

The Club Company Ltd

**Warwick District Local Plan Examination:
Stage 2 Hearing**

**Matter 7d: Policy DS11 and DS 3 Proposed
housing site allocations – Growth Villages
and Hockley Heath**

**Site H37 - response to Local Plan
Inspector's questions**

August 2016

Matter 7d: Site H37 Car Park East of The Hayes, Leek Wootton – response to Inspector Ward’s questions

- 1.1 This short Statement responds to the list of questions posed by the Local Plan Inspector Mr Kevin Ward in relation to each of the proposed housing allocations proposed within and adjoining the District’s ‘*Growth Villages*’, as identified in the Submission Draft Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Statement has been prepared by The Club Company Ltd which is the owner of proposed ‘*Housing Site H37 Car Park East of The Hayes*’ and the adjoining golf and country club known as ‘The Warwickshire’.
- 1.3 The Club Company’s response to each of the Inspector’s questions as they apply to Site H37 is set out below:

1) What is the current planning status of the site?

- 1.4 The site has a long-established planning use as an informal car park and was already used as such when The Club Company purchased The Warwickshire in 1997. The car park is clearly shown as being in existence in the 1999 Google Earth aerial view, confirming that it has been in existence for the 10 years required to evidence lawful use. To the best of our knowledge, the lawful use of the land as a car park has never been in dispute.
- 1.5 However, the car park is too remote from the Health Club building, which lies approximately 150 m to the west, to serve as a practical location for parking for club members. Moreover, for security and control purposes, The Warwickshire’s parking needs to be behind the barrier-controlled access system which controls exit and entry into the main car parking area. We also highlight that planning permission W/16/0852 has also recently been granted for the extension to, and reconfiguration of, the main car park to provide an additional 70 parking spaces. The informal parking area which is proposed Site H37 is therefore no longer required for the operation of The Warwickshire.
- 1.6 Although the car park site is used on a casual basis by dog walkers, this is only on a permissive basis by dog walkers with no established right.

2) How does it fit within the overall spatial strategy?

- 1.7 The overall spatial strategy proposed in the Submission Local Plan is set out in Strategic Policy DS 4 ‘*Spatial Strategy*’ and provides for a distribution of new housing across the District to a variety of sustainable locations, including larger villages. Whilst we understand that the District Council will be submitting a detailed Statement in support of the overall strategy, we highlight that the village of Leek Wootton is a sustainable location for additional growth as it benefits from facilities such as a primary school, recreation ground, public house, an extensive range of leisure and health activities at The Warwickshire, regular bus services and easy access to the strategic road network.

- 1.8 Paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also confirms that the principle of sustainable development includes consideration of the 'social role' that new development can play in supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities.
- 1.9 Given that the H37 proposal involves redevelopment of a previously-developed site in a location opposite the primary school, adjacent to the health and leisure facilities at The Warwickshire and close to the bus services along Warwick Road, we consider that the proposed allocation would contribute towards a sustainable pattern of development and is so consistent with the Local Plan's overall spatial strategy.

3) In addition to housing provision, are there other benefits that the proposed development would bring?

- 1.10 As well as delivering much-needed new housing, we consider that sensitively-designed housing with judicious landscaping and retention of the trees along Deansway (the internal access road to The Warwickshire) would be an improvement to the featureless and rather unattractive existing car park.

4) What are the potential adverse impacts of developing the site? How could they be mitigated?

- 1.11 We consider that the site currently makes little contribution to the character and appearance of the area. This view would appear to be supported by the fact that we understand from the District Council that no representations have been received against the proposed residential redevelopment of the site.
- 1.12 As previously noted, whilst the site is used on a casual basis by dog walkers, this is only on a permissive basis by dog walkers with no established right. However, if the local planning authority and / or the local community considered it desirable, a small number of 'pull over' parking spaces could be provided by The Club Company for public use (dog walkers, visitors to the school etc) on land opposite the H37 site. However, we consider that this matter could be considered as part of a detailed planning application for the site and is not one which is fundamental to the principle of the site's allocation in the Local Plan.

5) Is the scale of development proposed compatible with the capacity of the village to accommodate further growth in terms of its character and appearance, the level of services and existing infrastructure?

- 1.13 This question would appear to be most relevant to some of the larger site allocations proposed in Policy DS 11, as the development of five dwellings at Site H37 would be of such a modest scale as not to be incompatible with the existing character and appearance of the village or local infrastructure requirements.

6) What are the infrastructure requirements / costs and are there physical or other constraints to development? How would these be addressed?

- 1.14 There are no infrastructure constraints to delivering the development. The site is flat, level and easy to develop.
- 1.15 The site could be accessed either directly from Deanway or via the existing access point.
- 1.16 A foul drain runs just to the east of the site and there is also a second drain which runs across the company's land opposite the allocation site. There are therefore no constraints to the provision of adequate foul drainage for any new development.

7) Is the site realistically viable and deliverable?

- 1.17 As stated in relation to question 6), there are no constraints to the deliverability of the site.

8) What is the expected timescale for development and is this realistic?

- 1.18 In the event that the proposed residential allocation is confirmed in the adopted Local Plan, The Club Company would be looking to submit a planning application for residential development as soon as possible, certainly within the first year after adoption.

9) What would the effect of the proposal on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt?

- 1.19 Our comments in relation to the five purposes of Green Belt designation listed at paragraph 80 of the NPPF are:
- *To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas:* the site is previously-developed land, the development of which would not result in the visual extension of the village, being to the rear of existing development and not visually prominent.
 - *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another:* the proposed development would not threaten the merging of towns, with the key area of sensitivity being the need to maintain separation between the village and Kenilworth to the north.
 - *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment:* the site is not open countryside, nor does it make any contribution to the quality of the local countryside or read as part of the local rural landscape.
 - *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns:* the site lies distant from the village's designated conservation area and will therefore have no impact on its setting;

- *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land.* Development of the site would involve the recycling of under-used previously developed land and would therefore be consistent with this purpose of Green Belt designation.

1.20 We therefore consider that the allocation of Site H37 would not undermine any of the five stated purposes of Green Belt designation.

11) Are there exceptional circumstances which justify altering the Green Belt? If so, what are they?

1.21 Part g) of Policy DS 4 of the Submission Local Plan states that the following factors will be taken into account in considering whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify new development within the Green Belt:

- *the availability of alternative sites outside the Green Belt;*
- *the potential of the site to meet specific housing, employment needs that cannot be met elsewhere;*
- *the potential of the site to support regeneration within deprived areas; and*
- *the potential of the site to provide support to facilities and services in rural areas.*

1.22 Applying these considerations to proposed Site H37, we note that the whole of the village is currently 'washed over' Green Belt. There are therefore no available non-Green Belt sites for any new development which is to meet the housing needs of the village. Moreover, the site itself makes little contribution to the purposes of Green Belt designation and offers the opportunity to provide visually discreet new housing in a sustainable location in close proximity to the key element of village community infrastructure, the All Saints' Church of England Primary School.

Summary

1.23 The proposal represents re-use of a previously developed site in a sustainable location which would help maintain the viability and vitality of Leek Wootton. The site is visually unobtrusive, easy to access and free from development constraints and would not adversely affect the setting of the village or its conservation area. We understand that the proposal has not received any third party objections and we respectfully contend that the proposed Site H37 is justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy.