STRATFORD ON AVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

AINSCOUGH STRATEGIC LAND
MATTER E – SPATIAL DELIVERY OF HOUSING: ‘THE BIG PICTURE’

Date: December 2014
Pegasus Reference: ST/MAN.0001/R026v1
Local Plan Ref: 0020-1
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared in response to the Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC) Core Strategy (Proposed Submission Version, June 2014) on behalf of our client, Ainscough Strategic Land (ASL) (objector ref 0020-1).

Main issue: Is the Plan’s vision and development strategy for the distribution of the District’s objectively assessed housing needs figure of 10,800 justified?

1.2 No, the strategy is not justified and is unsound.

1.3 The Statement should be read in conjunction with the representations submitted to the Core Strategy Proposed Submission (July 2014) along with the Hearing Statements submitted in relation to other matters at this examination. In particular, the Inspector will note the Hearing Statement to Matter C (Housing Need). This provides evidence which demonstrates that Policy CS.16 fails to meet the full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing. This is contrary to the provisions of the NPPF, paragraph 182 which requires plans to be ‘positively prepared’. This is a fundamental flaw of the Core Strategy which renders the Plan unsound.

1.4 In light of the above the Inspector should note, from the outset, our contention that the distribution of development set out in the Vision, Policy CS.15 and CS.16 is unsound. It cannot be considered justified or effective because it is not capable of delivering the housing required in the District over the plan period. It is against this context that the Statement goes on to address the specific questions raised by the Inspector.

1.5 There are aspects of the distribution approach advocated in the Vision, Policy CS.15 and Policy CS.16 that ASL support as sound and sustainable.

1.6 ASL supports a dispersed approach to housing development across the District’s main settlements, under the proviso that the more sustainable settlements (i.e. those with the most services) receive the greatest quantum of development in proportional terms. This approach of ‘balanced dispersal’ across the District in a manner proportionate to the size of individual settlements (and their associated rural catchment areas), coupled their inherent provision of facilities and services sustainability is, in our view, consistent with paragraph 151, NPPF which requires Plans to be “prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development”.

1.7 There is, however, one key aspect of the spatial strategy that has not been demonstrated to be positively prepared, has not been justified as appropriate when considered against reasonable alternatives, is ineffective and unsound. This relates to the identification of a new settlement proposal at Gaydon / Lighthorne Heath for approximately 2,500 new dwellings over the plan period. The Core Strategy states, at paragraph 5.1.16, that “rigorous technical assessment of a wide range of options” has led to the conclusion that the new settlement proposal at Gaydon /
Lighthorne is appropriate for allocation and 'complements rather than replaces the dispersal strategy' (para 7.6.9, Topic Paper). For reasons set out later in this Statement, ASL do not consider that the new settlement has been justified as commensurate with the Government’s objective to deliver sustainable development. Cognisant of this conclusion there is a clear, reasonable alternative to the new settlement which will deliver sustainable development namely the effective application of the dispersal strategy.

1.b) Is the hierarchy of existing settlements in Policy CS15 justified.

1.8 The hierarchy of the existing settlements is broadly justified. Stratford is clearly the largest centre and the MRCs are distinctly larger and more sustainable than the Local Service Villages in terms of access to services.

1.9 However, ASL consider there is a distinction associated with the role and function of the Main Rural Centres (MRCs) of Alcester, Shipston and Southam compared to the role and function of the remaining MRCs, which the Core Strategy should recognise.

1.10 This distinction was specifically highlighted under the vision of the 2010 Draft Core Strategy¹, which stated:

‘The three largest rural market towns of Alcester, Shipston-on-Stour and Southam will each have enhanced their established role at the hub of a wide rural area. They will continue to support a good range of shops and services and have become more accessible by public transport. Further development will have provided homes and jobs in a manner that preserves the distinctive character of each town.

The other larger settlements in the District will have maintained their important role as rural service centres, supported by a modest amount of new housing. At the same time they will have retained their distinctive qualities and be attractive places to live.’

