

## TELFORD & WREKIN LOCAL PLAN REVIEW EXAMINATION

### MATTER 5 – ALLOCATIONS

**Define Planning and Design Ltd on Behalf of Bloor Homes (Regulation 19 Representations Ref. E135)**

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The following hearing statements relate to Bloor Homes Limited's (BHL) land interests that form part of proposed new Sustainable communities "SC1 Land at Bratton" and "SC2 Land North East of Muxton" as identified by emerging Local Plan (eLP) Policy HO2.

**Issue 1: Whether the allocations and their requirements are justified, effective, and consistent with national policy.**

**Questions 44: Are the requirements within Policy HO1 justified, sufficiently clear and unambiguous?**

Representations to the Regulation 19 Consultation (Respondent ID E135; Index 457) suggested modifications to clarify and remove any repetition of the planning requirements set out in Policy HO1 and HO2. Submission Document CDO8 proposes modifications to the Regulation 19 Plan (CDO1) including to Policy HO1, but only to update the cross references to the appendices.

Therefore, the position set out in the representations remains relevant. The requirement for a Design Brief, particularly as set out in Policy HO1 (which is repeated in other policies including HO2 and DD2) requires further clarification and justification. Our experience to date, including through pre-application discussions with the Council, has demonstrated that there is not a clear and consistent understanding within the Council itself or with other parties in relation to what the Design Brief should be. Prior to producing a draft Design and Development Brief for SC1 Land at Bratton, the general principles of the document were proposed and agreed with the Council via written correspondence. Based on the eLP requirements it is suggested that the purpose and content of the Design Brief should be as follows:

*"A Design Brief provides high level guidance that encapsulates the vision, objectives and essential development requirements of a specific development project. It details the intended use, design aspirations, and contextual considerations of the site. Design Briefs offer flexibility, allowing for interpretation and creative input from designers as the project progresses through the application stages.*

## Key points:

- **Purpose:** Design Briefs articulate goals and aspirations;
- **Flexibility:** Design Briefs offer room for creative interpretation;
- **Detail Level:** Design Briefs provide broad guidance.

The purpose of a Development Brief is to give assurance to the Council that the aims, objectives and policy requirements for the draft allocation are delivered and separate planning applications for the allocation are brought forward in accordance with an agreed framework. Significantly, the Development Brief will ensure that the allocation is delivered in a cohesive and equitable manner.

## Key points:

- **Phasing:** Relevant site wide common infrastructure is delivered in a timely fashion, based on an overall phasing strategy;
- **Delivery:** Common on site infrastructure items (e.g. educational facilities, sports and community facilities, shared site access infrastructure and active travel links) are funded in an equitable manner without requiring separate equalisation or collaboration agreements;
- **Connectivity:** Full multi modal transport connectivity is achieved within the allocation as a whole without ransom; and
- **Funding:** Common off site infrastructure is funded on a consistent basis e.g. based on a 'roof tax' financial contribution to be secured on a per qualifying plot basis.

The above matters will be determined in coordination with other relevant landowners, TWC and other key stakeholders.

In light of the above, the Design & Development Brief will be structured as follows:

1. *Introduction (including the site, purpose and policy requirements)*
2. *Vision and Objectives*
3. *The Site and Context (high level synthesis)*
4. *Identity (local character)*
5. *Uses and Built Form (based around the Development Framework Plan)*
6. *Movement (including the linkages between the two parcels of the draft allocation and into Telford)*
7. *Public Realm (including play and open space provision, nature and SuDS)*
8. *Energy and Water (resources)*
9. *On Site Common Infrastructure Delivery Strategy*

## 10. Off Site Common Infrastructure Delivery Strategy

### 11. Future Stewardship

*The respective planning applications will also be accompanied by Design and Access Statements (DAS) with strategic design code elements in relation to both place-making and Green Infrastructure. This will necessarily relate to the Bloor application site above. They will demonstrate how the visionary objectives and design aspirations set out in the Design & Development Brief will be realised for each site in order to ensure the delivery of a high-quality sustainable new neighbourhood.”*

The above approach would ensure that the sustainable communities, including necessary infrastructure, are delivered in a comprehensive and consistent manner and facilitate the timely delivery of much needed homes.

However, recent correspondence with the Council have suggested that a detailed Design Code for the entire sustainable community allocation is being sought, rather than a brief. Further, the Council are requiring this to be provided and agreed prior to the submission of any planning applications, including outline applications, which could slow the delivery of the sustainable communities. There must be pragmatism from the Council to ensure that strategic development proposals can be delivered in a phased manner, designed to address site specific requirements and are not unduly delayed.

