

REPRESENTATIONS TO THE SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE EXAMINATION
MAY 2013

This information is provided on behalf of Sevenside Distribution Land Ltd (SDLL) to assist the Inspector with his approach to the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy housing land supply position.

Further Main Modifications

Pegasus Group does not wish to repeat its previous representations and therefore concentrates only on the matters raised by the further main modifications.

Policy CS15

The approach taken to Policy CS15 is fundamentally flawed and is not sound. This is best highlighted by reference to the Engine Common Appeal Decision attached at Appendix SDLL1 which is fundamental to the Core Strategy process.

Appendix SDLL1 - APP/P0119/A/12/2186546 - Land between Iron Acton Way and North Road, Engine Common, South Gloucestershire

Although dismissing the appeal for other reasons, the appeal Inspector has:

- Clearly and with reasoned justification favoured the Sedgefield Approach in calculating the 5 year land supply, following other similar appeal decisions, over the Liverpool approach favoured by the Core Strategy Inspector. This is fundamental to the housing provision proposed in the Core Strategy and must be addressed to avoid legal challenge;
- Fundamentally and with reasoned justification questioned the ability to deliver housing over the first 5 years on a number of major strategic housing sites, including;

- Emersons Green (GHQ and Gateway);
 - Land south of Douglas Road; and
 - Land south of Filton Airfield;
- Resolved that as a result of the above South Gloucestershire Council does not have a 5 year land supply and 'reached the view that the Council is being overly-optimistic regarding the number of dwellings that it anticipates would be provided within the next five years. The number of new homes that are likely to be delivered would, in all likelihood, be very much lower than the quantum the Council requires under the provisions of the Core Strategy PMM';
 - Put very simply the appeal Inspectors decision, having considered detailed evidence that the Core Strategy Inspector has not given the opportunity to be examined, is that the housing provision proposed in CS15 will not be delivered and therefore South Gloucestershire Council does not have a 5 year land supply. The proposed further modifications do not address this and in fact compound the problem.

The evidence presented and accepted at appeal highlight that the graph and supporting text to Policy CS15 are fundamentally flawed.

The Engine Common appeal decision is fatal to the approach taken by the Core Strategy Inspector to the calculation of the 5 year housing need in South Gloucestershire, to draft Policy CS15 and to the Core Strategy itself.

In considering this, Pegasus will be grateful if the Inspector will bear in mind how much each stage of the Core Strategy process costs the development industry, land owners and interested parties: Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent to produce a Core Strategy that is clearly now open to successful challenge.

Pegasus was almost a lone voice at the last Examination session in asking for the Core Strategy to be found sound, based upon our strong belief in a plan led system. However, in view of the fundamental differences between the Core Strategy Inspectors approach to housing supply and that clearly now accepted at appeal, even in South Gloucestershire, and the lack of full and open consideration of the deliverability of sites to meet the 5 year land supply, one can only reach the conclusion that the Core Strategy is not sound and will be subject to successful challenge if it proceeds.

In light of the attached appeal decision, which fundamentally differs from the approach taken to calculate the 5 year housing land requirement in the further proposed main modifications, one can only conclude that the Core Strategy is not sound.

It would be fundamentally wrong and contrary to the advice of NPPF for a Core Strategy to be found sound that clearly does not deliver a 5 year land supply. The Core Strategy process must not be used to reduce the supply of housing land below what is required to meet need and demand, but must address both need and demand to boost significantly the supply of housing and remedy the unsatisfactory consequences that arise from a persistent under delivery of housing.

NPPF puts a system in place, which came fully into force on 27th March 2013, to ensure that housing supply is increased if a 5 year supply cannot be provided through the development plan system. This is part of the planning system and will deliver homes in South Gloucestershire to meet need and demand.

In addition to the above, the decision to add windfall provision to the last 5 years of the plan period is not justified and removes the flexibility windfall provision delivers to the process. NPPF supports the use of windfall provision in calculating a 5 year supply, but this is very different to using windfall as an excuse not to allocate sufficient land to meet need.

NPPF, paragraph 154, advises that only policies that provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal should be included in the plan: Policy CS15, by allowing 2,250 homes to be dealt with as windfall, provides no indication on how to respond to development proposals as one cannot know what windfall proposals will be made.

Paragraph 156 of the Framework requires strategic policies to deliver the homes needed in the area: This cannot be guaranteed when a very large proportion of such proposals are dependent upon windfall provision.

Relying on windfall provision to such a huge extent is not planning positively, is not succinct, will not proactively deliver the homes the area needs, will not help meet the objectively assessed needs for both open market and affordable homes in the housing market area and definitely will not boost significantly the supply of housing.

The only conclusion is that Policy CS15 is not sound.

Revocation of Regional Strategy

Pegasus Group is of the opinion that the revocation of Regional Strategy has little impact on the need for homes in South Gloucestershire. Need should be met in full in accordance with NPPF, which requires LPAs to have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should prepare a SHMA to assess full housing needs, to meet household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change, to address the need for all types of housing, and to cater for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand.

RPG10 did not accord with NPPF and therefore did not assist in ensuring that supply was sufficient to meet need and demand for housing. Its revocation therefore does not impact upon the production of the Core Strategy.

ONS Household Projections

The DCLG 2011 based household projections were published on the 9th April 2013.

Pegasus has reviewed the 2011 based DCLG household projections and has noted that the overall projection from 2011 to 2021 is 12,226 households.

Extrapolating the 2011 based DCLG household projections forward to 2027 from 2021 (1,226 households per annum) results in a total household increase of 19,562 households between 2011 and 2027.

The projections are predicated upon rates of household formation over the last 5 years, during a period of significant economic recession. It was also during a period where South Gloucestershire Council freely admits it has under provided homes, resulting in a need to provide 5 years plus 20% provision during the next 5 years.

However, extrapolating the 2011 based household projections forward beyond 2021 simply assumes that recession based trends seen over the past five years continue, including:

- An undersupply of new homes compared to need;
- Increased overcrowding and concealed households;
- Asking prices remaining out of reach of first time buyers;
- Slowdown in household formation rates due to young households being unable to access the housing market;
- Restricted mortgage finance putting the brakes on the market; and
- Low economic growth, as opposed to economic recovery sought by central Government and the West of England LEP.

The 2011 based household projections therefore assume that the formation of new households remains restricted, as seen over the past five years due to both the impacts of the recession and a historical undersupply of new homes.

The continuation of such trends over the next 14 years will result in an increase in concealed households (e.g. young adults living with their parents), overcrowding, worsened affordability for all sectors, a decreasing labour force and restricted economic growth. As soon as economic recovery begins to take hold, the recessionary constraints on household formation will be unlocked, rendering the 2011-based projections meaningless.

