

Examination of the Plan for Stafford

Development Strategy – Spatial Principle 4 – Housing Growth Distribution

Hearing Statement on Behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd land interests Stone

The following sets out further submissions on behalf Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd in respect of their land interest at Stone and with regard to the issue of housing growth distribution, with specific reference to the key questions and matters relevant to their representations to the emerging Plan which are to be addressed at the Examination.

Relevant Examination Question to Taylor Wimpey Representation

Spatial Principles 4

b. Does SP4 establish an appropriate, effective, justified, sustainable and soundly based distribution of housing growth within Stafford Borough, including the target levels of housing and balance between Stafford (72%; 7,200), Stone (8%; 800), Key Service Villages (12%; 1,200) and other areas (8%; 800)? Is the approach to a moratorium period realistic, appropriate, effective, fully justified and soundly based?

Policy SP4 sets out a distribution of housing growth between Stafford, Stone, Key Service Villages and the Rest of the Rural area. The proposed distribution of growth suggests some 72% for Stafford, 8% for Stone, 12% for Key Service Villages and 8% in the rural area. This moves away from the distribution within the former Local plan which saw a distribution of 78% for Stafford, 17% for Stone and 5% for Key Service Villages.

Actual distribution and delivery has been more greatly accommodated within the Rural Area providing 35%, Stone at 17% and Stafford at 48%.

The role of Stafford as the principal location for growth is supported, however levels of growth need to be sustainable and deliverable over the plan period. There is considerable reliance upon Stafford as the main town to deliver vastly greater levels of housing than it has done in the past and this presents a significant risk to the delivery of the Plan.

The role of Stone is underplayed in the distribution of growth. The plan needs to increase the range and type of housing available and to provide a range of development locations for new homes over the plan period to 2031, including affordable housing to ensure that there is a realistic prospect of full delivery of open market and affordable housing.

Stone is the second largest settlement in the Borough and should be a location for a significant proportion of the Borough growth behind Stafford itself. It contains 12.5% of the population of the Borough compared to Stafford Town which has 42.5% of the Borough's population. It is a sustainable location with services, facilities, employment opportunities as well as transport infrastructure. The plan provides for further employment growth in the town and further housing will support this economic growth.

Growth in housing, employment and retail provision, supported by improvements to local infrastructure including transport linkages, are fundamentally important to the town.

Stone has experienced housing growth in recent years and the level of current commitments appears to be in part justification for only a modest level of housing growth directed to the town and it being phased to the later period of the plan post 2021 – the proposed level of 500 dwellings

and it being back loaded in the plan are objected to. Such a level of development for Stone fails to reflect its status as the principal market town behind Stafford itself.

The Land for New Homes Monitor 2012 suggests that there are currently 287 commitments in Stone (albeit some of these sites have some issues or deliverability and 33 are for C2 care home use). This combined with the proposed 500 dwellings post 2021 would mean a proposed level of growth for Stone of 787 or merely 7.9% of the total of the remaining years of the plan (2013 to 2031). This is a meagre average build rate of only 80 units a year with the first ten years of the plan, Stone only contributing its existing commitments of around 30 units per year. These are disproportionately low levels for a settlement of the size and sustainability of Stone.

By contrast some 72% of the proposed housing growth is being directed to Stafford with the balance in the rural areas including Key Service Villages. Such a balance of provisions is not reasonable and would represent an unrealistic expectation for growth in Stafford, leaving Stone to miss out on the potential benefits of development. It does not provide Stone with its appropriate and balanced share of provision and suggests a significant policy shift from both the previously adopted Local Plan and also evidence of past delivery.

Stafford has never been able to sustain such levels of growth and has always been supported in delivery by some growth in Stone and the rural settlements. Both suggest that Stone can support greater levels of growth and a more proportionate share. The level of growth for Stone directly contradicts all that is stated within the Plan about the sustainability of Stone as a settlement and its suitability and ability to accommodate growth, second only to Stafford.

Even a modest provision of around 15% of the Boroughs total, say 75 dwellings per annum would suggest provision for around 1500 additional dwellings in Stone, taking into account existing commitments, the need to identify around 1200 new dwellings and it is suggested that this is a more appropriate minimum target provision in Stone through the full plan period.

Our objections elsewhere have highlighted a lack of 5 years supply of land for housing and the need for the plan to significantly boost the supply of housing. There has been persistent under delivery within the Borough. A more balanced distribution, promoting some early delivery with varied range of more housing allocations in all areas as well as particularly outside of Stafford town would create a plan which is more deliverable.