



# **South Gloucestershire Council Core Strategy EIP**

## **Additional Housing Sites**

### **Hearing Statement on Behalf of Bloor Homes Limited**

**8 February 2013**



## Contents Page

|     |   |    |
|-----|---|----|
| 1.0 | Introduction.....   | 1  |
| 2.0 | Matter 1: Whether the additional dwellings the Council has identified (594) are valid sites which are potentially deliverable in the first five years of the plan period and do not result in double counting of other sources e.g. windfall allowances.....  | 5  |
| 3.0 | Matter 2: The relative merits of various sites at a number of locations including (in no particularly order) Thornbury, Yate/Chipping Sodbury, Severnside and East and North Fringes. Factors to consider include the degree of coherence with the Plan’s vision and spatial strategy, site capacity, deliverability, having regards to constraints including infrastructure provision and transport connections and how effectively the site could be assimilated into the existing settlement pattern. .... | 7  |
| 4.0 | Conclusions .....   | 10 |



## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This EIP Hearing Statement is submitted by WYG Planning & Environment on behalf of our client, Bloor Homes Limited, in respect of its site at Morton Way, North East Thornbury and its joint development site with Sydney Freed (Holdings) at Engine Common, Yate.
- 1.1.2 This Hearing Statement has also been prepared in the context of a joint matters statement that has been submitted by Barton Willmore and agreed between Bloor Homes and other developers.
- 1.1.3 The Inspector will be aware that, in May 2012, our client, together with its joint development partner, Sydney Freed (Holdings), submitted a full planning on land between Iron Acton Way and North Road, Engine Common, Yate for a mixed use development comprising 210 new homes, 3,243 sq metres of new employment floorspace and a new clubhouse for Yate Town Football Club.
- 1.1.4 An appeal on that planning application was lodged on the grounds of non-determination in October 2012 and an Inquiry is due to open on 5 March 2013. The main ground of appeal is the Council's lack of a demonstrable five-year supply of housing land.
- 1.1.5 Bloor Homes Limited also submitted a hybrid planning application in July 2012 for a residential development of up to 300 homes (including full details for a first phase of 109 dwellings) on land at Morton Way, North East Thornbury. An appeal against the non-determination of that planning application was lodged in December 2012 and an inquiry dates is due to be set shortly. Again, the main ground of appeal is the Council's lack of a demonstrable five-year supply of housing land.
- 1.1.6 In respect of the Engine Common appeal, the main thrust of the evidence that has been submitted (a copy of which can be provided to the Inspector should he so wish) is set out below:-
- The starting point in assessing whether the Council has a five-year supply of housing should be either the emerging RS household figures (which are based on recent household projections and were the subject of detailed scrutiny by an independent panel of planning experts and then approved by the Secretary of State based on up-dated household projections) or the CLG 2008 household projections (being the very latest household data from the DCLG). These housing figures must be achieved in South Gloucestershire in order



to meet the full objectively assessed housing needs of the District - something the Inspector has already confirmed would not be achieved by the current Core Strategy housing figure.

- There is a need to address the accumulated shortfall in supply that has emerged each year since 2006 (as advocated in planning appeal decisions). That shortfall is set out in the Engine Common evidence and is re-provided below.

| <b>Housing Figure Source</b>   | <b>Total Requirement in Period 2006-2012</b> | <b>Actual Housing Delivery</b> | <b>Undersupply</b> |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Local Plan                     | 7,104  | 4,987                          | 2,117              |
| Emerging Core Strategy         | 8,100  | 4,987                          | 3,113              |
| Revised Draft RS               | 9,840  | 4,987                          | 4,853              |
| CLG 2008 Household Projections | 9,540  | 4,987                          | 4,553              |

**Delivery of Housing since 2006**

- The method of dealing with such a shortfall should be the 'Sedgefield' method (i.e. the above undersupply should be added to the five year requirement). This is because:
  - Paragraph 47 requires LPA's to boost significantly the supply of housing. To boost significantly the supply of housing land, any previous undersupply should be dealt with now.
  - It rewards failure by allowing those Councils who wish to, to postpone the requirement to meet objectively assessed housing needs, creating an ever bigger shortfall.
  - It has been shown that South Gloucestershire Council has fallen short of its housing delivery requirements since at least 2001 and, indeed, previous local plan undersupply is being carried forward into the next plan period. There is a danger that by not seeking to deal with previously undersupply in the short term, that undersupply will continue to be carried forward, with the potential that it will never be dealt or will continue to worsen (a





position which is clearly the case at South Gloucestershire where that has been persistent under-delivery with previous housing need from the last local plan period needing to be accounted for in the new plan period).