Taking the 2011 household projections at face-value is not therefore an appropriate evidence base upon which to plan for housing and jobs growth over the next 14 years. As required by the NPPF, demographic and household projections should be considered alongside other indicators of need, demand and affordability within the housing market area (as discussed in detail by this paper).

It is worth noting that the average per annum increase in households projected by the DCLG 2011 based projections for the West of England is still closer to the Draft RSS Panel Recommendation targets than emerging Core Strategy targets for the West of England.

Bristol is the only West of England Authority with an adopted Core Strategy housing target, which was adopted before publication of the NPPF. The Bristol Core Strategy Inspector accepted that the Core Strategy housing target would not meet identified housing needs within the Authority, however, due to its constrained boundaries, the only way this need could be met is by urban extensions extending into the other West of England Authorities:

"household projections, housing needs and greater ambition or optimism regarding economic growth point to a higher housing figure than the Council

expects to deliver, but land supply is a very real constraint within the city boundary.... The only way that substantial additional housing pressures could be accommodated would be via urban extensions in the Green Belt and these would largely be beyond the city's boundary, as was proposed in the emerging RSS."
 (Paragraph 50-52 of the Bristol Core Strategy Inspector's report)

This statement was made before the introduction with the duty to co-operate and represented simply good planning practice. It is fully in accordance with NPPF and is what we should be seeking to achieve across the West of England today and into the future.

It is therefore clear that the other West of England authorities, including South Gloucestershire, should be planning to meet not only their own needs, but also those of Bristol. Whilst the Core Strategy was evidently submitted prior to the need to apply the duty to co-operate, this is required by paragraphs 157 and 159 of the NPPF. Not to apply the NPPF is not a sound approach.

Table 1: Comparison of DCLG 2011 based household projections with emerging Core Strategy and RSS targets for the West of England authorities

	DCLG 2011 household projections	Core Strategy*	Draft RSS	Draft RSS Panel Recommendations
BANES	439	415	775	940
Bristol	2050	1,530	1,400	1,500
North Somerset	1450	700	1,300	1,338
South Gloucestershire	1223	1,845	1,150	1,650
WoE	5161	4,490	4,625	5,428

*The only adopted Core Strategy target is in Bristol. LP shortfalls for BANES (1,169) and South Gloucestershire (1,150) are excluded as they do not meet need from the current plan period.

NPPF, paragraph 159, requires that the Core Strategy caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand. The assessment of demand must take into account the latest information on demand for all types of housing, including affordable housing, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes: This the Core Strategy simply fails to do.

Affordable housing need is being met in accordance with the 2009 joint SHMA, which was based on evidence from 2008 and earlier. This SHMA does not address open market housing need, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families or people wishing to build their own homes. It therefore is not in conformity with NPPF.

This matter has recently been considered by the Bath and North East Somerset Core Strategy Examination Inspector, who has quite rightly concluded that using evidence contained within the SHMA is not sound. The Inspector advised that the Core Strategy would not be sound without the production of a new SHMA that is currently the subject of public consultation. It would not be sound to apply NPPF to the Bath and North East Somerset Core Strategy but not to the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy.

The West of England (WoE) Authorities have commenced the preparation of a joint replacement SHMA, publishing the Joint Production brief in March 2013 attached at Appendix SDLL2, which is currently available for comment on the LEP web site. The SMHA results will not be available until 2015 and will feed into the other WoE Authorities Local Plan reviews scheduled for 2016. South Gloucestershire Councils proposed review, if it does proceed, is not scheduled until 2021 which will continue the lack of continuity across the housing market area. We have previously argued that if NPPF is to be ignored and full housing needs are not to be met by the Core Strategy, a review is must proceed in line with the remainder of the housing market area and take place in 2016.

**Appendix SDLL2 - West of England Strategic Housing Market
Assessment review - Pre-production Brief - Consultation March 2013**

In a similar case to South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset, planning inspector Anthony Thickett confirmed in a letter dated 22nd April 2013, attached at Appendix SDLL3, that North Warwickshire Council's SHMA, produced in 2008, *"cannot be said to be up to date"* and that *"The passage of time has a bearing on how reliable data is and the robustness of the projections, studies and assessments using that data"*.

**Appendix SDLL3 – Letter dated 22nd April 2013 from Anthony Thickett
BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI Dip RSA to North Warwickshire Borough Council**

The inspector also said that the economy and the housing market have changed significantly since the SHMA was prepared, adding: *"I do not consider that it provides an adequate basis on which to objectively assess the housing needs of the borough"*.

North Warwickshire is similarly due to commission a joint SHMA with neighbouring authorities but the inspector said he was concerned about the timetable for this joint work and thus could not rely upon it.

The Inspector further stated that *"A plan which cannot be shown to be seeking to meet the objectively assessed needs of an area cannot be sound and, consequently, I do not consider that it would be appropriate to defer housing matters to an early review of the Core Strategy."* This inspector clearly agrees that a proposed early review to meet housing needs does not conform to NPPF. He concluded that he did not see how he could conclude that the plan is based on a strategy which seeks to meet the objectively assessed needs of an area in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

It is vitally important for the credibility of the planning system, and to avoid legal challenge, for Inspectors to be consistent in their approach.

Core Strategy Policy CS20 is the only provision made for older people, which is again based upon the out of date and insufficient SHMA. The SHMA itself was based upon South Gloucestershire Council's 'Strategy for Older People' February 2008, which set a strategy only for the period 2008 to 2012 and has not been updated. The Core Strategy therefore clearly does not even attempt to meet older person's needs, is based upon out of date evidence and is not in accordance with NPPF.

There is also no attempt to assess the needs of people with disabilities, of service families, especially those working in the significant Abbey Wood establishment, or of people wishing to build their own homes. At a time when people are living longer with disabilities and where the government has launched the Self Build Initiative, it cannot be in accordance with NPPF and therefore sound to proceed with a Core Strategy that simply ignores them.

The new household projections should be assessed against up to date evidence of need and demand, neither of which are available in South Gloucestershire. Assessment of the projections alone do not assist the Core Strategy process, but simply highlight its significant failings due to the fact that all of the evidence base is massively out of date.

The most recent household projections highlight the harm that has been caused by the under supply of homes. To adopt a Core Strategy that will restrict housing supply to a recession based rate up to 2027 will prolong the recession and restrict growth throughout the period. There is no method of forcing South Gloucestershire Council to review the Plan at an earlier date, under identical circumstances they chose not to review the recently revoked Structure Plan and North Somerset Council has already resolved not to review their Core Strategy notwithstanding statements within it that they will do so.

The only thing the projections alone demonstrate is the impact of continued and persistent under supply of housing in South Gloucestershire.

At a time when the growth of the economy is vital and a NPPF core planning principle is to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development by delivering the homes the country needs, which will require us to boost significantly the supply of housing, it is not sound to adopt a Core Strategy that plans to extend the recession in South Gloucestershire and the West of England Housing Market to 2027.



Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 5, 6, 11, 12 and 15 March 2013

Site visit made on 14 March 2013

by Neil Pope BA (HONS) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 8 April 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/A/12/2186546

Land Between Iron Acton Way and North Road, Engine Common, Yate, South Gloucestershire, BS37 7LG.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Bloor Homes Limited and Sydney Freed (Holdings) against South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref. PK12/1751/F, is dated 21 May 2012.
 - The development proposed is a mixed use development comprising 210 new homes, including 73 affordable units; 1,329 square metres of new office space (Use Class B1); 1,914 square metres of employment units for light industrial use (Use Class B1c) and/or warehouse and distribution (Use Class B8); a new club house and car park for Yate Town Football Club (totalling 352 square metres); and associated infrastructure.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission is refused for a mixed use development comprising 210 new homes, including 73 affordable units; 1,329 square metres of new office space (Use Class B1); 1,914 square metres of employment units for light industrial use (Use Class B1c) and/or warehouse and distribution (Use Class B8); a new club house and car park for Yate Town Football Club (totalling 352 square metres); and associated infrastructure.

Procedural Matters

2. Within its Statement of Case the Council informed me that had it been in a position to determine the application, planning permission would have been refused for the following reasons:
 1. *The application site falls outside both the Engine Common village and Yate and Chipping Sodbury settlement boundary, as defined on the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Proposals Map, and is not allocated for development within the emerging Core Strategy. As such it lies in the open countryside and therefore is contrary to Policy H3 and Policy E6 of the adopted South Gloucestershire Local Plan. Furthermore, the proposals would result in the expansion of Engine Common, out of scale with the current settlement, and would unacceptably alter the function of Engine Common as a village, and as such the proposals are contrary to the location strategy and spatial development policies CS5 and CS34 of the emerging Core Strategy.*
 2. *The site lies outside any housing or employment allocations in the emerging Core Strategy, as such, the correct mechanism for consideration of this application should be through the democratic, plan led process, which has now*

- reached an advanced stage. To grant planning permission now would be premature, contrary to the plan led system and undermine public confidence in that system.*
- 3. The proposal is unacceptable in highway terms as it would result in an over-reliance on outward commuting of cars because of the limited provision of public transport and poor access to higher education and employment. The contributions offered and the limited scale of development would not provide a change in the current public transport provision. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy T12 of the adopted South Gloucestershire Local Plan.*
- 4. The proposed scheme does not accommodate the forecast growth in the area and would result in sub-standard traffic conditions on the adjoining local highway infrastructure, and as such, does not take into account overall changes in patterns of movement in the general area arising from the North Yate New Neighbourhood. As the proposal is contrary to Policy T12 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan.*
- 5. The proposed scheme would result in a sub-standard highway junction interfering with the safety of all road users and the safe and free flow of traffic and is therefore contrary to Policy T12 of the adopted South Gloucestershire Local Plan. As the proposal is contrary to Policy T12 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan.*
- 6. The application is not supported by an agreed S106 planning obligation, which requires the provision of affordable housing on site, and in this respect is contrary to Policy H6 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan.*
- 7. The application is not supported by an agreed S106 obligation which requires the provision of appropriate Category 1 sports facilities and on-site equipped and unequipped play and maintenance thereof and in this respect is contrary to Policy LC8 of the adopted Local Plan.*
- 8. The application is not supported by an agreed S106 obligation which requires provision of community facilities and in this respect is contrary to Policy LC1 of the adopted Local Plan.*
- 9. The application is not supported by an agreed S106 obligation which requires provision of library services and in this respect is contrary to Policy LC1 of the adopted Local Plan.*
- 10. The proposed diversion of footpath LIA21/10 would harm the amenity of this recreational route and in this respect is contrary to Policy LC12 of the adopted Local Plan.*
3. The appellants and the Council have agreed a Statement of Common Ground (SCGT) on transport matters. Within this SCGT it is agreed that the scheme would include provision to overcome the Council's 'deemed reasons for refusal' numbered 3, 4 and 5 above. There is also agreement in respect of another Statement of Common Ground (SCG). Appendix B to the SCG includes plan reference 2996-002/C. This shows a revised route for a footpath diversion across the site. Both main parties agree that this revised route would address the Council's tenth 'reason for refusal'. A separate Addendum to the SCG sets out the preferred positions of the main parties regarding housing land supply.

4. At the Inquiry I was presented with a completed planning obligation (agreement) under the provisions of section 106 of the above Act. This obligation includes financial contributions towards the cost of various highway/transport measures, library provision and off-site public open space, as well as a mechanism for delivering some affordable housing on the site. The Council informed me that this agreement¹ would overcome its 'deemed reasons for refusal' Nos. 6, 7, 8 and 9.
5. As part of the appeal the appellants have submitted a number of revised plans². In essence, these relate to amendments to the proposed layout and some of the proposed house types. The appellants have undertaken a process of consultation in respect of these amendments, including statutory consultees and neighbours. I understand that no responses were received in respect of these revised plans. The Council informed me that it had no objection to these amended plans being considered as part of the appeal. I also note from the letters of representation that were made to the Council at 'application stage' that some local residents are concerned by the principle of the proposed development rather than the detailed aspects of the layout and design.
6. Having regard to good practice³ and the Wheatcroft judgement⁴, the scheme is not so altered by the revised plans as to materially change the proposed development. Moreover, the Council, consultees and interested parties have been given adequate opportunity to comment upon the amendments. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the plans considered by the Council at 'application stage' as amended by plan reference 2996-002/C and those plans that comprise Appendix 1 to Mr Richards's proof of evidence.
7. At the start of the Inquiry I was asked to make a ruling in respect of the Council's rebuttal evidence. On the final sitting day I sought the views of both main parties as to whether or not the Inquiry should be closed in writing to allow for the receipt of the Core Strategy Inspector's further findings that were due to be published on 18 March 2013. I agree with the appellant that this would be likely to result in the parties seeking to present further evidence, including recalling witnesses and cross-examination. This would considerably delay the determination of this appeal and create uncertainty regarding other housing appeals in South Gloucestershire. I therefore closed the Inquiry on 15 March 2013, in accordance with the Inquiry timetable.
8. In addition to the above accompanied site visit, I viewed the site and surroundings, on my own, on 4 March 2013.
9. At the Inquiry an application for an award of costs was made by the appellants against the Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

10. The two main issues are: firstly, whether there is a shortfall in the five year supply of housing land within South Gloucestershire and the implications for the adopted and emerging spatial strategy, including public confidence in the plan-led system and; secondly, the effect upon the character and identity of Engine Common.

¹ As the appeal is dismissed on the substantive merits of the case it is not necessary to look at the agreement in more detail as the scheme is unacceptable for other reasons.

