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Planning. Design. Economics.

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Dear Ms Huxtable

Wigan Core Strategy Examination: Additional Hearing Session

On behalf of Taylor Wimpey, the following responds to the Inspectors comments, as set out in your letter to Wigan Council of 14 March 2012¹. This indicates that the Inspector has significant concerns regarding the soundness of the submitted Core Strategy [CS] and its effectiveness in delivering housing requirements. In this context, an additional hearing session has been arranged to examine whether CS can be amended to resolve his concerns and the practical and procedural implications of doing this.

The following forms the basis for the representations that will be made on behalf of Taylor Wimpey at the forthcoming hearing session. It provides a view on the steps that the Council may reasonably take, at this stage in the development plan preparation process, in order to address the shortcomings of the CS. It also provides additional comment on the importance of delivering housing at North Leigh.

General Comments on North Leigh

Taylor Wimpey is intending to work in partnership with North Leigh Park Group Limited [NLPGL] to provide certainty on the delivery of the site for housing development.

Taylor Wimpey considers that the delivery of North Leigh is fundamental to the CS housing delivery strategy and can potentially help unlock the regeneration of further land within the east-west core, including the South of Hindley broad location. The identification of North Leigh as a Strategic Site in the CS is therefore strongly supported by Taylor Wimpey. Furthermore, Taylor Wimpey considers

¹ Examination Document EX29



that the failure to identify North Leigh as a firm commitment or to delay progress on the CS unnecessarily undermines the regeneration of the east – west core and the Council's housing delivery strategy.

In respect of delivery, we can confirm that Taylor Wimpey is already working with NLPGL to prepare two separate reserved matters applications for a total of 400 dwellings as the first two phases of development of the site.

These two applications (one accessed from Westleigh Lane and one accessed from Nel Pan Lane) will be submitted shortly after the grant of outline planning permission. The distance between these two developments and differing points of access enable the two character areas to be built and sold at the same time without impacting the rate of sale from either outlet. Taylor Wimpey regularly build and sell houses from more than one location on large development sites and are successfully doing this on a number of sites across the country.

Taylor Wimpey is confident that the phased nature of the North Leigh site over the construction period allows it to be developed with a number of differing character areas and points of sale which will help to achieve a strong delivery rate across the whole site (led by prevailing market conditions).

NLPGL has confirmed that the remediation of the site, provision of necessary infrastructure and creation of development parcels can be achieved within the necessary timescales in order to ensure the successful development of the site in accordance with the broad timescales set out within the CS. It is the record of NLPGL and its parent company in delivering development on contaminated sites in areas requiring regeneration that has led Taylor Wimpey to seek to partner with them to deliver this development.

Taylor Wimpey considers that the CS must provide clear policy support for delivering North Leigh site early in the plan period to allow for the substantial reclamation and remediation of this site. The former mining and industrial uses of the site mean that it requires remediation (including treatment to mineshafts, the former sewage works, former scrap yard and landfills). Taylor Wimpey considers that certainty over the planning status of the site is essential at an early stage in order to secure the significant commitment needed to remediate the site and stimulate wider housing delivery in the east-west core of Wigan.

Shortfall of Housing Land

As a broad matter of principle, Taylor Wimpey agrees with the fundamental concern expressed by the Inspector that even if North Leigh is delivered early in the plan period as required, the CS will not realistically provide for the delivery of housing requirements in Wigan. Taylor Wimpey has set out its position in this respect in its written statements and representations at the hearing sessions on Matters 1, 4 and 7b. These representations stand. Furthermore, it is stressed the importance of the CS providing clear policy support for the delivery of North Leigh early in the CS period above.



Addressing the Shortfall

The Inspector has invited comments on the potential options for addressing the shortfall in housing supply. Specific comment is invited on the following:-

- 1 Safeguarded land in the East Lancashire Road Corridor;
- 2 Safeguarded land elsewhere, for example Standish;
- 3 Release of Green Belt land; and,
- 4 Other options.