A draft Design and Development Brief has been provided to the Council in relation to SC1 Land at Bratton and sets out an overarching high level framework masterplan for the delivery of the two sites that comprise the allocation. The Brief sets out the principles for infrastructure delivery and meeting the allocation requirements. It should then be for the individual planning applications to build on this framework, as set out above. For BHL's interests at Land at Bratton this has been developed in the form of a Strategic Design Code which is included within the Design and Access Statement to be submitted with the outline planning application. This is an entirely appropriate and justified approach to ensure development comes forward in a timely manner, delivers the policy and infrastructure requirements and recognises the different stages and constraints that different development sites within a single allocation need to deal with.

The policy must be amended to ensure a clear and reasonable approach to Design Briefs are taken which are proportionate to the scale and complexity of development sites.

Further clarification is also needed in terms of the “need to work together”. A number of these matters should be addressed through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Policy Strategic S7 and it is unclear how this part of the policy would be applied to development proposals which are in any case required to appropriately consider the cumulative impact of development. Indeed, the Policy as worded could lead to significant delays to development coming forward, especially where details of third party land/development proposals elsewhere in the allocation site are required to comply with the Policy, but are not yet available (e.g. site specific flood risk and drainage, land conditions and green infrastructure strategies).

**Issue 2: Whether each of the Sustainable Communities allocations in Policy HO2 and their policy requirements are soundly based?**

**Question 47: Are each of the Sustainable Communities (SCs) allocations and their policy requirements justified, deliverable/developable, consistent with national policy and supported by the evidence? Do they accord with the development strategy of the Plan?**

BHL support the allocation of sustainable communities SC1 and SC2. The Council's evidence work fully supports the allocations and BHL have provided information which demonstrates the deliverability of its land interests as the main part of both of these allocations. As the Council have set out in its evidence work including the Site Selection Technical Paper March 2025 (Ref. AS01), and as BHL have addressed in representations and Vision Documents for the sites, allocating significant development to the north of Telford is the most sustainable approach to meeting local housing needs and aligns with the development strategy of the eLP which directs the majority of development to Telford as the principal town. Further opportunities for development to the east, west and south of Telford are constrained by the Authority's boundary, heritage, landscape designations and landscape sensitivity.

BHL have carried out the required technical and design work and are in a position to submit an outline planning application for their site at Land at Bratton in the coming weeks, subject to a reasonable and proactive approach from the Council with regards to the allocation policy requirements and agreement of a reasonable Planning Performance Agreement. This will unlock the site to begin delivering much needed new homes in accordance with the housing trajectory set out in the eLP.

**Question 48: Does the evidence support the expected delivery trajectory on each site? Does the market and other evidence take account of all three SCs seeking to deliver housing at a similar time in a similar part of Telford?**

The Council has submitted a Topic Paper for each Sustainable Community including the expected trajectory for each site which has been based on input from the site developers including BHL who have significant experience in delivering comparable sites.

BHL fully support the trajectories provided and confirm that delivery is anticipated to align with the timescales set out within, subject to achieving planning permission without undue delay.

**Question 50: Will Policy HO2 and the approach it proposes to bringing the sites forward be effective in ensuring that all the requirements for each SC can be achieved?**

Whilst representations previously submitted (Respondent ID E135; Index 458) have set out amendments that should be made to the policy, the overarching approach in Policy HO2 will ensure that the sustainable communities are brought forward in an appropriate manner. HO2 sets out site specific matters and the wider eLP includes policies to guide the developments more generally.

However, as set out in the response to Matter 4, Question 37 and Matter 5, Question 52 and 55 introducing flexibility on the types of non-residential uses and requirements would enable the development of the site to respond to market requirements over time.

The Design/Development Brief is a fundamental part of the Policy and as discussed in response to Matter 5, Issue 1, Question 44, a reasonable and pragmatic approach must be taken in respect of this requirement and a detailed design code for the entire sustainable community allocations should not be sought in advance of or alongside individual outline planning applications. Further, BHL strongly object to the proposed modification to require the submission and agreement of the Design Brief prior to a planning application being submitted. A more appropriate trigger would be prior to the approval of detailed matters.