² Included as Appendix 1 to Mr Richards's proof of evidence

³ Planning Inspectorate Good Practice Advice Note 09 'Accepting amendments to schemes at appeal'

⁴ Bernard Wheatcroft Ltd v SSE [JPL, 1982, P37]

Reasons

11. The development plan includes the Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10), the Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire Joint Replacement Structure Plan (SP) and the South Gloucestershire Local Plan (LP). All three plans were adopted many years ago and the SP and LP were intended to guide the development and use of land up to 2011. (RPG10 covers the period up to 2016.) No party relies upon the housing requirement figures of the development plan to support its case. (The LP housing requirement covered the period 1996-2011 and was based on household projections from the 1990s.)
12. The appeal site lies outside the settlement boundaries for the village of Engine Common and the town of Yate, as defined in the LP. The most relevant development plan policies to the determination of this appeal are 'saved' SP policy 2 (the locational strategy) and 'saved' LP policies H3 and E6 (residential and employment development in the countryside). The appellants accept that the proposal conflicts with these LP policies. The spatial strategy includes locating new housing and employment facilities within and adjacent to the main urban areas and protecting and enhancing the character of the countryside.
13. The South Gloucestershire Core Strategy (CS) was submitted for Examination in March 2011. The Examination was initially suspended by the CS Inspector to allow for the submission of Post Submission Changes. Hearing sessions were subsequently held in June and July 2012 and the CS Inspector published his Preliminary Findings and Draft Main Modifications in September 2012. The Inspector's initial conclusion is that the Core Strategy is capable of being made 'Sound' subject to a number of Proposed Main Modifications (PMM). The PMM have been subject to a further hearing session that was held on 7 March 2013. The most relevant policies to the determination of this appeal are CS5 (location of new development), CS15 (distribution of housing) and CS34 (rural areas).
14. The CS has reached an advanced stage of preparation. However, there are unresolved objections to the housing requirements, including the means of addressing the shortfall in the delivery of housing that accrued during the LP period. My attention has been drawn to legal opinion, obtained by some house builders, which argues that the housing requirement of the PMM, if adopted, could be susceptible to challenge. Moreover, the CS Inspector has not yet found the CS to be 'Sound'. The CS carries moderate weight in this appeal.

Housing Land/Spatial Strategy/Public Confidence

15. Both main parties agree that within South Gloucestershire there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing. As a consequence, and in accordance with the Government's objective to boost significantly the supply of housing⁵, it is also agreed that a 20% buffer should also be applied to the Council's five year supply of deliverable housing sites. However, there is disagreement between the main parties over the housing requirement for the CS period 2006-2027⁶, the means of addressing the housing shortfall up to 2012⁷, as well as the deliverability of sites. The Council's preferred position is

⁵ Paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework')

⁶ The Council has argued that this should be 28,355 new homes, as set out in the CS Inspector's Draft Main Modifications to CS policy CS15, whereas the appellants argue that the requirement should be 32,800 new homes, as set out in the former Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Strategy (RS).

⁷ The appellants argue that the 'Sedgefield approach', based on research commissioned by the Department of Local Government and Communities and set out in the 'Land Supply Assessment Checks' report 2009, should be

that it has a 5.13 years supply of housing (5.02 years supply if based on the CS Inspector's PMM) whilst the appellant's preferred position is that the Council is only able to demonstrate a 1.58 years supply.

The housing requirement

16. It is by no means certain that the CS will be found sound or that the CS Inspector will reason that 28,355 new homes is sufficient to meet the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area. The appellants have also drawn my attention to other appeal decisions where the draft RS Proposed Changes housing figure has been preferred. These include two recent Secretary of State decisions in another part of Gloucestershire (Refs. APP/F1610/A/12/2165778 and 2173305). However, the circumstances of these other cases are different to the situation before me. The South Gloucestershire CS is at a more advanced stage and each case must be determined on its own merits. These other decisions do not set a precedent that I must follow.
17. The appellants' housing supply witness agreed that a fair reading of the Note of 10 January 2013⁸ was that the CS Inspector appeared to have settled on a housing requirement of 28,355 but had concerns over the Council's ability to provide a five year supply of housing land. If, for the purposes of this appeal, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply against this housing requirement then it follows that it would be unable to demonstrate a five year supply under the draft RS Proposed Changes. It would therefore only be necessary for me to determine the appropriateness of using the appellants' preferred housing requirement or the Government's 2008-based Household Projections if a five year supply exists under the CS PMM requirement for 28,355 new homes.

The means of addressing the housing shortfall up to 2012

18. When assessed under the LP housing requirement, there was a surplus in the supply of new homes in South Gloucestershire during the period 1996-2001. However, since 2001 there has been a deficit. Both main parties agree that over the period 1996-2006 there was a shortfall of 1,150 new homes. It is also agreed that if the above noted CS PMM housing requirement is used for the period 2006-2012, there is a further shortfall of 3,113 new homes. This results in a total shortfall of 4,260 new homes up to 2012.⁹
19. There is no policy document or guidance which advises against a residual ('Liverpool') approach to addressing shortfall rather than the 'Sedgefield approach' of front-loading this within the first five years of housing land supply. However, the Council's 'hybrid' approach, which it argues would involve tackling about 60% of the shortfall within the first five years, appears at odds with the CS Inspector's PMM. This supports the appellants' concerns that the Council is 'cherry picking' the PMM. If the Council's argument for assessing the five year supply of housing land on the requirement for 28,355 new homes is to have credibility then a higher annualised provision is required than contained within its preferred position.

used instead of the Council's 'hybrid' approach whereby 60% of what it considers to be the accrued shortfall would be provided during the next five years.

⁸ 'Additional Housing Sites' - matters to be explored at the CS Hearing session on 7 March 2013

⁹ The shortfall is very much greater if the draft RS Proposed Changes or the Government's 2008-based Household Projections are used instead

20. There is a greater weight of evidence before me, including the findings of the Inspector who determined a mixed use development in Worcestershire (Ref. APP/H1840/A/12/2171339), to indicate that the 'Sedgefield approach' is more closely aligned with the need to boost significantly the supply of housing and remedy the unsatisfactory consequences that arise from a persistent under delivery of housing. I share the appellants concern that the Council is failing to adequately address the very substantial shortfall that accrued up to 2012.
21. As I have noted above, the Council's figures, based on a higher annualised provision over the first five years, reveal a 5.02 years supply of housing. However, this includes a site at Thornbury, which is the subject of a separate outstanding appeal (Ref. APP/P0119/A/12/2189213). This by itself is an admission that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply against the PMM. Nevertheless, even if this site at Thornbury is included as a deliverable site, the Council's assessment reveals a surplus of only 42 new homes over the five year period. There is very little margin for error or slippage in the Council's predicted delivery rates on the sites it has identified.

