

13 December 2021



Planning Policy Team
South Staffs Council
Wolverhampton Road
Codsall
South Staffordshire
WV8 1PX

Jessica Graham
E: jgraham@savills.com
DL: +44 (0) 121 634 8494

55 Colmore Row
Birmingham B3 2AA
T: +44 (0) 121 200 4500
F: +44 (0) 121 633 3666
savills.com

Sent via email only: localplans@sstaffs.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

**Representation to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review – Preferred Options Consultation
Land off Barnhurst Lane, Bilbrook
Barratt West Midlands**

On behalf of Barratt West Midlands ('Barratt'), we have prepared the following submission to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Preferred Options Consultation in relation to their land interests off Barnhurst Lane, Bilbrook (the 'Site').

The below submission has responded to the following questions within the Preferred Options consultation document:

- Question 1
- Question 4
- Question 5
- Question 7
- Question 8
- Question 11
- Question 12

Site Overview

Barratt's land is located to the south east of Bilbrook, off Barnhurst Lane (SHELAA reference 500). The Site is circa 8.79 hectares (21 acres) and could yield circa 200 dwellings. The Site is bound by Barnhurst Lane to the east, the River Penk and woodland to the south and proposed allocation SA1 to the north and west.

The submission is supported by the following pieces of technical work:

Constraints and Opportunities Plan

The plan highlights the existing limited constraints on site and how they have been incorporated into the indicative layout. The small area of the site which is within flood zone 3 will be incorporated into a landscape / biodiversity improvement area and the existing hedgerows will be retained where possible.

The plan demonstrates how pedestrian / cycle connections can be provided between the Site and proposed allocation SA1 to improve connectivity between the two sites. Vehicular access will be taken off Barnhurst Lane to the west. The provision of Green Infrastructure corridors within the Site provide a link between the proposed allocation SA1 and the Shropshire Union Canal to the east.

The plan shows an indicative net developable area of circa 6.15 hectares (16 acres) and indicative public open space / biodiversity improvement area of circa 2.64 hectares (6.5 acres).

Offices and associates throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.

Savills (UK) Limited. Chartered Surveyors. Regulated by RICS.

A subsidiary of Savills plc. Registered in England No. 2605138. Registered office: 33 Margaret Street, London, W1G 0JD



Green Belt Technical Note

This document appraises the Green Belt function of the Site and includes a comparative assessment of further land parcels being promoted around Bilbrook and Codsall.

The Technical Note concludes that the Site is more favourable for release than the wider Bilbrook area as the release of those land parcels would potential lead to a more significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. In combination with site SA1, the note concludes that the Site would lead to limited impact on spatial and visual openness.

We support the allocation of site SA1 to the south east of Bilbrook given that Bilbrook is one of the most sustainable settlements within the District and the Local Plan Review's strategy is to target the most growth to the Tier 1 settlements. The submitted Constraints and Opportunities Plan demonstrates that once proposed allocation SA1 is delivered, the Site will be immediately adjacent to the revised Bilbrook boundary and the new primary school and local facilities provided as part of site SA1. As stated in our response to the consultation below, it is considered that the allocation of the Site will ensure a more defensible and permanent revised Green Belt allocation than currently proposed for site SA1.

Highway Technical Appraisal

The Technical Appraisal reviews the potential highway and transport impacts of the future development at the Site.

The appraisal concludes that the Site is in an accessible location for residents to access the local facilities. All key facilities are considered to be within walking distance and this position will improve when the primary school and additional shops, services and facilities are provided as part of site SA1.

There is no scope for improvements to the existing footway along Barnhurst Lane within the public highway, however, the Appraisal states that there would be scope to build a new footway along the western edge of Barnhurst Lane should the Council wish to deliver improvements to benefit existing and future residents. Vehicular access could be provided via a standard priority junction or via a priority junction with a right-turn lane. The proposed access is set out in further detail within Section 4 of the Technical Appraisal.

Section 5 of the Technical Appraisal sets out the potential traffic generation of the development. The Site is expected to generate 99 two-way vehicle movements in the AM peak hour and 98 two-way vehicle movements in the PM peak hour. This equates to approximately 1-2 vehicle movements every minute which the technical Appraisal considers to be a modest increase in traffic movements and will not cause any safety problems.

