



Telford & Wrekin
C O U N C I L

Telford & Wrekin Local Plan

Correspondence with Inspector

Date:

5 September 2016

EiP library document reference:

F2a

1. This note provides a response to the inspector's note dated 1 August 2016. Relevant EiP library document references are quoted in the footnotes below to support the response.

Procedural matters

2. The Council expects the inspector to run the examination on the basis of the **Publication version** of the Local Plan¹ and supporting documents² as these were the documents that were publicly exhibited for comment between January and March 2016.
3. The Council has subsequently prepared a **Submission version** of the Local Plan too with the EiP library³. This track change document incorporates typographical amendments, updates in facts and other minor modifications following the release of the Publication version of the Local Plan that help clarify policies to improve the Plan, overcome objections and thereby reduce the length of the EiP. None of these changes are required for reasons of soundness.
4. The full schedule of modifications is also set out in Appendix F to the Regulation 19 consultation report⁴ which was sent to the inspector as a Word document too. The schedule of modifications is a live document and the Council will continue to update it as the examination proceeds.

Meeting Housing Needs from the West Midlands Conurbation

5. The Council has concluded that it is both inappropriate and unreasonable to accommodate any of the unmet housing need from the West Midlands conurbation or South Staffordshire. The **Submission version** of the Local Plan has been amended at paragraph 1.3.2.3 to reflect this.

¹ D5 and D5a

² D5b and D5c

³ A1 and A2

⁴ A5a

6. Telford & Wrekin Council is mindful of its legal duty to cooperate with the West Midlands conurbation as well as the advice in the PPG and the NPPF on how such cooperation should be conducted. The Council also participates in the West Midlands Combined Authority as a non constituent member. The Council has discharged its duty to cooperate in a positive manner.

7. Paragraphs 178 to 182 of the NPPF direct Councils on how to prepare plans for examination. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states that plans must be, among other things:
 - positively prepared, meeting *“the unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development”*; and
 - effective, *“based on joint working on cross boundary strategic priorities.”*

8. Both the Council’s OAN statement⁵ and its SHMA⁶ demonstrate that, for the purposes of preparing the Local Plan, Telford & Wrekin operates as a separate housing market area. The Council’s evidence of recent migration⁷ also shows that net in migration has occurred largely from Shropshire and the rest of the UK rather than the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA)⁸. On this basis, it is not appropriate or reasonable to plan for any unmet housing need from these areas.

9. The Council’s Duty to Cooperate statement⁹ sets out how the Council has engaged with its neighbours within the GBBCHMA¹⁰ to identify relevant cross boundary strategic priorities. Over this period of engagement, the Council has received various requests from the Black Country authorities and South Staffordshire to accommodate a proportion of Birmingham’s unmet housing need.

10. The last of these - made in March 2016 - was that at least 2,000 Telford & Wrekin of the housing requirement “contribute” towards the housing shortfall in the GBBCHMA¹¹. Officers explored this request and invited their Black Country colleagues to provide evidence to justify it. The Council contends that, as it has not been provided with any substantive evidence that would counter the findings

⁵ C2a-i; pp2 to 7

⁶ C2b-l; p9 and pp22 to 28

⁷ B2a; pp12 to 13

⁸ To be clear, the Council has confined its direct engagement to six of its neighbours in the GBBCHMA – Birmingham, Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire and not all of the HMA participants (eg Bromsgrove, Lichfield and Stratford) but has kept apprised of other initiatives in the HMA through contact with the lead authority at Solihull.

⁹ A6

¹⁰ Comprising Dudley, Wolverhampton, Walsall and Sandwell

¹¹ A6; paragraphs 6.9 to 6.16 and Appendices 2.3 and 2.4

of its OAN statement and the SHMA report, it continues to be unreasonable to be asked to meet the unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities.

11. Notwithstanding this, the Council contends it is both inappropriate and premature for the Black Country/ South Staffordshire to approach the Council before they have completed site capacity studies within their Housing Market Area. This would by necessity considering Green Belt releases especially in South Staffordshire.
12. On a final point on this topic, it is useful to reflect on the South Worcestershire Councils'¹² recent experience of this type of request to accept housing at its recent Local Plan examination. South Worcestershire shares some characteristics with Telford & Wrekin including its distance from Birmingham and its location outside the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area. The same inspector (Roger Clews) examined both local plans concurrently.
13. Inspector Clews was asked to consider whether South Worcestershire should take some of Birmingham's unmet housing need. He concluded that the South Worcestershire Councils were not obliged to do so and nor were they expected to be directly involved in any sub regional Housing Strategy¹³. The South Worcestershire Councils adopted their joint Local Plan in February 2016.