**Question 51: Does the evidence demonstrate that all three SCs are viable in respect of delivering all the requirements of Policy HO2 and other relevant policies of the Plan when taken together? Are any of the SCs reliant upon external funding?**

In relation to BHL's land interests at "Land at Bratton" and "Land North East of Muxton", the development of both sites can be made viable and would not rely on external funding subject to further consideration of the affordable housing requirement. This should be bought in line with the Council's Viability Study (VSO1, VSO1a and VSO2) and any update to it taking account of the latest infrastructure costs in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The most recent update to the study (VSO2), dated December 2024, states that "*The results in relation to the Sustainable Communities are similar to those reported in the 2023 WPVA. On these, the Residual Value exceeds the EUV, but on most it is a little less than the BLV, suggesting that these are likely to be challenging to deliver with 20% affordable housing.*". Furthermore, the Viability Assessment pre-dates the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (dated March 2025), the expected Highways Topic Paper which is expected to include detailed transport infrastructure schemes and costs, and recent pre-application discussions with the Council which has established that very significant community infrastructure contributions are to be sought from the Sustainable Communities.

It is imperative that for strategic sites, such as the Sustainable Communities, viability is assessed throughout the plan-making process and updated when significant new information in relation to expected infrastructure costs is available. Failing to do so would fail to accord with the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on viability and plan-making. Indeed, PPG Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 10-002-20251216 states "*Policy requirements, particularly for affordable housing, should be set at a level that takes account of affordable housing and infrastructure needs and allows for the planned types of sites and development to be deliverable, without the need for further viability assessment at the decision making stage.*".

Therefore, an updated Local Plan Viability Assessment should be carried out that is consistent with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP should be updated to accurately reflect the updated allocation policy requirements and any evidenced and calculated infrastructure costs including for education and transport. This should then inform other Local Plan policies,

including affordable housing requirements, which is very likely to result in the requirement being lower than 25% currently required in the sustainable community sites.

Without proper understanding of, and accounting for, the likely financial burden on the Sustainable Communities, delivery of such sites could be delayed during the planning application process due to the need to carry out site specific viability work as required by the NPPF and eLP affordable housing policies.

**Question 52: (a) Is the employment land requirement in each of the SCs justified? (b) Does the policy include sufficient clarity and/or flexibility around the quantum, location and type of non-residential development to be delivered in the SCs?**

It is understood that the Council has allocated employment land on the site to provide local employment opportunities that contribute to sustainability. BHL has confirmed to the Council that it intends to sell the employment land to a commercial developer in due course to bring forward. However, flexibility should be incorporated into the policy to enable the site proposals to appropriately respond to market requirements (as further discussed in the response to Matter 4, Question 37).

This flexibility would be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and would not undermine the sustainability or the suitability of the site which is located near to significant existing employment opportunities within Telford. Further, a range of opportunities will be provided through the local centre and primary school to be delivered on site.

**Question 53: How have the impacts of growth planned in the SCs on infrastructure and flood risk, individually and cumulatively, been assessed and where is this set out?**

BHL has carried out significant technical assessment of its site at Bratton (SC1 Land at Bratton) where an outline planning application is to be submitted for planning imminently. This has included a site specific flood risk assessment and hydraulic modelling which finds that flood risk is lower than indicated on the EA Flood Maps; the proposed development of the site will not increase flood risk elsewhere; and the development will be safe for its lifetime.

BHL are also confident that flood risk can be appropriately addressed and mitigated at SC2 through masterplanning and technical assessment work which includes hydraulic modelling that identifies any required mitigation.

**Question 55: Does the policy need to specify the size of new schools required in the SCs to be effective? Is there sufficient flexibility if evidence on school place planning changes over the Plan period?**

Policy HO2 SC1 and SC2 relate to sustainable communities where BHL have land interests which include the need to deliver land for new primary schools. The Policy as drafted include specifying the size of the primary schools to be provided, but depending on how and when the sites come forward the need for school places could change over the plan period. On this basis, BHL would support modifying the policies to introduce flexibility to ensure the infrastructure delivered meets evidenced needs.

However, there must be a level of certainty provided for example through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to ensure developers can proceed with the delivery of sites with confidence of the likely requirements in land and financial contribution terms. In this regard, the IDP must be updated with the expected cost of delivering education provision on the Sustainable Community sites which is understood through BHL's pre-application discussions to date to be much higher than that currently accounted for in the IDP and Viability Assessments.

**Question 57: (a) How will vehicles access SC2 and what effect will this have on existing residents and businesses? (b) What alternatives were considered and why were they ruled out? (c) How will any harmful impacts be mitigated?**

An iterative design and assessment approach has been taken in relation to SC2 on behalf of BHL and the wider consortium to ensure that the strategy for the delivery of the allocation is appropriate and deliverable. This includes the access strategy which has been promoted through the Masterplan and Vision Document provided to the Council in support of the allocation site.

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