Site Context Summary

In summary, the identified limited constraints are not considered to impact on the suitability of the site for development and the delivery of proposed allocation SA1 will result in the Site being adjacent to the revised settlement boundary and its allocation will provide a more permanent Green Belt boundary for proposed allocation SA1. We therefore consider that this site should be released from the Green Belt and allocated for residential development.

Preferred Options Consultation Response

Question 1: Do you agree that the evidence base set out in Appendix A is appropriate to inform the new Local Plan? No

Please provide comments on the content or use of the evidence base set out in Appendix A, referencing the document you are referring to.

In addition to those evidence documents listed, we consider that an Urban Capacity Report to highlight the limited number of deliverable sites within the urban area and outside of the Green Belt may be beneficial to justify why Green Belt sites are being allocated for development. A Green Belt Topic Paper setting out the exceptional circumstances which the Council consider exist to justify the release of Green Belt could also be appropriate to support the Council's strategy at Examination.

We have set out below our comments on the evidence documents which have been published to support the Preferred Options plan.

Duty to Cooperate Paper (November 2021)

As identified within the consultation document, a key consideration for South Staffordshire in the context of duty to cooperate, is the unmet need from the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area ('HMA'). As set out in our response 5 below, we consider that more work needs to be undertaken in order to confirm the housing shortfall position in the HMA up to 2031 and beyond so that this can be factored into the Local Plan process.

The Black Country authorities has identified a shortfall of 28,239 dwellings in addition to the existing shortfall from Birmingham in their adopted plan as well as their emerging plan taking the 35% standard method uplift into consideration. We consider that in order to fully address the identified shortfalls in the greater Birmingham and Black Country areas, LPAs with the greatest geographical and functional relationship with the Black Country should be making the greatest contribution towards this unmet need (Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Reference ID: 61-017-20190315).

Our analysis below shows that South Staffordshire is the LPA with the greatest geographical connection to the Black Country, sharing 44% of the Black Country boundary. 44% of the Black Country's current shortfall would equate to 12,425 dwellings which is over three times greater than the Council's current contribution. Even taking a mid-point between these two figures would lead to a contribution of 8,212 dwellings – over double the Council's current contribution.

In additional to geographical connection, we also consider that South Staffordshire has a strong connectivity through road and rail connections.

In this context, South Staffordshire should be providing a much higher number of residential dwellings towards the HMA.

Appendix A states that the Council will work with the CCG to “agree indicative commuted sums likely to be required from new development”. We set out a more detailed response below under Question 11, however, in short we consider that health providers should be engaged during the plan process so that they can identify the level of growth proposed in order to inform their funding for the plan period. Health providers should not be allowed to request financial contributions from known developments during the plan period in order to ‘plug the gap’ between occupancy and funding being updated the following year.

Housing Site Selection Topic Paper (September 2021)

The Topic Paper states that sites assessed as 'NS' means they 'are unsuitable because of constraints which cannot be overcome' and were therefore not assessed in Stage 3 of the site selection process.

Our client's land to the east of Bilbrook (site reference 500) has been assessed as 'NS'. The SHELAA 2021 states that the key constraints are that the 'site is disassociated from any village development boundary' and that a small part of the site is within Flood Zone 3. Only a small section of the site along the southern boundary falls within Flood Zone 3 and built development can be directed away from this area. The submitted Constraints and Opportunities Plan shows the area within the flood zone proposed as open space / biodiversity improvement area. Therefore we do not consider that the flood risk on site should impact on the site being brought forward for development.

Although the site is currently disassociated from the village boundary, the delivery of proposed Strategic Allocation SA1 will result in site reference 500 being immediately adjacent to the revised settlement boundary of Bilbrook.

When defining Green Belt boundaries, the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') states that they should be defined clearly "*using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent*" (paragraph 143f). We do not consider that the current proposed boundary for Strategic Allocation SA1 is clearly defined by physical and permanent features. Our client's site (reference 500) is bound by Barnhurst Lane to the east and the River Penk and woodland to the south. We consider that these physical features offer a more permanent revised Green Belt boundary and therefore Site 500 should be included as part of Strategic Allocation SA1.

The proposed 'Parameters Masterplan' submitted by Bloor Homes with their representations to the Issues and Options consultation, shows potential pedestrian connections into our client's land. We consider that the development of Site Reference 500 forms a logical extension to Strategic Allocation SA1 and pedestrian and green infrastructure links could be provided to strengthen the accessibility and environmental net gain of the overall allocation.