The deliverability of sites

22. Paragraph 47 of 'the Framework' requires a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing. Footnote 11 of 'the Framework' advises that to be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. This does not mean that sites without planning permission should be excluded from a calculation of supply figures. Moreover, whilst agreeing with the appellants that a calculation of supply based upon projecting past delivery rates forward could save much time at inquiries, Footnote 11 suggests that analysis of particular sites may be required. However, that is not to say past delivery rates should be ignored as this is evidence of what has been achieved.
23. The Council's 2012 Annual Monitoring Report reveals that the annual delivery rate in South Gloucestershire over the last six years is significantly below the annualised provision in the Council's assessment of the five year supply of housing land under CS policy CS15. The economic downturn occurred in 2008/9 and the Council's Major Sites Team has been in existence since 2008. Whilst this Team works closely with house builders/developers in an attempt to deliver much needed housing, the evidence on past completions suggests that the Council is being very optimistic in the amount of housing it expects to be delivered over the next five years. In this regard, only a very small number of the new homes that were due to be provided on allocated sites within the LP were delivered during the LP period. I also note the appellants argument that a return to a period of strong economic growth is still a long way off.
24. There is much disagreement between the main parties as to the numbers of new homes that are likely to be delivered on some sites during the next five years. In the very competitive house building industry, I would be unsurprised if house builders/developers sought to gain an advantage over a rival by either 'talking up' the delivery rates from an allocated/preferred site in order to retain the support of a Council and/or cast doubt on the predicted delivery rates of a competitor so as make another site in the same area appear 'less deliverable'.
25. The Council appears unquestioning of some of the delivery rates provided by house builders/developers on sites that it has argued would deliver housing

- within the next five years. Its predictions make little, if any, allowance for the effects of competition from different sales outlets operating in close proximity to one another. Furthermore, the rates used by the Council in its assessment take no account of a reduction in completions on some sites following an initial 'spike' in sales caused by pent up demand.
26. Nevertheless, assessing deliverability is not an exact science and it would be unfair to be too critical of the Council's endeavours to ascertain delivery rates. Moreover, whilst average build rates from sales outlets of national house builders is an indication of what occurs throughout the country, such figures are unlikely to be representative of local circumstances and therefore likely to be of only limited value. In all likelihood, the delivery rates on most of those sites identified by the Council would probably be somewhere in between the Council's predictions and the appellants.
 27. However, for the two sites at Emersons Green (GHQ and Gateway), land south of Douglas Road and land south of Filton Airfield, there is more cogent evidence to support very much lower delivery rates than predicted by the Council. Only outline permission exists for one of the sites at Emersons Green which was allocated for housing many years ago within the LP. There are clearly many obstacles to be overcome before new homes can be delivered on these two sites. There are also contradictory emails from those aiming to develop these sites regarding delivery rates. This strongly suggests to me that the Council's predictions, possibly through no fault of its own, are unduly optimistic.
 28. For the land south of Douglas Road (also previously allocated for housing in the LP) a resolution to grant permission was made in 2011, but permission has yet to be issued. A planning obligation has had to be renegotiated on two separate occasions for this scheme, which involves both houses and flats. The evidence indicates that notwithstanding much effort on the part of the Council, viability remains an issue. I share the appellants concerns over the ability of this site to deliver the number of homes predicted by the Council in the next five years.
 29. In 2012 the Council resolved to grant outline permission for development on land south of Filton Airfield. However, that application is the subject of a comprehensive holding objection from the Highways Agency. Given the issues raised by that objection, I am very far from convinced that this will only result in "*slight slippage*" and "*not impact upon deliverability*" as argued by the Council. The appellants' delivery figures appear more realistic for this site.
 30. With much of the evidence on deliverability tested under cross-examination, I have reached the view that the Council is being overly-optimistic regarding the number of dwellings that it anticipates would be provided within the next five years. The number of new homes that are likely to be delivered would, in all likelihood, be very much lower than the quantum the Council requires under the provisions of the CS PMM. The Council does not therefore have five years worth of housing against its preferred housing requirement. As a consequence, paragraph 49 of 'the Framework' is engaged.
 31. The proposed employment development would be located immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of Yate. Both this and the proposed residential development would have convenient access to the highway network and the wide range of other services and facilities available within Yate. In transport terms, the scheme would comprise a sustainable urban extension to the town of Yate. Whilst the proposal would result in the loss of a number of hectares of

countryside, paragraph 49 of 'the Framework' is clear in stating that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The boundaries of the LP are based on housing requirements for the period up to 2011. In this instance, the conflict with LP policies H3 and E6 and CS policies CS5 and CS34 is outweighed by the need to meet immediate housing need and secure an adequate supply of housing land.

32. I note the concerns of the Council that if the appeal site was released for development it could prejudice the CS and undermine public confidence in the plan-led system. However, the proposal represents less than 1% of the housing requirement of the CS. There is also no evidence to show that it would prejudice the delivery of housing on other sites in South Gloucestershire, including the North Yate New Neighbourhood proposed under CS policy CS31. Furthermore, the Council is releasing other land for development prior to the adoption of the CS. I therefore agree with the appellants that if the appeal scheme were permitted it would not prejudice the CS.
33. Some residents would undoubtedly view an approval as a 'departure' from the plan-led system and at odds with 'Localism'. However, the Secretary of State has made it clear¹⁰ that in putting the power to plan back in the hands of communities there is a responsibility to meet the development and growth needs of communities and to deal quickly and effectively with proposals that will deliver homes, jobs and facilities.
34. I conclude on the first main issue that there is a shortfall in the five year supply of housing land within South Gloucestershire and the conflict with adopted and emerging policies and strategies would be outweighed by the contribution the scheme would make towards remedying this shortfall.

Character and Identity of Engine Common

35. Engine Common is a linear settlement with housing on either side of North Road. In addition to a primary school, post office/convenience store and public houses, the village comprises about 100 homes. Bus services and footways provide links to Yate and the southern limits of the village are separated from the north western edge of the town by the width of a road. Nevertheless, Engine Common has its own separate identity with a distinctive pattern of small rectangular fields, some of which extend up to North Road. The unspoilt open qualities of the fields which comprise the majority of the appeal site form part of the attractive setting to the village and are an integral part of its identity.
36. Unlike Yate, Engine Common has a pleasing rural character. I was able to clearly appreciate this during my visits. As noted by the Inspector who considered objections into the LP in 2004, this village has a somewhat fragile, though none the less valuable character as separate from Yate. This is reflected in some of the representations made to the Council at 'application stage', including those made by Save Engine Common Action Group. It is clear to me that many residents of the village cherish the separate identity of Engine Common and its rural charm. I also note from the representations made by Yate Town Council during the CS Examination that it wishes to maintain the separate identity of this village and is opposed to expanding Yate in the manner proposed by the appellants. In responding to the application, Iron

¹⁰ 'Housing and Growth' Ministerial Statement 6 September 2012

Acton Parish Council also expressed concerns over the "*excessive build numbers in a rural area*".