- That the Sedgfield approach is advocated in planning appeal decisions, including an appeal at Dudley Road, Honeybourne, Worcestershire (Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/A/12/2171339) where, at paragraph 36, the Inspector concluded that:-

*"In my view, it is inconsistent with Planning for Growth and the NPPF paragraph 47 to meet any housing shortfall by spreading it over the whole plan period. Clearly it is better to meet the shortfall sooner rather than later. Moreover, if the buffers are brought forward into the first 5 years as in the NPPF, so also should the shortfall. I cannot agree with the Council's use of the residual method. In my view the Sedgfield approach should be used for the reasons outlined."*

- The Council's five-year supply must include the application of a 20% buffer because of the Council's clear record of persistent under delivery over the last 10 years.
- That, following a critical analysis of the Council's AMR sites which are highlighted as contributing to its five-year supply, the Council's potential housing delivery over the next five years will only be 5,915 dwellings, a **reduction of 3,172 houses** in comparison to the Council's predicted supply. This assessment of supply also retains potential delivery on sites that do not have the benefit of planning permission. Removal those sites, which is advocated in a number of appeal decisions given the guidance of footnote 11 to paragraph 47 of the NPPF, would further reduce the Council's five-year supply.
- That this reduction in supply results in the Council only being able to demonstrate a **1.92 year supply** against the Draft RSS and a **2.1 year supply** against the 2008-based CLG Household Projections. Even against the current Core Strategy housing figure of 28,355 (which does not sufficient to meet full objectively assessed housing needs), the Council would only be able to demonstrate a 2.64 year supply. Numerous other five year supply methods (twelve in total) have been tested and the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply against any of them.
- That this reduction in supply is a result of the Council's unrealistic assumptions on development commencement dates and annual delivery rates.



- That there is a need for genuine realism about lead in times and delivery rates on those sites identified by south Gloucestershire Council as contributing towards five-year supply. ,

1.1.7 In terms of the correct level of housing, the emerging RS figures need to be used in the absence of a duty to cooperate, otherwise the housing figures adopted are meaningless, and derived from no cooperation at all. Legal submissions will be made on this point.

1.1.8 Notwithstanding the above, we will provide commentary on the Inspector's questions that he wishes to cover at the additional Hearing Session. However, our evidence shows that it is not just a case of selecting one or two additional sites in order to make up the shortfall in the Council's five-year supply.

1.1.9 The Council's five-year supply is significantly lower than presently outlined in the Inspector's preliminary findings and it will be necessary for the Council to release a number of additional development sites in order to come close to meeting its required five-year supply. Releasing additional sites will also move the Council closer to achieving its full objectively assessed housing needs, as required by the NPPF.





**2.0 Matter 1: Whether the additional dwellings the Council has identified (594) are valid sites which are potentially deliverable in the first five years of the plan period and do not result in double counting of other sources e.g. windfall allowances.**

2.1.1 The starting point, as detailed in the previous section, is that the additional sites identified by the Council come nowhere near to meeting the shortfall in the Council’s five-year housing land supply.

2.1.2 We accept that the additional identified sites do not result in double counting against the Council’s existing windfall figures because all of the additional sites are for developments in excess of 10 units.

2.1.3 However, an element of double counting does exist in the Inspector’s amended Policy CS15 ‘Distribution of Housing’ table where a windfall allowance of 750 is included for the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. Whilst that figure of 750 has not be added to the total overall housing figure of 28,355 units for the period 2006-2027, it has been added to the figure of 8,493 units being predicted to come forward in the five-year period 2012/13- 2016/17. This windfall allowance of 750 units is also included in the Council’s 2012 AMR and distorts the Council’s five-year supply position.