Justification for the housing requirement

14. The justification for the Council's approach is set out in its Technical Paper – Housing Growth¹⁴. The Council's case for a housing requirement of 15,555 homes can be summarised as follows:
 - Peter Brett Associates advised that the Council's OAN is 9,940 homes for the period 2011-2031.
 - The OAN includes a 3% adjustment for vacancy rates, reflecting the data on household spaces set out in the 2011 Census.
 - The Council could legitimately set its housing requirement at, or very close to, the OAN. However, the Council has taken the decision to set a housing requirement that exceeds its OAN. There is no published methodology, either in the NPPF or in the PPG, that sets out how this is to be undertaken. However, the desirability of an uplift comes in part from the need to comply with national policy in the NPPF¹⁵, which directs Councils to provide,

¹² Worcester, Wychavon and Malvern Hills Councils

¹³ Refer Annex 1 (paragraphs 1 to 11) to Inspector's report into the South Worcestershire Local Plan http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SWDP_Inspectors_Report_ANNEX_A_Feb2016.pdf

¹⁴ B2a

¹⁵ NPPF, paragraph 14 (second bullet point)

“...sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change...”, and to ‘...boost significantly the supply of housing...’¹⁶.

- The uplift the Council has adopted may be higher than the uplift applied to other local plans. Nonetheless, the Council considers that it is both deliverable and sustainable.
- The Technical Paper identifies a number of factors that underpin the justification for such an increase. These include: the Council’s pro-growth agenda; the opportunities for development that exist due to the extensive amount of available land, much of which is in public ownership, including up to 148 ha of employment land within the B Use Classes¹⁷; and the desire to reverse the fact that Telford & Wrekin is, and has historically been, a net importer of skilled labour with net out-migration into Shropshire and Stafford. The Council seeks to reverse the outflow of people so that more disposable income is spent in the borough’s centres.

15. The uplift is also justified because it will help deliver additional affordable housing, in line with advice set out in the PPG and evidenced in the SHMA 2016¹⁸. The delivery of more affordable housing would not be possible were the Council to plan for fewer homes by adopting a lower housing requirement.

16. Finally, the scale of the uplift is clearly appropriate given the significant supply of new homes completed since 2011¹⁹ (4,498 dwellings) and from existing, committed sites that already have the benefit of planning permission at April 2016²⁰ (8,787 dwellings). The uplift will allow new sites to come forward with affordable housing included as part of the dwelling mix.

Housing supply and SHLAA

17. The reason why the Council has stated it has 12.9 years’ housing land supply (based on the OAN) is because it has not yet received confirmation from the inspector that planning for a housing requirement of 15,555 homes is a sound policy approach.

18. Assuming that the inspector supports this housing requirement, the Council can show it has 8.24 years’ housing land supply. The calculation is set out below.

¹⁶ NPPF paragraph 47

¹⁷ B1a sets out how the Council expects this to be delivered

¹⁸ C2b-1 and C2b-ii

¹⁹ Centre for Cities report identifies Telford as performing the second best out with regard to housing stock growth in a survey of 63 UK primary urban areas (cities and towns)

<http://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Cities-Outlook-2016.pdf>

²⁰ Data relating to completions since 2011 are set out in E5 and G1, AMR 2016 Housing section

Table 1: Calculation of five year housing land supply based on a housing requirement of 15,555 homes

A	Five year requirement ²¹	4,080
B	Annual rate (A divided by 5)	816
C	Total deliverable housing land supply	6,727 ²²
	Number of years housing land supply	8.24

19. The Council has forwarded separately an update to the SHLAA document. The document is intended solely to update you on the suitability, availability, and achievability of sites as at August 2016.

Gypsy and travellers accommodation

20. The Council has shown in the Technical Paper – Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation²³ that it has made substantial progress in delivering its Local Plan policy target. The Council has more than five years' supply when set against the timescale in the GTAA and the Technical Paper. The Council is obliged only to demonstrate broad locations for future provision thereafter.

21. In this respect, the balance will come from one or more of the following sites:

- An extension to either the Ketley Bank or Lodge Road sites;
- An intensification of the first phase of the Lodge Road site (the density of this site is low due to the presence of historic mineshafts. Geotechnical research would need to be undertaken to see if it could accommodate more housing);
- The expansion of one of the other existing gypsy and traveller sites in private ownership;
- One of the Local Plan housing allocations;
- A windfall site; or
- The development of other land in Council ownership for this purpose.

22. The criteria in Policy HO9 will support appropriate new development including on windfall sites because they have been positively prepared.

23. The Council has complied with its obligation to plan for gypsy and traveller housing.

²¹ Based on a housing requirement-led five year requirement of 816 dwellings per year (778 multiplied by 5 and assuming a 5% buffer)

²² Taken from E4 (Table 4)

²³ B2e