1.11 Policy CS 2 also retained all of the 8 MRCs as MRCs but still made a distinction between the ‘primary centres’ of Alcester, Shipston and Southam as the larger rural market towns and the remaining ‘secondary centres’².

1.12 This distinction is correct in our view. Indeed, it has been highlighted throughout the Council’s retail evidence base, which focuses on Stratford as the main centre and what Colliers describe as the three Main Market towns within the District³.

1.13 There is also a distinction when examining the range of services within the Main Rural Centres as set out in the table at Appendix 1. By and large, the key differences relates to the size and attraction of the town centres and the more comprehensive retail offer within the larger market towns. The larger market towns also typically have more leisure, health and education facilities,

¹ Doc / Page 10
² Doc / Page 26
³ Doc ref / page 26
with each having a secondary school, hospital and leisure centre and a swimming pool of some description.

1.14 Even if the three larger market towns are to be retained within the MRC category, it must be recognised that they should accommodate a greater number of dwellings due to their inherent sustainability.

1.c) Is the balanced dispersal of dwellings between the existing main settlements, in which approximately 25% of dwellings would be built in Stratford, 27% in Main Rural centres and 18% in Local Service Villages appropriate?

1.d) Is there any consensus that this 70% should be allocated to the existing settlements, even if the exact proportions between settlements is not necessarily agreed?

1.e) Of the remainder, does the Plan strike the right balance in seeking to develop a new settlement adjacent to the existing employment site at Gaydon, whilst rejecting a more dispersed pattern, options for sustainable urban extensions and not fully utilising the opportunities in the District to re-use previously developed rural sites?

1.15 In considering the above three questions together, the answer is no. For reasons set out above and below, the GLH site is not sound and in light of this, ASL consider approximately 90% of the District’s housing requirements should be met within or on the edge of the existing key settlements including Stratford, the MRCs and Local Service Villages.

1.16 There is no evidence to indicate that this level of development (including that required from the higher and more accurate OAN figure) is not achievable in and around the existing settlements. Indeed, the Core Strategy and the evidence base does not credibly answer this question. It offers assertions only that further development in the rural settlements would irrevocably harm their character.

1.17 Whilst the Council has produced a high level study in the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, this has only been capable of making broad brush conclusions as to the suitability of areas for development. Inevitably when a finer grained study of particular sites is undertaken it becomes clear that the capacity of settlements to accommodate development is often greater than assumed. This is being borne out in practice as a number of proposals for development across the District are being granted planning permission, on appeal (including schemes at Wellesbourne, Bishop’s Itchington, Hampton Lucy and Welford-on-Avon) where looking at schemes forensically has demonstrated that new development can be accommodated and appropriate provision can be put in place to mitigate impact of development.

2.a) Does the Plan provide sufficient detail over what will be permitted where?

1.18 ASL support an element of flexibility in relation to the amount of development that will be achieved in each of the MRC’s and this is captured by the 810/750 unidentified MRC dwellings in Figure 1. However, it is still considered Shipston’s specific allocation of housing is too low, particularly when compared to the two other large market towns of Alcester and Southam.

1.19 Indeed, Shipston is shown to accommodate 160-200 less dwellings than these two comparable settlements. As a bare minimum, it is considered Shipston’s target should be comparable to
Alcester’s and Southam’s and should certainly be no less than 450 dwellings. However, this does not account for our view that the OAN figure in the submitted Core Strategy is not high enough and therefore Shipston’s target should in fact be higher still.

2.b) Is there evidence to show that the amount of development proposed in the strategic allocations, including in each of the 4 categories of Local Service villages, is justified?

1.20 The amount of development at each location is based on the Council’s original target of 10,800 homes over the plan period. As per the detailed set out in our Matter C statement, we do not agree with this figure and consider it should be higher. Even the Council have recently increased the housing requirement from 10,800 to 11,300 on 1st December 2014, which will need to be accounted for.

