West Midlands housing market area through co-operation across with the relevant local authorities."* It is suggested that Walsall Council also considers inclusion of the same wording in the pre submission Walsall SAD.

It is hoped that these representations are of assistance to the Council in preparing the next stages of the Walsall SAD. In the meantime if any further information or assistance is required please contact the undersigned.

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



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