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Date : 6 January 2014

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Paul Lankester
Chief Lankester

Dear Janet

Presubmission Consultation on Long Compton Draft Neighbourhood Plan

Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to the pre-submission consultation on the Long Compton Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Long Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan (LCNDP) and would like to provide the following comments.

It is evident that a huge amount of hard work and commitment has been involved in preparing a draft neighbourhood plan for Long Compton. The LCNDP is proactive in dealing with the three dimensions of sustainable development. The draft plan makes a strong commitment to the protection of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, design and safeguarding the environment, which is welcomed.

The fact that Policy H2 '*Steady and Moderate Development*' makes provision for 32 dwellings within Long Compton is welcome. However, the policy appears to be founded on certain assumptions which would not be consistent with the emerging Core Strategy as it refers to the provision of housing for local housing needs only. The emerging Core Strategy proposes that a range of homes (26-50) be built in Long Compton as part of the requirement to meet the overall housing needs of the District. This lack of consistency will need to be addressed.

As a result of most recent timetable for preparation of the Core Strategy, the Council has been recommended to revise the plan period so that it runs from 2011 to 2031. The references to the plan period and to the amount of development already committed will need to be revised to be consistent with the Core Strategy. It is likely that the quantum of development to be accommodated will remain unaltered.

It is also noted that Policy H2.3 seeks to restrict the scale of development to a maximum of 5 dwellings in line with an early version of Draft Core Strategy Policy CS.16. Policy CS.16 has been revised and the draft most recently endorsed by the Council (July 2013) omits reference to the capacity limit. I attach a copy of the latest Proposed Submission Core Strategy for your information, although you should note that this is likely to be further revised.

<http://sdcweblive/files/seealsodocs/148153/Intended%20Proposed%20Submission%20Core%20Strategy%20-%202022%20July%202013.pdf>

At the recent independent examination of the Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan, the examiner supported a limit on the number of homes per site, citing the justification as community support and local character. I have attached a copy of the Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan for your information. I suggest you consider both this approach and the criteria mentioned in Draft Core Strategy Policy CS.16 to seek a form of wording that might appropriately justify the inclusion of a site capacity limit.

http://consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/portal/cwc_ldf/np/tattenhall_np

I recommend that you consider the likely impacts of restricting the number of homes on each site. Whilst this would help to protect the existing character of the village, small scale of development of this type would be unlikely to provide any substantial infrastructure benefits to the local community and would not trigger the provision of affordable housing as part of the development.

Policies H3 and E1 of the plan advocate brownfield sites only. Whilst it is recognised that the use of previously developed land (brownfield) is the most sustainable option, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not limit development to brownfield land only. The NPPF provides a more flexible approach and seeks to encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield sites). Consideration might be given to amending the policy, possibly based on the principle of sequential development, so that brownfield land should be developed first wherever possible.

It would be helpful to clarify whether the sites listed in Appendix 6 are intended to be allocated or merely identified as preferred sites. If it is anticipated that the plan will include the sites as allocations, it would be advisable to incorporate them into Policy H2.

If it is intended that the sites should be allocated, I would advise that further work is carried out which would demonstrate that they are deliverable. This could be achieved by a brief assessment to determine that there are no overarching constraints that would prevent development; for example, ownership issues, access and highway issues, flooding, heritage and environmental designations.

The identification of these sites throws up a problem as regards the proposed 'brownfield only' approach. None of the three so-called brownfield sites listed in Appendix 6 appear to meet the definition of previously developed land (brownfield sites) as set out in 'Annex 2:Glossary' of the NPPF.¹ The definition excludes both land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings and land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens. As such I recommend that you reconsider Policy H3. You may also wish to consider the merits of including a set of criteria to be met by any planning application for housing development, as the option of introducing a blanket ban on such development is unlikely to be supported. For example, it would be unworkable should one or more of the preferred sites not come forward or prove unviable.