The detailed representations made by Taylor Wimpey on Matters 1, 4 and 7b demonstrate that:-

- 1 The most appropriate means of addressing the shortfall, in compliance with the broader CS strategy, is to bring forward additional land in the East Lancashire Road broad location around Golborne.
- 2 Whilst there is Safeguarded Land on the edge of Standish (and other smaller settlements), the locational characteristics of Golborne and the strength of its housing market mean that it is the most appropriate location for growth, in order for strategic housing requirements of the plan to be met.
- 3 The CS must provide a strategic framework to support the release of the broad locations within the East Lancashire Road Corridor (i.e. Rothwells Farm, Stirrups Farm and Pocket Nook Lane), in a phased manner throughout the plan period, in order to meet housing requirements. In this context, it has been demonstrated that:-
 - a The CS must provide specific policy support for the release of Rothwells Farm and Stirrups Farm early in the emerging plan period, with Pocket Nook Lane phased for delivery later in the plan period depending on the delivery of the sites within the East-West Core; and,
 - b There are constraints associated with delivering housing at Pocket Nook Lane due to fragmented ownership, infrastructure constraints and mitigation required to address environmental impacts.

Subject to sufficient land being identified in the East Lancashire Road Corridor as suggested through the representations, and South of Atherton being brought forward for development (as proposed by the Council), Taylor Wimpey considers that it is possible for the shortfall in housing supply to be addressed, without releasing Green Belt land or other Safeguarded Land elsewhere in the borough.

For clarity, it should be noted that notwithstanding the above comment, Taylor Wimpey does not agree with the projected delivery rates suggested by the Council for South of Atherton, for the reasons set out in its Further Comments in Respect of Matter 4².

² Examination Document WS72 [§3.7-3.8]



Additional Work Required

Taylor Wimpey considers that in order to comply with the provisions of the NPPF [§155] and regulations³ on plan making, the Council should undertake additional engagement with the local community and key stakeholders. This should invite comment and seek support for the necessary revisions to CS, which should specifically support the development of all of the 'site options' in the East Lancashire Road Corridor around Golborne and the land at South of Atherton for housing development.

The Council would have to review and update its Statement of Community Involvement to reflect the additional engagement requirements associated with taking forward changes to the CS.

Procedural Implications

The position of Taylor Wimpey is that the solution to addressing the shortfall of housing land is for the CS to provide a clear strategic framework for all 'site options' in the East Lancashire Road Corridor to be brought forward for housing. It must provide specific policy support for the early release of Rothwells Farm and Stirrups Farm and provide a mechanism for bringing forward additional land at Pocket Nook Farm later on in the plan period. Taylor Wimpey also accepts that specific support should be provided for housing development at South of Atherton (as proposed by the Council).

Taylor Wimpey considers that the changes required to address the shortfall clearly accord with the spatial strategy of the CS [Policy SP1], which seeks to:-

- 1 Direct the majority of development towards the east-west core of the borough;
- 2 Deliver housing growth in the south of the borough to complement the east-west core; and,
- 3 Generally restrict development elsewhere in the borough (i.e. in Standish, Aspull, Shevington, Orrell and Billinge) to redevelopment opportunities and small scale sites.

Changes (as suggested through representations) will be required to other policies of the CS, in particular Policy SP4, which will need to include reference to South of Atherton and provide specific policy support for housing development on all sites in the East Lancashire Road Corridor (including the early release of Rothwells Farm and Stirrups Farm). However, Taylor Wimpey submits that the suggested changes will not:-

- 1 Undermine the role of the east-west core and the policy position relative to other areas of the borough;
- 2 Materially affect the spatial strategy or the broad approach to the distribution of housing requirements;
- 3 Materially affect the CS approach to Safeguarded Land; or,

³ The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008



- 4 Result in individual settlements or particular parts of the borough being affected differently, in particular those outside of the east-west core.

On this basis, Taylor Wimpey considers that the nature and extent of changes required to the CS, in order to address the shortfall of housing, are not so significant that they require the withdrawal of the document. Rather, it is considered that the recommended changes can appropriately be made to the CS in order to provide an effective strategy for the delivery of housing requirements. As indicated above, these should be subject to further engagement.

As a final point, Taylor Wimpey considers that the requisite changes to the CS must be undertaken as quickly as possible to avoid unnecessary delay to its adoption and any consequent delay to bringing forward the North Leigh site and the required sites in the East Lancashire Road Corridor for growth. Any such delays would be wholly counterproductive to the delivery of much needed housing delivery in Wigan. They would also create uncertainty for the community as well as for house builder investment plans. A situation of 'planning by appeal' is also likely to arise from the policy and development management vacuum.

If I can of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Michael Watts
Director

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