

5 December 2017  
**Delivered by email**

The Inspector  
C/o Ms Carmel Edwards  
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Coton Road  
Nuneaton  
CV11 5AA

Dear Mr Spencer

## **NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH LOCAL EXAMINATION – RESPONSE TO ADDITIONAL COUNCIL EVIDENCE**

We write on behalf of our client, Richborough Estates, in response to the additional evidence submitted by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council to the ongoing examination of their Borough Plan. Richborough Estates participated in the hearing sessions for Matters 1, 2 and 3 in respect to land they are promoting to the east and west of Higham Lane, Nuneaton.

Prior to the close of the stage one hearing sessions the Council submitted the Interim Monitoring Report and the relevant officer's report (NBBC/14) which was presented to Cabinet on 6 September 2017 and a Full Council extraordinary meeting on 13 September 2017. This was supported by background information (NBBC/20) regarding the Council's housing supply.

The version of NBBC/20 now available on the examination website differs from that which was originally issued to participants on 31 August 2017, which formed the basis for the Interim Monitoring Report. The report identifies a housing supply for the plan period of 15,223 dwellings. The updated version of NBBC/20 confirms that the supply is actually 14,840 dwellings, 383 fewer dwellings. The Council's deliverable supply in the first five years has also marginally increased by 21 dwellings.

### **Housing requirement**

The Council's Housing Topic Paper (NBBC/33) states at paragraph 1.6 that: "*for the avoidance of doubt, the Council proposes that the "requirement" figure in the plan would be 14,060 (i.e. 10,040 + 4,020)*". It goes on to state at paragraph 1.8 that "*the Council have willing to signing the MoU [Memorandum of Understanding with the other Coventry and Warwickshire authorities] and are in the process of agreeing the necessary procedures to enable this to happen*".

There is no evidence (such as agendas or minutes from any of the Coventry and Warwickshire authorities) that signing the MoU is being expedited by Nuneaton and Bedworth. The hearing sessions should not

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resume until the Council has formally signed the MoU and agreed it will be meeting its share of the Coventry and Warwickshire housing shortfall with the other housing market area authorities.

## **Substantial existing shortfall**

To 31 March 2017 the Council has a shortfall in its supply of 2,333 dwellings. This is a substantial shortfall; it represents 17% of the Borough's overall requirement of 14,060 dwellings.

The Interim Monitoring Report sets out the Council's five year housing land supply position should the Borough Plan be adopted. It presents two calculations, either the 2,333 shortfall being met in the first five years (Sedgefield) or across the remainder of the plan period (Liverpool). At the Cabinet meeting on 6 September 2017 the minutes (NBBC/30.2) confirm that it was resolved the Liverpool method was the preferred calculation.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is clear that local planning authorities should aim to deal with any shortfall within the first five years of the plan period where possible (Paragraph: 035 Reference ID: 3-035-20140306).

At the Matter 3 hearing session we made the Inspector aware of situations where the Liverpool method has been deemed appropriate by previous Inspectors at the point of examining plans, such as Blaby District in Leicestershire. Here a single Sustainable Urban Extension, which was still at the embryonic stage and not subject to a planning application and therefore unlikely to deliver until later in the plan period, made up 49% of the Council's total requirement.

That is not the case in Nuneaton and Bedworth, where there are 11 proposed housing allocations, including HSG1 which has already delivered 289 dwellings up to 31 March 2017 and continues to deliver in the strong market area to the north of Nuneaton.

There is no justification for the Council using the Liverpool method. Moreover, it is imperative that the Council seeks to increase the delivery of housing immediately to meet its chronic housing needs, in accordance with PPG.

## **Buffer in supply**

In the Publication Plan the Council specifically sought to provide a 10% buffer (1,004 dwellings) in supply against the requirement (i.e. 10,040). The Council's Matter 2 hearing statement clarified in the response to question 18 that the buffer was to "*cover the non-delivery of sites and allows flexibility to ensure that the Borough's requirement is met and overall delivery is not affected*".

Clearly such a buffer is necessary given the substantial existing shortfall that exists in the Borough. We made submissions to this effect in our Matter 2 hearing statement.

Based on the supply figure of 14,840 dwellings established in NBBC/20, this includes a 780 dwelling buffer against the 14,060 requirement, equating to 5.6%. To allow for a 10% buffer an uplift of 626 dwellings is required to ensure the plan provides sufficient flexibility, certainty, and choice and competition for the market, in accordance with paragraph 47 of the NPPF and to ensure that the Plan is aspirational but realistic, as required by paragraph 154 of the NPPF.

## **Additional sites**

Using the Sedgefield methodology, the Council is only able to demonstrate a 4.15 year housing land supply (a 0.01 year increase to that shown in the Interim Monitoring Report to reflect the additional 21 dwellings in the supply) with a 20% buffer, below the necessary five years.

This, in addition to the need for the planned supply to provide a 10% buffer, make it clear that the Council must identify further land for housing, of a scale (100-300 dwellings) which is capable of making a significant contribution and can deliver immediately, in locations attractive to the market.

The NPPF promotes development in sustainable locations. Nuneaton is the most sustainable settlement within the Borough. It has the primary role for employment, housing, town centre, leisure and service provision. The south and east of the town is significantly constrained by the West Midlands Metropolitan Green Belt. This is not the case to the north, where sustainable opportunities for housing allocations on greenfield sites remain.

This includes land to the east of Higham Lane, which is in a sustainable location and could contribute 200 dwellings towards the Council's shortfall immediately. We made submissions regarding the suitability of the site in our representations and hearing statements to the examination.

We are currently in pre-application discussions with the Council regarding the site in anticipation of submitting an application prior to hearing sessions resuming. This will demonstrate the deliverability of the site.

The site is of a smaller scale than the remaining sites to come forward within the proposed HSG1 allocation, such as Top Farm (1,700 dwellings), Callendar Farm (850 dwellings) and the Persimmon site (493 dwellings). As such the site is typical of those sites that deliver quickly due to simpler land agreements and more limited infrastructure provision prior to the delivery of housing.

In summary, we remain concerned that the Council has not formally signed the MoU committing the Borough to delivering the full 14,060 dwellings and strongly recommend that additional housing allocations are needed within the emerging Borough Plan to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of sites to meet the Borough's pressing housing needs, whilst providing the flexibility required by Local Plans.

Yours sincerely



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