1.21 We do not doubt that the amount of development shown in Figure 1 of the Core Strategy can be achieved in Stratford and the MRCs and most of the strategic locations. However, there is a clear lack of evidence and justification for the new settlement at Gaydon / Lighthorne Heath (GLH). In terms of the GLH proposal, it is predicated in some large part on the basis that it is the most suitable and sustainable solution for Stratford. A key reason given for this is the juxtaposition with employment opportunities. This conclusion, in our view, is not sound. It cannot be assumed that a significant number of the new households will be employed on land adjacent to their housing.

1.22 In reality a considerable number of the potential new residents are likely to be employed already and will therefore commute, by car given the very close proximity of the M40, to their existing job. Likewise, the proximity of the M40 is such that existing employees will continue to drive to their existing employer located there. The new settlement will, in our contention, encourage significant car borne commuting to work. This is not, in our view, a location that is commensurate with the Government’s objective that the right development should be provided in the right location. It is not particularly sustainable and will promote longer and less sustainable travel patterns by private car. If the development proposal were directed to alternative locations, including in particular Stratford town the public transport offer is such that people are more likely to use modes of travel other than the private car. In this regard the new settlement proposal is not reasonable when assessed against the reasonable alternative of greater balanced dispersal around the existing settlements.

2.c) Noting the modification proposed as new paragraph 5.2.7, does this require a further modification to parts 1 and 2 of Policy CS15 to refer to the Site Allocations Plan and to part C of Policy CS16 to refer to Stratford on Avon and the Main Rural Centres?

1.23 It is considered the Core Strategy should identify further strategic site allocations within the MRCs. If this is not undertaken, Part C of Policy CS.16 also needs to refer to the Main Rural Centres and Stratford on Avon because 750 dwellings are unidentified for the MRC category (based on the modified Figure 1). These dwellings will need to be identified in a Site Allocations document if permissions or neighbourhood plans have stalled or not progressed sufficiently.
2.d) In the absence of a review of the Plan, how could a change in the status of a Local Service Village, as suggested in part 4 of Policy CS15, be realised?

1.24 No comment.

2.e) How will the Plan quantify the amount of Local Needs Housing that might come forward? Alternatively, given the proposed change to Policy CS16 that refers to at least 10,800 additional homes, is there a need to put a figure on this source of homes?

1.25 ASL do not consider a figure needs to be specified in the Core Strategy for this type of housing. Such needs can alter regularly and frequently and it will be for the Parish Council and/or Neighbourhood Plan process to identify housing needs that exist over and above the housing allocated to each settlement through the Core Strategy and Site Allocations Documents.

3.a) Insofar as the Plan seeks to identify Built-Up Area Boundaries (BUAB), is it justified and effective?

3.b) Is it agreed that any BUABs should include all allocated sites and extant permissions?

1.26 Taking the above two questions together, it is logical that the BUABs should include allocated sites and extant permissions.

1.27 We note that the Council have provided the Inspector with annotated versions of the Local Plan inset maps for each of the MRC’s and Stratford illustrating where these sites and permissions lie. The plan for Shipston is included at Appendix 2 for ease of reference. Amongst other permissions, the plan shows the extent of the Banner Homes permission for up to 70 homes located to the south of Campden Road and to the west of Shipston’s exiting Built Up Area boundary.

1.28 By virtue of the extent of the original Shipston inset plan in the Local Plan, a major extant permission has not been shown or illustrated by the Council. It relates to the former IMI Factory site, which is located just to the west of the inset plan and Cala Homes granted planning consent for over 100 dwellings and just under 1,000 sq m of B1 office floorspace.

1.29 The extent of the IMI site was illustrated on previous versions of the Core Strategy in 2008, 2010 and 2012. The respective plans are provided at Appendix 3, 4 and 5 for ease of reference.