As indicated above, the Council is almost certain to adopt a new Core Strategy plan period of 2011-2031 to ensure there is a plan period of at least 15 years post adoption. The overall LCNDP will need to be reviewed so that the change to the plan period is reflected wherever necessary.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

The strategic objectives are laudable and well intentioned. I would advise however that they could be strengthened further. In their present form they appear as ambitions, rather than specific statements that set out what the LCNDP is seeking to deliver. Objectives should be tailored to the locality, be specific and include clear targets. The strategic objectives should be derived from the identified key challenges and the vision. They should illustrate, in a meaningful way, how the plan contributes to the outcomes outlined in the vision i.e. they provide the link between the policies and achieving the vision itself. The objectives can then form the monitoring framework for the LCNDP. The SMART methodology (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) is a well-established process for setting and achieving objectives as well as being consistent with the 'plan, monitor, manage' approach of strategic plan-making. The use of SMART objectives will help to ensure:

- (a) That it is clear what you are setting out to do; and
- (b) You will be in a position to actually know whether you have achieved what you set out to do.

The SMART acronym uses the following definitions:

- Specific - Objective is detailed, focused and well defined, straight forward and emphasises action and the required outcome;
- Measurable – The measurement source is identified and can track actions as progress towards the objective
- Achievable / Realistic - Need to be achievable unlike aspirations and visions. Can we get it done within the timeframe? Do we have the resources to get it done?
- Timely - Setting a deadline

Consideration should be given to the viability of policy requirements, to ensure that future development remains viable and deliverable as stated in the NPPF paragraph 173. For example, Policy H9 '*Parking and Highways*' requires off-road spaces for two cars, at least one space to be in the form of a garage or car port. It is possible this may be considered too onerous on developers, threatening the delivery of development, unless you can demonstrate that it is viable to do so. The District Council has a Supplementary Planning Document '*Car parking and Cycling Standards*' which sets out the standards for car parking and cycling space provision that will need to be reflected with the LCNDP. I have attached the link to the document for your information.

<http://sdcweblive/files/seealsodocs/6902/0862%20Car%20and%20Cycle%20Parking%20Standards%20SPD%20-%20April%202007.pdf>

The question of viability should be tested in Policy INF1 Infrastructure Criteria, as some of the requirements appear to be too prescriptive.

The inclusion of a Village Design Statement is welcomed. The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and recognises that design is a key aspect of sustainable development, and is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to places better for people. The viability of the design requirements should also be tested to ensure that the proposed housing can be delivered.

I recommend that the section entitled 'Traffic Management and Improved Village Environment' as included at Appendix 3 would be better included as a policy within the draft plan document.

Policies in the draft plan should be expressed in a positive way to reflect the guidance in the NPPF advice, which requires that plans are positively expressed and prepared. For example, it would be preferable for policy to state 'schemes will be supported where they..' rather than 'schemes will be refused'.

In terms of the next stage for the draft plan, the Localism Act sets out basic conditions which the neighbourhood development plans must meet to be found sound by the independent examiner. One of the basic conditions is that draft neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in force. They are not determined against the policies in the emerging development plan. In Stratford-on-Avon District, the development plan in force is the Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan Review. It is noted that page 4 of the LCNDP anticipates the timescale for the adoption of the LCNDP to be May 2014. This would be in advance of the adoption of the District Council's Core Strategy. This would intimate that the LCNDP would be adopted against the District Council's Local Plan Review 2006. This would result in a very short shelf life for the LCNDP. I have to advise you that this Council is not in a position to support the adoption of a neighbourhood plan prior to the adoption of its Core Strategy unless it is clearly intended that the NDP is prepared to be in conformity with the extant Local Plan (which the LCNDP clearly is not). It seems quite likely that a proposal to progress a NDP to adoption ahead of the Council's Core Strategy's adoption would be subject to a legal challenge on grounds of prematurity, as is currently the case with the Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan.

I trust my comments have been helpful. If you would like to discuss any of the comments, please don't hesitate to contact me. Once again, please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to the consultation document.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Blundell
Policy Officer (Corporate Services)