



North Warwickshire Local Plan Examination Phase 1 Hearings Position Statement

Matter 4: Strategic approach, distribution of
development and justification

Introduction

- 1.1. This Position Statement has been prepared by Fisher German on behalf of Mr Ralph Arnold & Mrs Rosemary Bell, landowners of proposed housing allocation site H25 (Land south of Shuttington Village Hall).
- 1.2. Positive Pre-Application Advice has been obtained from the Council in respect of residential development on the land south of Shuttington Village Hall and a planning application is currently being prepared.
- 1.3. Consideration has been given to Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 which states that the policies of the previous Framework will apply for the purposes of examining plans, where those plans were submitted on or before 24th January 2019. This is the case with the North Warwickshire Local Plan, which was submitted in March 2018.
- 1.4. A number of issues and questions have been raised by the Inspector in relation to Matter 4. However, in the interests of our Clients, this Statement will focus specifically on issues 4.7 and 4.9.
- 1.5. Finally, in respect of the Inspector's question at 4.6, "*Is the settlement hierarchy justified and consistent with national policy?*", please refer to the response set out in respect of 4.7 a) and b).

4.7 – LP Paragraph 1.7 explains that the settlement hierarchy is based on ‘an assessment of the services, facilities and sustainability of the various settlements’.

a) Where is that assessment set out specifically?

b) Is each settlement correctly categorised?

- 1.6. Document CD6/3B of the Local Plan Examination Library (Settlement Sustainability Assessment) appears to be the Council's most up-to-date evidence in respect of the sustainability of settlements in the Borough. It is noted that this document is dated January 2010 and therefore predates the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012.
- 1.7. Paragraph 158 of the NPPF 2012 requires that the local planning authority ensure that the Local Plan is based on “adequate, **up-to-date** and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area” (emphasis added). Given the age of the Settlement Sustainability Assessment, it is considered that this cannot be described as being ‘up-to-date’ evidence, especially as no further commentary has been provided by the Council in respect of whether the assessment still provides an accurate representation of the sustainability of the Borough's settlements.
- 1.8. Notwithstanding this, the settlement hierarchy as per the Submission Local Plan seems appropriate for use and reflects the sustainability of settlements in North Warwickshire.
- 1.9. In respect of Shuttington, which is identified as a Category 4 Settlement (Other Settlement with a Development Boundary), this village still continues to benefit from the following services and facilities:
- Village Hall & Playing Field
 - Village Supermarket/Convenience Store
 - Public House
 - Place of Worship
 - Auto Repair/MOT Garage
 - School Bus Service to Newton Regis Primary School
 - Regular Bus Services to Tamworth Town Centre

- 1.10. However, the 2010 Settlement Sustainability Assessment could be updated to consider the relationship the villages in the Borough have with one another and indeed with the larger settlements nearby.
- 1.11. This approach would conform with Paragraph 55 of the NPPF 2012 which states that “*to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, **development in one village may support services in a village nearby***” (emphasis added).
- 1.12. In terms of Shuttington, this is located in close proximity to the smaller villages of Seckington (approx. 1.8 miles/4 min car journey away) and Newton Regis (approx. 2.2 miles/ 5 minute car journey), each of these villages, which also benefit from their own services and facilities, are considered to benefit from a functional relationship with Shuttington. One example of this relationship is the school bus service which runs between Shuttington and Newton Regis C of E Primary School. As a result of development taking place in Shuttington, it is therefore anticipated that additional children residing in the development will help to ensure the continued sustainability of the School. Equally, the Four Shires Farm Shop in Seckington (open till 6.30 pm on weekdays), will continue to benefit from customers from Shuttington. Whilst new homes in Shuttington will also continue to benefit from the day to day services in the village too.
- 1.13. The Settlement Sustainability Assessment could also reflect the functional relationships that villages in the Borough have with nearby urban centres. In the case of Shuttington, this lies very close to Tamworth (approx. 5.1 miles / 11 min car journey away). The village already benefits from good public transport links to the Town Centre, for example, the 785 bus service, which connects Shuttington with Tamworth Town Centre Bus Interchange, provides morning services at 7:04, 7:41 and 7:54 which all arrive into Tamworth before 9 am. Additionally, evening bus services at 17:25 and 18:25 from Tamworth to Shuttington enable ‘9 to 5’ commuters from the village to utilise public transport to and from Tamworth Town Centre. At present, it is considered that this high level of connectivity with Tamworth is not adequately reflected in the scoring attributed to the village within the 2010 Settlement Sustainability Assessment.
- 1.14. Overall, it is considered that even with the suggested updates to the Settlement Sustainability Assessment to enable it to comply with the NPPF 2012, the village of Shuttington remains a sustainable settlement, suitable for housing growth.

4.9 – Is the approach to site allocations overly reliant on the allocation of larger sites to the detriment of supporting thriving rural communities?

- 1.15. As previously detailed, paragraph 55 of the NPPF 2012 recognises that new housing in rural areas can enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. We wish to highlight that this is particularly the case in Shuttington, which, in addition to having a good number of existing day to day services and facilities within the village itself, also benefits from a functional relationship with services in nearby villages and indeed with Tamworth. As such, the proposed allocation of the land south of Shuttington Village Hall is considered to be a positive action towards supporting the village to thrive.
- 1.16. Policy LP39 – Housing Allocations proposes to allocate land for a total of 6,821 dwellings in the Borough. Of these 6,821 dwellings, 4,552 are proposed to be delivered at three strategic sites at Atherstone (H2), Polesworth (H7) and adjacent to Tamworth (H13). These three large sites alone represent 67% of the total number of dwellings that the Council are currently proposing to allocate.
- 1.17. 67% is clearly a large percentage and shows that the Council are relying heavily on the delivery of these strategic sites in order to meet the Borough's housing needs.
- 1.18. Paragraph 50 of the NPPF 2012 states that Councils must deliver “*a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities*”. The paragraph goes on to state that in order for Councils to achieve this aim, they must plan for a mix of housing and seek onsite delivery of affordable housing.
- 1.19. In terms of providing a mix of housing, it is crucial to ensure that the widest possible range of sites can come forward for development so that house builders of all types and sizes can have access to suitable land in order to offer the widest possible range of products. Smaller sites such as the land south of Shuttington Village Hall, which are not subject to the same infrastructure constraints as the strategic sites, are able to make an immediate positive impact to the Council's supply of housing and are therefore essential to the Plan.
- 1.20. The provision of new homes at Shuttington on the land south of the Village Hall will provide a wider mix and choice of housing in the village. By providing for new homes in Shuttington we believe the Council is planning positively to widen the choice of homes available in the village and create opportunities for further home ownership.
- 1.21. Finally, the allocation of sites such as the land south of Shuttington Village Hall, will deliver a percentage of affordable housing which will also assist in ensuring an inclusive and mixed community.