

Local Plan Review Consultation
Forward Planning
Mid Devon District Council
Phoenix House
Tiverton
EX16 6PP



(Representations submitted by email to planningconsultations@middevon.gov.uk)

17th March 2014

Re: Mid Devon Local Plan Review Options Consultation

Introduction

Gladman Developments specialise in the promotion of strategic land for residential development with associated community infrastructure. We understand that the Council are currently inviting comments on the options consultation of the Local Plan Review. This letter is in response to the above consultation and provides Gladman Developments' representations.

The Local Plan review has been undertaken by the Council to ensure the development plans full compliance with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (see context provided by §215 of the Framework). §182 of the Framework establishes the tests of soundness against which the Local Plan will be examined once submitted to the Secretary of State; namely that the plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. It is in consideration of the above criteria that the comments are made by Gladman Developments in this representation. In these representations Gladman will focus our comments upon the soundness of the proposed Housing requirement, development strategy and housing strategy.

Housing Requirement

The plan proposes a housing target of 8,400 dwellings for the plan period (420 dwellings per year). §2.7 of the consultation paper sets out that the housing requirement is established using the districts former RSS figure with an additional 20% applied to account of more recent population growth projections. A new SHMA for the Housing Market Area (prepared jointly with neighbouring districts) is currently in production and will be published later this year. The consultation document makes clear the Councils intentions to amend the Local Plan figure to accord with the findings of the SHMA once published. In this sense, provided that the Council abide by this promise, Gladman find that there is little wrong with the housing requirement as put forward by the Council at present.

That said, given the current gap in the evidence base that is provided by the absence of the SHMA study and the potential impact its results may have upon the remainder local plan's strategy, it is confusing as to why the Council have decided embark on this consultation at this stage, rather than await the study's results.

Gladman understand that the Framework sets out grave implications for local decision making should policies contained within the adopted development plan be found to be in conflict with the Framework (see §215), and that the adoption of a plan found sound provides greater certainty that is beneficial for all in Mid Devon. However, the publication of a document predicated on a housing figure that is likely to change, is a waste of time, effort and resources for all parties involved (especially the Councils planning department).

Development Strategy

Gladman welcome the recognition given by the Council to the sustainable capacity of its rural settlements to accommodate growth by allocating a large proportion of the planned housing requirement beyond that of the identified main settlements of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. This strategy is supported by §28 of the Framework and ID 50-001-20140306 of National Planning Practice Guidance and should undoubtedly form part of the final development strategy for Mid Devon.

Policy S5 attempts to provide assurance of the Councils commitment to the monitoring and full delivery of the Councils housing requirement. Gladman are pleased that the Council have provided a policy to address this. The policy's inclusion is particularly important, given the significant reliance upon the delivery of SUE's (and possibility of a new settlement) in the plan, in order to meet the overall housing requirement.

That said however, Gladman believe that there are two significant shortcomings with the Policy S5 as currently written. Firstly, Gladman believe that the requirement for the Council to act after two years of cumulative undersupply is inflexible and potentially responds too late. Gladman believe that the plan should aim to deliver the residual requirement without delay. Therefore if the plan should under deliver then this should be met within the first five years of the plan by increasing the plan requirement in these years proportionally (the Sedgefield approach). This methodology of monitoring and delivery would ensure that the plan is responsive to needs and problems, and provides a significant boost to housing land supply now, as required by the Framework, instead of putting off the problem for tomorrow.

Secondly, the policy attempts to place a control on sites being permitted when the Council lack a five year land supply. Though the process of proactively forwarding allocations and contingency sites is the correct one to take by the Council behind the scenes, §49 of the Framework clearly expresses that should a local authority fail to demonstrate a five year land supply, relevant policies (such a policy H5) for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. In this context applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The provision made by the policy in this sense is therefore pointless and in conflict with the Framework, and its reference should be removed prior to submission.

Gladman approve of the Councils commitment to allocate land for 10% more dwellings than that currently required. It is our submission that the Council also adhere to this should the SHMA require a higher housing requirement when published. Gladman also add that the Council should allocate a broad mix of sites, in order to provide market choice and ensure that the plan is not too over reliant on the delivery of any one site in a particular part of the plan period. Gladman believe that these

provisions, together with the monitoring strategy outlined above will ensure that the plan is deliverable in full.

Housing Strategy

In applying the policy requirements as set out by Policy S4, the Council must ensure that development viability is protected, to ensure compliance with §173 of the Framework. Gladman believe that all policy requirements must be evidenced by an up-to-date evidence base that is monitored throughout the plan period. Gladman believe that in the implementation of the policy, the Council should be flexible, allowing for developments to take place that cannot deliver these requirements, should it be demonstrated by a robust and well evidenced viability study.

Conclusions

Gladman find that it is critical for the soundness of the Mid Devon Local Plan that the Council undertake a review of the housing requirement (and spatial strategy) following the publication of the new SHMA. Though the much of the spatial strategy is likely to change following this review, Gladman believe that the Council must retain both its approach to rural housing growth and the over allocation by 10%.

Gladman believe that in order for the plan to be considered effective (and deliverable), the Council must ensure that in monitoring the plans delivery, the plan reacts more quickly than currently proposed, meeting any under delivery seen within the subsequent next five years. In the same context, the plan should ensure that policy requirement, are not to arduous to the extent that they prevent development. Requirements set by the plan should be monitored continuously, be supported by an up-to-date evidence base and be flexible by being open to negotiation should an applicant demonstrate that requirements prevent the development from taking place.

I hope you have found these representations constructive, if you require any further information or wish to meet with one of the Gladman team then please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank Mid Devon District Council for the opportunity to comment on this consultation.

Yours Sincerely

Craig Barnes
Strategic Land Team
Gladman Developments