2.1.4 The Council acknowledged in its Position Statement for Matter 8 (EIP Document PSM8, response to question 5) that 150 dwellings should only come forward from 2015/16. A reduction in the AMR figures for new windfall sites must be made as follows:

|  | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | Total in 5-Year Period |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| 2012 AMR                                     |         | 120     | 190     | 220     | 220     | 750                    |
| Revision                                     |         |         |         | 150     | 150     | 300                    |
| Reduction in completions in five-year period |         |         |         |         |         | 450                    |





- 2.1.5 The above assessment of windfall sites alone already increases the need for a further 450 houses to come forward from additional sites as a result of this double counting.
- 2.1.6 In addition, the potential for a further 240 dwellings to come forward on the North Yate New neighbourhood is unrealistic. The Council is predicting that 500 dwellings (at 125 per annum from 2013/14) will come forward on the 'Heron' part of the North Yate New Neighbourhood. Whilst we appreciate that those figures may have been provided by Heron, it is in the interest of such developers to indicate overly ambitious dates for first commencements and to overinflate the potential delivery rates on their site in order to stave off completion. Of particular note, the current 2012 AMR figures predict that 125 dwellings will come forward before March 2014 (effectively in the next year).
- 2.1.7 Outline approval remains outstanding on the 'Heron' site with a resolution to grant required before a S106 can then be completed. Given that the applicant, Heron Land, is not a house builder, following the grant of outline approval, parcels of land will then need to be sold off to house builders and, thereafter, conditions will need to be discharged, reserved matters applications will need to be prepared, submitted and approved and start up infrastructure will need to be implemented prior to any first residential unit completions. The Council's prediction that 125 unit completions will occur in the monitoring year 2013/14 is simply unachievable. First housing completions are unlikely to be seen on the site until the end of the monitoring year 2014/15, in our view, with numbers in that year lower as a result. In the light of this assessment, it is necessary, in our view, for the anticipated delivery figures to be adjusted as set out in the below.

| <b>AMR Site</b>                              | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | Total in 5-Year Period |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| <b>0133-Heron Site</b>                       |         |         |         |         |         |                        |
| 2012 AMR                                     |         | 125     | 125     | 125     | 125     | 500                    |
| WYG Revision                                 |         |         | 30      | 120     | 120     | 270                    |
| Reduction in completions in five-year period |         |         |         |         |         | <b>330</b>             |



- 2.1.8 In terms of adjustments to annual delivery, using the delivery assumptions set out in the proof of evidence for Engine Common, a site of this scale is likely to see three outlets (bearing in mind that the Barratt site at Peg Hill is already envisaged to have 2 sales outlets), with a build rate of 10 dwellings per outlet in the first monitoring year (based on a completions not coming forward until the end of 2014) and a maximum of 40 units per outlet in subsequent years. This is consistent with delivery rates set out in the Barton Willmore joint matters statement.
- 2.1.9 This is just an example of one site included in the Council's five-year supply and which we have highlighted because the Inspector has asked if the additional capacity identified by the Council is 'valid' to count towards five-year supply. In the case of the additional capacity identified at North Yate, it is not a valid source of additional five-year housing land supply.

**3.0 Matter 2: The relative merits of various sites at a number of locations including (in no particularly order) Thornbury, Yate/Chipping Sodbury, Severnside and East and North Fringes. Factors to consider include the degree of coherence with the Plan's vision and spatial strategy, site capacity, deliverability, having regards to constraints including infrastructure provision and transport connections and how effectively the site could be assimilated into the existing settlement pattern.**

- 3.1.1 A number of additional sites are required in order to achieve a demonstrable five-year supply of housing. A list of suitable, available and deliverable sites is set out in the joint representation prepared by Barton Willmore.
- 3.1.2 We note the Inspector's comments on the need for the Council to revisit its sustainability appraisal. We agree that any new sites that are identified as necessary to meet the Council's five-year supply must be suitably addressed in an updated Sustainability Appraisal.