37. The proposed residential development would be set back from North Road. Some agricultural land would remain at the rear of some buildings along the western side of North Road and the western boundary of the site would include a landscape buffer. Much of the existing hedgerows would be retained and there would be green spaces around some of the new buildings. However, this would not disguise the introduction of a very sizeable suburban style housing estate within the countryside that would be characterised by a long curved estate road and perimeter block style development with some parking courts. Whilst this type of design/layout can be successful, in this instance, it would have little in common with the linear form of Engine Common or the scale of existing housing that makes up the village.
38. I share the Council's concerns that the scale and layout of the scheme would amount to an inappropriate 'suburban bulge' at odds with the character and identity of the village. The scale of the development would increase the number of new homes in the village by nearly 200%. Whilst the number of new homes would be lower than the scheme considered by the LP Inspector, existing residents would almost certainly feel swamped by such a large increase in population. Furthermore, if the scheme was permitted, there is likely to be future pressure on the Council to allow additional housing on the fields between the eastern edge of the scheme and the properties along the western side of North Road, which would be difficult to resist. This would result in further cumulative harm to the character and identity of Engine Common. The LP Inspector's recognition of the "*advantages*" of development at Engine Common does not convey tacit support for the scheme before me. Moreover, as I have noted above, a much larger mixed-use development is planned for the north of Yate. Unlike the appeal scheme, this new neighbourhood would safeguard the integrity of Engine Common.
39. The Design & Access Statement submitted in support of the scheme states, amongst other things, that the proposal would be designed to enhance the "*civic heart*" of Engine Common. The appellants have also argued that the proposal would "*knit together existing disparate parts of development that make up the north western edge of Yate.*" Whilst the appellants' urban designer informed me that the scheme was intended to provide a central focus to Engine Common, the creation of a "*civic heart*" and attempts to bind the appeal site with Yate would markedly erode the rural character of Engine Common. The proposal would blur the distinction between Yate and Engine Common and result in this village being subsumed as part of this neighbouring town. The separate and locally cherished identity of the village would be lost forever and the setting of Engine Common would be seriously compromised.
40. I conclude on the second main issue that the proposals would seriously harm the character and identity of Engine Common.

Other Matters

41. I note the concerns of some residents that during periods of heavy and prolonged rainfall part of the site and some of the surrounding roads experience land drainage problems. However, the site is not at risk of fluvial flooding and the proposed drainage strategy, which would include swales, ponds, below ground storage tanks and a surface water pumping station, would

- limit the risk of flooding within the site and in the surrounding area. Neither the Council nor the Environment Agency has raised flood risk objections and this matter could be addressed by way of a suitably worded planning condition.
42. The proposal would change the outlook from some neighbouring properties. However, the buildings would be sited and designed so that they were set back an adequate distance from existing properties, thereby avoiding any serious harm to the living conditions of neighbouring residents.
43. The proposed development would increase the volume of traffic on the local road network. However, the Transport Assessment submitted in support of the application demonstrates that the scheme would not result in any harmful consequences. The development would also include new highway works. The proposals would be unlikely to compromise highway safety interests. Adequate mitigation would also be included to safeguard nature conservation interests.
44. A landownership issue has been raised on behalf of a local resident. However, there is nothing of substance to refute the appellants' argument that the appropriate certificates of landownership were submitted with the application and appeal.
45. The proposal would increase the range and supply of employment premises within South Gloucestershire. This could enhance employment opportunities, including within the construction sector, and would benefit the local economy. In addition, the proposed improvements to the football club would meet the aspirations of some supporters/fans and provide wider community benefits with the clubhouse being available for hire and use by community groups. These matters weigh in favour of an approval.

The Planning Balance/Overall Conclusion

46. I have found above that the Council does not have a five year supply of land available for housing. The scheme would assist in meeting housing needs within South Gloucestershire, including provision for some affordable housing. Jobs and wealth would be created, including within the construction sector, and the improvements to the football club facilities could provide some limited social benefits to the local community. These matters weigh in favour of an approval and it is the Government's priority is to get the economy growing. Nevertheless, this does not override all other considerations.
47. There is an environmental dimension to achieving sustainable development and one of the Core principles of 'the Framework' includes taking account of the different roles and character of different areas. In this instance, the harm that I have identified to the character and identity of Engine Common would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme. The scheme does not comprise sustainable development within the context of 'the Framework' and permission should be withheld. I therefore conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Neil Pope

Inspector

APPEARANCES

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Miss S Ornsby QC Instructed by Miss G Sinclair, Deputy to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services

She called

Mr P Conroy BA (Hons), MSc, MRTPI Strategic Planning Policy and Specialist Advice Team Manager

Miss S Tucker BA (Hons), BTP, MRTPI Principal Planning Officer, Major Sites Team

Miss L Bowry (*spoke during the discussion in respect of the planning obligations*) Solicitor, Sharpe Pritchard Solicitors

FOR THE APPELLANTS:

Mr C Young of Counsel Instructed by Mr J Richards, Associate Director, WYG Planning & Environment

He called

Mr J B Richards BA (Hons), MTP, MRTPI WYG Planning & Environment

Mr G S Rider Director, Tetlow King Ltd

Mr S J Dale Dip LA, CMLI Director, ACD

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Mrs I Rockliffe On behalf of Mr T Stone (local resident)

Mr M Keenan (*Mrs Keenan also put questions to some of the appellants' witnesses*) Save Engine Common Action Group

LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT THE INQUIRY:

Document 1	Inspector's Ruling
Document 2	Mr Conroy's rebuttal and appendices
Document 3	Miss Tuckers rebuttal and appendices
Document 4	The appellants Opening Submissions
Document 5	The Council's Opening Submissions
Document 6	Schedule of Statements of Common Ground
Document 7	Signed Statement of Common Ground
Document 8	Signed Addendum to Statement of Common Ground
Document 9	Errata Note to Mr Conroy's proof
Document 10	Agenda to Core Strategy Hearing Session on 7 March 2013

Document 11	Appendix 20 to Miss Tucker's proof
Document 12	Updated Appendix 2 to Miss Tucker's proof
Document 13	Notes on the Council's Approach to Determining Applications
Document 14	Appendix JR 28 to Mr Richards's proof
Document 15	Table JRT16 to Mr Richards's proof
Document 16	Drainage note from Mr Gwilliam, WYG Engineering
Document 17	Letter dated 6 March 2013 from Moore Blatch Solicitors
Document 18	Letter dated 6 March 2013 from Osborne Clarke
Document 19	Bundle of missing application plans
Document 20	Contents list to Appendix JR20 of Mr Richards's proof
Document 21	Skeleton of the appellant's costs application
Document 22	Email dated 6/3/13 from Barratt PLC to the Council
Document 23	Decision Ref. PT11/1442/O (Park Farm, Thornbury)
Document 24	Appeal Decision Ref. APP/Q3115/A/11/2145037)
Document 25	Appellant's View of Deliverable Supply
Document 26	Actual Housing Delivery Against Requirements
Document 27	Appeal Decision Ref. APP/X1165/A/11/2165846
Document 28	Local Plan policy H1
Document 29	Exchange of emails between Turley Ass. and Taylor Wimpey
Document 30	Highways Agency letter dated 15/11/12
Document 31	List of suggested planning conditions
Document 32	List of properties to be viewed on accompanied site visit
Document 33	Planning Obligation dated 12/3/13
Document 34	Further drainage note from Mr Gwilliam
Document 35	Methodology/Calculations for the planning obligations
Document 36	The Council's Closing Submissions
Document 37	The appellants' Closing Submissions
Document 38	The Council's response to the appellants' costs application

West of England Strategic Housing Market Assessment review

Pre-production Brief Consultation March 2013



Planning strategically
across local boundaries

West of England

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
Somerset
Council

South Gloucestershire
Council

Introduction

1. The National Planning Policy Framework requires local authorities to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). A SHMA is an objective assessment of local housing needs. These assessments should consider housing market areas, and therefore need to be prepared jointly between neighbouring authorities.
2. The West of England Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be an important part of the evidence base to inform the monitoring of core strategy policies. It will inform policy makers of the context of decisions on the quantum of housing to be planned for, the type of housing that is required and where it should be developed to best meet the needs of our local communities now and in the future.
3. The evidence needs to be clear, transparent and inform policy makers of what to plan for to enable the delivery of a sustainable mix of housing that takes account of the full range of housing needs.

Proposed approach

4. The West of England Authorities have worked together formally for many years on consistent housing monitoring, production of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, and the West of England Strategic Housing Market Assessment. However monitoring is an ongoing process and will inform the evidence base and lead to updates of the evidence when appropriate.
5. The Authorities have published this Pre-production brief to set out the proposed approach to undertaking a shared SHMA review.
6. The SHMA is a technical exercise that needs to consider many variables that have complex relationships to one another, across several local authorities.
7. The SHMA project programme will therefore comprise the following workstreams:

Workstream 1	Economic Growth Scenarios
Workstream 2	Demographic Scenarios
Workstream 3	Housing supply and summary outputs from SHLAAs
Workstream 4	Housing needs elements including the needs of specific groups
Workstream 5	Bringing all of these elements together into a final SHMA report.

8. An outline of the scope for each workstream is at appendix 1.
9. It is anticipated that to complete these work streams commissioning of specialist consultants/services will be required. **Any comments or views on the proposed approach as set out in this pre-production brief are welcome. These views will help inform and shape the final brief for the SHMA and the appointment of successful consultants.**

Scope of SHMA

10. It is anticipated that the final SHMA output would detail ranges of housing requirement at the West of England level and at Unitary Authority level, (subject to the chosen consultants approach). Individual authorities will require appropriate evidence to draw on and inform them of how they may determine their sustainable locally derived housing targets, and to make choices based on their own strategic objectives.
11. In this approach it is important to note that the SHMA would not set housing numbers as it is technical work to inform policy rather than set policy itself.
12. However, this will need to be done within the context of the overall requirement at the West of England level and will require effective cross boundary cooperation as required in the Duty to Co-operate.
13. It is also important to note that the Housing Market Area will need to be defined either re-affirming the existing Sub-regional Housing Market Area (as defined in the Regional Spatial Strategy), as still relevant, or evidencing an alternative.

Going Forward

14. The West of England Authorities working with our key stakeholders and partners are committed to reviewing the SHMA to help inform strategic planning. There are practical timing issues, regarding the publication of census information, which will be required to input into any assessment, and the anticipated confirmation of housing allocations in adopted local plans (as current Core Strategies are finalised/progressed).
15. Lord Taylors recent review of planning guidance has also implied that there will be new SHMA and SHLAA guidance (possibly combined guidance), to consider in SHMA preparation.
16. The West of England will continue to work with our neighbouring Authorities to determine the best approach to undertaking the SHMA review.

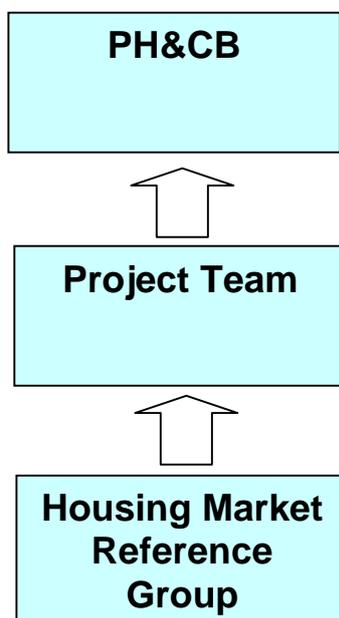
Proposed Programme Timetable

17. It is anticipated that taking into account the practical issues above and any comments received on this pre-production brief, invitations to quote by suitably qualified consultants could be sought during summer 2013. Consultants could be appointed in the early autumn, ready to start on the work streams as data becomes available around October 2013. On that basis interim findings could be available at the end of 2014, with a final draft report anticipated in 2015, which could feed into any update of Core Strategies as appropriate and necessary. The proposed SHMA programme is set out below.

Mar-May 2013	Consultation on a Pre-production brief
Summer 2013	Consider outcomes of pre-production brief consultation , and draft brief for each work stream/commissioning of consultants.
Autumn 2013	Finalise the Brief and identify commissioning arrangements. Commission consultants in principle (and subject to the outcome of the HMA Area boundary), for work streams as required
Spring/Summer 2014	On basis of all data available (2011 Census), work streams commence.
Winter 2014/15	First output (likely interim findings)

Joint working and the duty to co-operate

18. Existing resources and structures will be used where possible. The proposed governance arrangements are set out in the diagram with further detail below:



19. The West of England Planning Housing & Communities Board- will receive progress reports from the project team. Comprises of Executive Members or appropriate representatives from each Authority with the portfolio for Planning and Housing.

20. Project Team: preparation and technical work will be undertaken by a small working group of specialists in housing and planning in the Local Authorities and projected managed by the West of England Office.