1.30 Within the 2008 and 2010 versions of the Core Strategy, the IMI site, the Banner Homes site and ASL’s land interest located north of Campden Road were specifically allocated as a strategic location for development and within a revised urban boundary area. Within the 2012 version, the overall site is not as precisely identified but is still annotated under sites 3, 4 and 5 and the IMI site is specifically identified as being part of the defined built-up area.

1.31 The most recent layout and landscape plans for the IMI/Cala Homes scheme are included at Appendix 6. They show the proposals will entirely remove existing vegetation on the site frontage to Campden Road and along the boundary with Mouth Farm to the east. As such, the

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4 Document ED1.1g
urban area of Shipston will undoubtedly begin at the western boundary of the IMI site when travelling from the west and the Cala Homes scheme will be clearly visible when travelling up Campden Road from the east.

1.32 In light of these characteristics and the fact the Banner Homes site and the IMI site have extant permissions, it is clearly logical to include the surrounding ‘infill’ land within the BUAB and identify the area as a strategic allocation in the Core Strategy.

1.33 As a final point, it is worth noting that the District Council reconsidered Orbit Homes application located to the south of Shipston on London Road for 55 dwellings and refused it at the 26th November 2014 Planning Committee. This site is shown on the Shipston plan in document and is located in the Area of Constraint. This site should not be illustrated as being located within the BUAB.

4) Does Policy CS15 need to be revised to make clear that the Plan is not proposing a brownfield first approach?

1.34 Whilst Paragraph 111 of the NPPF clearly promotes the efficient use of resources including the use of brownfield land, the NPPF does not stipulate a brownfield first approach or sequential approach to site selection.

1.35 Policy CS15 in the Submission Core Strategy does not appear to suggest a brownfield first approach is being adopted by the Council, which is correct. However, we do note the reference to the use of derelict and vacant brownfield sites being bought back into use within the ‘Vision’ on page 14 and therefore some clarity within policy CS15 may be prudent.

1.36 We reserve judgement until we see the Council’s response to this question.

5) Is it appropriate for part D of Policy CS16 to monitor for over-provision of housing?

1.37 No, The NPPF requires full objectively assessed needs to be met and a continual 5 year housing land supply to be demonstrated. Where the Council have an up to date 5 year housing land supply, the requisite weight can be given to other policies within the plan that seek to protect the open countryside or other protective designations. There is no explicit need set out within the NPPF for the Council to monitor the over-provision of housing.

1.38 Indeed, any FOAN targets set out within the Core Strategy should be regarded as a minimum in the context of the NPPF’s aspirations to maintain a 5 year land supply and to significantly boost housing delivery.

6.a) Why are contingency sites only proposed to be identified in Stratford-upon-Avon and the Main Rural Centres?

1.39 A contingency process for identifying sites should form part of the plan where there is evidence that the required housing delivery is not being achieved. There is also no justification for omitting LSVs from this process. However, the Site Allocations document should not be seen as a contingency document. It will form a fundamental part of the Local Plan to ensure the Council do
meet their requirements. As currently drafted, this part of the Policy suggests the Site Allocations document will only look at MRCs where there is evidence of under-delivery.

1.40 To suggest that this will only be undertaken as a contingency if monitoring shows there to be a significant shortfall is entirely at odds with the approach set out in Figure 1 of the Core Strategy and would run the serious risk of these housing needs not being met.

1.41 Indeed, the submitted Figure 1 in the Core Strategy states 810 dwellings (or 750 as subsequently modified) are proposed across the MRCs but are yet undefined. This is not an insignificant number. As such, other sites will need to be clearly need to be allocated if not identified through the Core Strategy.

1.42 It is suggested that Neighbourhood Plans could do this. However, if settlement targets are left a little opaque by the Core Strategy, there could be a danger that this does not occur. Indeed, through initial discussions, we are aware that the Shipston Neighbourhood Plan Group are not actively looking to identify site allocations. Whilst it is early days and no draft proposals have been published by the Group, the implied stance appears to be on the assumption that Shipston’s Submission Core Strategy housing target (235 dwellings) has already been exceeded and increased to 281 in the proposed modification. Bearing in mind the extent of undefined dwellings for the MRC group of settlements in the Core Strategy, this implied stance could not be regarded as being sound should the Neighbourhood Plan actually proceed on this basis.