3.1.3 Both of Bloor Homes' sites at Morton Way, North East Thornbury and Engine Common Yate are suitable, available and deliverable in order to contribute towards the Council's five year supply and we briefly comment on the suitability of each below.

### **3.2 Land at Morton Way East, Thornbury**

3.2.1 The Council has already confirmed Bloor Homes' site at Morton Way East, Thornbury as a suitable site to contribute towards five year supply, should it be required.

3.2.2 Thornbury is a sustainable settlement which is capable of accommodating additional growth. Additional development will contribute towards achieving the Core Strategy objectives of providing family accommodation, strengthening the town centre, reducing existing surpluses in local schools and enhancing community facilities and activities.

3.2.3 The site is not located in the green belt and it is not restricted by any of the designations or constraints outlined in footnote 9 to paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

3.2.4 No technical objections have been raised to the planning application that has been submitted to South Gloucestershire Council. The site is located adjacent to existing bus routes and has good cycle and pedestrian links back towards the town centre.

3.2.5 The development does not require any significant infrastructure and, given the advanced position of the planning application, which includes a detailed first phase of 109 dwellings, first housing completions can be achieved on the site in the short term in order to contribute towards the Council's five-year shortfall.

### **3.3 Land between Iron Acton Way and North Road, Engine Common, Yate**

3.3.1 A full planning application on this site, including 210 dwellings, is presently the subject of a planning appeal.

3.3.2 A Statement of Common Ground between our clients and the Council has been submitted to the Inquiry Inspector in which it is confirmed that the following matters been satisfactorily dealt with as part of the planning application submission:





- Landscape impact;
- Impact on protected trees;
- Impact on the Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI);
- Impact on residential amenity;
- Drainage;
- Ecology;
- Design;
- Employment need; and
- Archaeology.

3.3.3 Indeed, there are very few matters which remain in dispute, with the focus of the Inquiry being whether the Council is able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply rather than any technical objections to the planning application. In essence, the present position on that appeal demonstrates the suitability of this site to be released for housing where a five-year supply cannot be demonstrated.

3.3.4 Yate is a sustainable settlement which is capable of accommodating additional growth. The development will provide both housing and employment to provide a broader employment base in Yate. The statement of common ground confirms that there is no dispute on employment need.

3.3.5 The site is not located in the green belt and it is not restricted by any of the designations or constraints outlined in footnote 9 to paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

3.3.6 The development does not require any significant infrastructure and, given the advanced position of the planning application, which was a full planning application for all 210 dwellings, first housing completions can be achieved on the site in the short term in order to contribute towards the Council's five-year shortfall.





## 4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1.1 The evidence which has been submitted in respect of the Engine Common appeal demonstrates that, when considering a range of potential housing figures and delivery scenarios, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. Indeed, there are significant shortfalls in the Council's five-year supply.
- 4.1.2 It is clear that there is a need to release a number of additional sites in order to make up the five-year housing land supply shortfall.
- 4.1.3 Whilst a number of additional sites identified by the Council will be capable of contributing towards five-year supply, the Council's housing figures already includes an element of double counting on windfall sites and the additional capacity identified at North Yate is a wholly unrealistic assumption of the delivery that will be achieved from that site in by 2016/17. There are many other examples of wholly unrealistic developer assumptions in the Council's five-year supply.
- 4.1.4 Both of Bloor Homes' sites at Engine Common, Yate and Morton Way, North East Thornbury are appropriate and sustainable locations in which to make an important contribution to both housing need and economic growth. Both sites are at an advanced stage in the planning application process and will be available and deliverable to contribute towards housing needs in the short term.
- 4.1.5 Both sites can be developed without compromising the key objectives of the Council's Core Strategy or planning principles of the NPPF. The Council has already offered its in principle support for the release of Morton Way should it not be able to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing and the statement of common ground in respect of Engine Common confirms that there very few reasons why that site should not be released for development.

