

WARWICK DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2011-2029

MATTER 7D: Proposed Housing Site Allocations – Leek Wootton

STATEMENT BY GARY STEPHENS, MARRONS PLANNING ON BEHALF OF: BLOOR HOMES LIMITED (BHL) (11532/7678)

This Statement relates solely to Proposed Housing Site Allocations H34, H35 & H46 (DS NEW 3) at Woodcote, Leek Wootton

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

1. The spatial strategy within Policy DS4 states that sites which have a detrimental impact on the significance of heritage assets will be avoided unless the public benefits of development outweigh the harm (criteria e). It also states that areas assessed as high landscape value will be avoided (criteria f).
2. DS NEW 3 is a designated heritage asset. Woodcote House is a Grade II listed building, and its parkland grounds are a locally important historic park and garden described by the Council as important in landscape terms, and of local or regional importance¹. Woodcote also overlaps with the Leek Wootton Conservation Area², and although the boundary of DS NEW 3 has been drawn to exclude the Conservation Area, it forms an important part of its setting.
3. In response to representations made to the Publication Draft Local Plan, an assessment of the impact of the proposed housing site allocations (H34, H35 and H36) on the setting of the heritage assets was undertaken by the Council (HE06) in accordance with Paragraph 129 of the Framework.
4. The evidence concluded there was harm to the significance of the assets, most notably the loss of an important view between Woodcote House and the Conservation Area across open parkland (one of the few remaining open aspects retained within the grounds of the House) and resulting in a change to the whole

¹ Paragraph 5.181 of the Publication Draft Local Plan

² Paragraph 2.1.1 of HE06 – Woodcote House – The Setting of Heritage Assets

experience of Woodcote House when arriving at East Lodge to the front of the house itself³.

5. Proposed Modification 10 replaces H34, H35 and H36 with DS NEW 3. This increases the proposed allocation from 21 to 115 dwellings, but removes any detail as to where the dwellings will be located within the heritage assets. No assessment of the impact of DS NEW 3 on the significance of the heritage assets has been produced by the Council contrary to Paragraph 129 of the Framework, and inconsistent with its approach to other proposed allocations in the Plan. The Council instead appears to rely on HE06 as its supporting evidence.
6. In the absence of any evidence other than HE06, it can only therefore be concluded that DS NEW3 is likely to have a similar detrimental impact on the significance of the heritage assets.
7. Policy D4 (criteria e) requires an assessment as to whether the public benefits of development outweigh the harm, and the benefits of new housing are noted in HE06 (although not specified). There would be public benefits from the delivery of new housing at Woodcote, although it is noted from the wording of the proposed policy DS NEW 3 and its supporting text that policy requirements may render development unviable. This implies that public benefits, such as affordable housing, may not be delivered to the same extent as other less constrained sites. The landowner makes similar references in their representations.
8. In any event, the public benefits of housing could equally be achieved on alternative sites within the village. Development of those sites would not have a detrimental impact on the significance of heritage assets, and therefore the weight to be afforded to the public benefits of new housing at Woodcote is diminished in this context and not sufficient to outweigh the detrimental impacts referred to above.
9. The Inspector will be aware that there are a number of alternative sites around Leek Wootton that are outside of its historic environment, including land north and south of Hill Wootton Road⁴ promoted by Bloor Homes Limited which has been the subject of representations.
10. It is therefore concluded DS NEW3 does not fit with criteria e and f of the spatial

³ Paragraph 5.1 of HE06 – Woodcote House – The Setting of Heritage Assets

⁴ Sites R54 of HO12 SHLAA Rural Areas Part One May 2014 & R118 of HO13 SHLAA Amendments July 2014

strategy.

11. In terms of its performance against the other elements of the spatial strategy, DS NEW 3 does adjoin the built up area of Leek Wootton, and would not lead to coalescence of settlements, and so accords with criteria b and d. Exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the alteration of the Green Belt boundary within the District through the review of the Local Plan, and therefore criteria g is met. Although DS NEW 3 is in part previously developed, it does not fall within an urban area and therefore criteria a is not relevant.
12. In overall terms, the conflicts with criteria e and f are significant and also represent a conflict with national planning policy. Notwithstanding the site's location adjacent to a sustainable village, DS NEW 3 does not fit with the overall spatial strategy.

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

13. The Council have not provided any evidence (other than HE06) as to the potential adverse impacts of DS NEW 3 on heritage, or whether they could therefore be mitigated. The evidence within HE06 is that there will be potential adverse impacts of developing Woodcote in relation to heritage and these cannot be satisfactorily mitigated in order to avoid harm.
14. It is evident from the Plan's approach to Woodcote that the Council has not given great weight to the asset's conservation, and has not provided any evidence showing a clear and convincing justification for the harm likely to be caused contrary to Paragraph 132 of the Framework. DS NEW 3 is not therefore consistent with the Framework, is unsound, and should be recommended for removal from the Plan.