1.43 We are also aware that most of the other neighbourhood plan areas are also at an early stage of production and there is no evidence at this stage that sound neighbourhood plans will be promoted and adopted. As such, should the Site Allocations process start in advance of the adoption of any Neighbourhood Plans for the various settlements, it should be the Site Allocations document that looks at addressing the undefined MRC housing numbers in Figure 1, together with any undersupply that may have occurred in the interim.

6.b) **Alternatively is part D of Policy CS16 simply not required on the basis that sustainable development would be brought forward in the event of an undersupply?**

1.44 Part D is not deemed to be required on the basis that where a 5 year land supply cannot be demonstrated by the Council proposals for sustainable housing sites will come forward.
Appendix 1 – Services and Facilities Matrix for Main Rural Centres
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Nos of Dwellings in Fig.1 of Submitted Core Strategy</th>
<th>Alcester</th>
<th>Shipston</th>
<th>Southam</th>
<th>Bidford</th>
<th>Henley</th>
<th>Kineton</th>
<th>Studley</th>
<th>Wellesborne</th>
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<tr>
<td>481</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>387</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modified Proposed Nos of Dwellings in Fig.1 of Submitted Core Strategy</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>392</td>
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<td>Settlement Population</td>
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<td>5000</td>
<td>6500</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>5800</td>
<td>5500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closest Higher Centre</td>
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<td>Stratford</td>
<td>Leamington</td>
<td>Stratford</td>
<td>Redditch</td>
<td>Stratford</td>
<td>Redditch</td>
<td>Stratford</td>
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<td>Miles to Higher Centre</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Constrainted by Green Belt</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
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Appendix 2 - Extract of Document ED 1.1 G (Shipston Plan)
Appendix 3 – 2008 Core Strategy Extract (Shipston Plan)
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Stratford-on-Avon Proposals Map

Scale 1:10,000

To Chipping Campden

To Oxford

To Stratford
Appendix 4 – 2010 Core Strategy Extract (Shipston Plan)
Shipston-on-Stour Proposals Map

- Proposed Development Site
- Built Up Area Boundary Policy CS.1
- Area of Restraint Policy CS.2E
- Flood Risk Area Policy CS.11 © Environment Agency
- Conservation Area Policy CS.14

Scale 1 : 10,000

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Appendix 5 – 2012 Core Strategy Extract (Shipston Plan)
Plan 6: Shipston-on-Stour

Potential Development Options

NOTE: The Potential Development Options are not at this point evidence-based and they are presented for discussion and consultation. There are numerous constraints in planning terms that may affect the viability of the options and these will be subject to subsequent testing.

- Area of Restriction
- Flood Risk Area
- Built-up Area
- Main River
- Trunk Road
- A-Road
- B-Road
- Minor Road

0 0.5 1 Kilometres

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Appendix 6 – Cala Homes Landscape Plans and Layout on IMI Norgren Site, Shipston
**LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located at some distance to the west and east of the site. As such, consideration of the existing woodland boundary treatment is key to the proposals. Retention and reinforcement, where necessary, ensures the integrity of the structural planting is maintained and enhanced.

In particular, infill planting to close up the visual break in the western boundary, identified in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, and reinforcement tree planting to the northern boundary (both of which are supplemented by new hedgerow planting along the woodland edge of these more sensitive boundaries.

A woodland management plan seeks to enhance the boundary treatment further, ensuring sustainable structural planting.

Creation of a sequence of public open spaces provide a green link through the site which increases permeability and connectivity.

The proposal will create an appropriate and robust landscape infrastructure to complement the existing character, sensitively designed to minimise the impact on the surrounding open countryside.

The principles of the landscape strategy are born out of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which was submitted for the outline application.