21. A Housing Market Reference group – will challenge and act as a critical friend, considering assumptions and methodology to be used in the SHMA review and giving their views to the project team. Invited representation from those bodies listed as statutory consultees in the Localism Act under the duty to cooperate as appropriate e.g:

- Housing/Planning/Economic Development officers UAs
- LEP/Business representation
- Lead SHMA officer of neighbouring authorities
- Lead SHMAA Officer of non –neighbouring authorities.
- Home Builders Federation
- Registered Providers
- Homes & Communities Agency
- Private Landlords
- Economic Intelligence Panel (LEP)

22. Wider stakeholder engagement could take place at key stages of the process through workshops.

This project is a technical piece of work and we have targeted people with direct experience or expertise in this topic area. Comments are also welcome from other interested parties. Comments on the pre-production brief or on the workstream outlines are welcome between March 28th and May 31st 2013. Please send your comments to laura.grady@westofengland.org

Please note we will not be providing individual responses as a matter of course. We will record your comments and will publish our responses when the SHMA review is completed.

Appendix 1: Outlines scope for workstreams for the SHMA review.

The workstreams may be undertaken by one or more consultants, but it is acknowledged that these workstreams will need to be considered alongside each other and the relationships between them clearly analysed to understand how various aspects of the population and our economy will impact on various aspects of housing need.

Workstream 1: Economic growth scenarios	
To commission scenarios (likely to be from 2016 and up to at least 2036 at both UA level and WofE level) to include:	
1a.	Economic Growth measured in Gross Value Added - scenarios chosen could be above and below (OBR) Office of Budget Responsibility projections, and a longer term projection based on historic trends.
1b.	Job numbers/land supply from Core Strategy growth expectations & LEP ambitions
1c.	Possible economic forecasts to allow for how variables may affect the economy as we move forward ¹ as projections will only extrapolate existing trends
Workstream 2: Demographic Scenarios* will require Census 2011 information	
To commission scenarios and forecasts (likely to be from 2016 and up to at least 2036 at both UA level and WofE level) around:	
2a.	Population Projections (including age structure and components of change) (Census 2011 anticipated May 2014)
2b.	Sensitivity testing projections in terms of Migration & Zero net migration*
2c.	Household projections including headship rates (household formation) *
2d.	Workforce and economic activity , including resident workforce, and employment projections*
2e.	Jobs -rates of employment *
2f.	Confirmation of the housing market area – informed by the Census 2011
2g.	Possible locally (UA) derived demographic forecasts given that ONS national projections will only extrapolate existing trends (useful to compare with 2a, anticipated May 2014)
Workstream 3: Housing supply and summary outputs from SHLAAs	
Consistent approaches to defining & summary output tables of housing land supply.	
Workstream 4: Housing needs elements	
Likely to be a modelled approach (with separate information for the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Accommodation Assessment element), which may be undertaken separately but will need to be brought into the SHMA.	
Assumptions taken from above workstreams- economic growth, housing supply and detailed housing data will feed into a modelled approach along with other socio-economic variables which could include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household earnings and incomes • Interest rates and availability of credit, change in the mortgage market • Housing stock, completions, conversions, vacancies, tenures. • Allocations of housing- new supply • Social housing provision by tenure • House prices • Private rental market 	

¹ note that projections will only extrapolate existing trends and therefore do not allow for consideration of how policy interventions or other external factors may affect future positioning.

Examination of the North Warwickshire Borough Council Core Strategy

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 Forward Planning and Economic
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Tel: 01902 696318

By email only

E mail: programme.officer@sstaffs.gov.uk

Date 22 April 2013

Dear Mrs Barratt,

Thank you for your letter of 28 March. As you know the date for the preliminary session to consider whether the Council has met the duty to co-operate has been set for 5 June. I will, through Amanda Willis, provide an agenda for that meeting shortly but my response (below) to the matters raised in your letter of 28 March raises questions regarding whether the Core Strategy should be withdrawn.

As I said in my letter of 22 March, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires evidence to be adequate and up to date. Whilst the 2008 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) may well be proportionate in terms of its breadth and depth (taking into account the circumstances at the time it was produced), due to its age, it cannot be said to be up to date. The passage of time has a bearing on how reliable data is and the robustness of the projections, studies and assessments using that data. The NPPF requires local planning authorities to have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. In addition to the passage of time, the economy and the housing market has changed significantly since the SHMA was prepared and I do not consider that it provides an adequate basis on which to objectively assess the housing needs of the Borough.

I note that the joint SHMA that you are about to commission includes Warwick District Council. Warwick District Council were not party to the 2008 SHMA and the inclusion of this authority would appear to indicate an acknowledgment that circumstances have changed and cast further doubt on the adequacy of the 2008 study.

I am pleased to see that you are working with some of your neighbours to prepare a new joint SHMA but I am concerned regarding the timetable for this work. The Stage 1 Joint SHMA is not due for presentation until January 2014. I note that this exercise will determine overall housing numbers after which you intend to undertake a Stage 2 SHMA with Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby Borough Councils. No timetable has been set for this work.

I am not aware of the circumstances of that led to my colleague's interim conclusions with regard to the Solihull Local Plan. For the reasons given above, I do not see how I could conclude that the Core Strategy is based on a strategy which seeks to meet the objectively assessed needs of an area. A plan which cannot be shown to be seeking to meet the objectively assessed needs of an area cannot be sound and, consequently, I do not consider that it would be appropriate to defer housing matters to an early review of the Core Strategy.

The updated SHMA may show that the Core Strategy meets the needs of the Borough and it may not, leading to a need to revise the plan. Further, there is no indication of when this assessment will be completed. The Planning Inspectorate's Procedure Guidance cautions against suspensions of longer than 6 months. January 2014 is eight months away and that would only take us to the completion of the Stage 1 assessment and there is no indication of when the Stage 2 SHMA would be produced. An open ended suspension is not acceptable, particularly where the results of such a critical study may require significant revisions to the Core Strategy. In light of this, I would urge you to consider the withdrawal of the Core Strategy.

I note that you anticipate that updating the Employment Land Study would take around 4 months. Should you decide to proceed, would you seek a suspension to enable this work to be done? I note that you do not intend to update either the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment or the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Should the examination proceed, we will explore whether there is sufficient available land in the broad locations identified by the Core Strategy to meet the needs of the Borough.

Turning to retail, should we proceed, you may wish to consider whether the evidence base shows that the Core Strategy is based on a clear understanding of business needs, the function and roles of the town centres in the Borough and that it provides an adequate strategic framework to meet your stated aim of *'helping existing businesses with the high streets'*.

I would now ask you to give careful consideration to the next steps for the Core Strategy and to advise me of the chosen path at the earliest opportunity. I do not propose to hold an Exploratory Meeting but am happy to do so should it be considered to be useful to assist the consideration of procedural issues. I will do all I can to help the Council in relation to the way forward, although you will appreciate the restricted nature of my role in this regard and that any advice given is without prejudice.

Yours faithfully

A Thickett

Inspector