Viability Appraisal 2021

Appendix I 'Assumptions Summary' of the Viability Appraisal 2021 states that no off-site contributions for Education or Health have been considered. No contribution has been noted for any off-site highways works either. In regards to planning obligations, paragraph 34 of the NPPF states that "*plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan*" [Savills emphasis].

We therefore consider that it is imperative for the Council to engage with infrastructure providers to confirm financial contributions that they will require from allocations, these should then be factored into the Viability Appraisal.

Question 4: Do you support the policy approach in Policy DS1 – Green Belt and Policy DS2 – Open Countryside? No

If no, please explain how these policies should be amended?

Paragraph 4.4 of the Preferred Options Plan states that "*where Green Belt release is necessary through the Local Plan, we will ensure that compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt, including improving access to the countryside and ecological and biodiversity enhancement, are made*". We do not oppose the proposed requirement to provide compensatory improvements but consider that any requirement should accord with the wording of the Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') which states that policies for green belt compensatory improvements should be "*informed by supporting*

evidence of landscape, biodiversity or recreational needs and opportunities” [Savills emphasis] (Reference ID: 64-002-20190722). Compensatory improvements should not necessarily have to improve access, landscape and biodiversity.

We support the provision of a Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document which we consider should include more guidance on the provision of compensatory improvements and costs for calculating off-site contributions if improvements cannot be met on-site.

Question 5: Do you support the policy approach in Policy DS3 – The Spatial Strategy to 2038? No

If no, please explain how this policy should be amended?

Policy DS3 seeks to deliver a minimum of 8,881 dwellings up to 2038. This is based on 4,881 dwellings (243 dwellings per annum) to meet South Staffordshire’s housing need and a 4,000 dwelling contribution towards the HMA shortfall.

The PPG is clear that the standard method sets the minimum housing need and does not produce a housing requirement figure (Reference ID: 2a-002-20190220); and there may be circumstances where a higher requirement figure is appropriate, for example, meeting unmet HMA needs or previous levels of housing delivery (Reference ID: 2a-010-20201216). Although the plan does include a contribution towards the HMA shortfall which the Council may consider is a suitable buffer, the Council has not proposed an uplift to the minimum standard method figure to meet local needs nor has the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (‘SHMA’) May 2021 assessed the requirement for an uplift. Without a buffer, we do not consider that the plan has been positively prepared in an aspirational way (NPPF paragraph 16) nor does it support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes (NPPF paragraph 60).

In order to be found sound, a plan should be positively prepared and “*seek to meet the area’s objective assessed needs and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development*” (NPPF paragraph 35). We therefore support the proposed approach to contribute towards the HMA shortfall. However, as of yet, the distribution of the housing shortfall across the HMA authorities has still not been agreed, nor is it known when it will be so the Council cannot fully justify that 4,000 dwellings is a reasonable contribution. Particularly given that there is now the additional housing needs arising from the Black Country (circa 28,000 dwellings) and the District has a strong connectivity between South Staffordshire and the Birmingham conurbation so is well placed to accommodate more of the shortfall than other authorities in the HMA.

It is also unclear whether the Council’s 4,000 dwelling contribution is being made towards the shortfall that is confirmed by the HMA up to 2031 or beyond which we currently expect could be significantly greater than the existing shortfall. In a report submitted to Lichfield District Council in response to their Local Plan Review, Turley has estimated that the shortfall could be between 53,000 and 64,000 dwellings by 2036.

The NPPF also requires plans to “*be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period*” (paragraph 143). Given our comments above, we consider that additional Green Belt land will be required within the plan period so therefore the plan does not accord with the NPPF.

In light of the above, we consider that an uplift should be applied to the minimum standard method figure of 243 dwellings per annum and the proposed contribution towards the HMA should be updated to reflect the additional housing shortfall identified by the Black Country authorities. Therefore, additional sites should be identified within the District in order to meet these additional housing needs. We consider that our client’s land (site reference 500) forms a logical extension to proposed Strategic Allocation SA1 and should be considered for a residential allocation to assist the Council in meeting their housing needs.

In order to demonstrate on-going and effective joint working with the HMA authorities, one or more statements of common ground should be prepared to document how strategic matters are being progressed (NPPF paragraph 27). The Council has not yet issued a statement of common ground (SoCG) to demonstrate how it

has effectively worked with the HMA throughout the local plan review process to date (PPG Reference ID: 61-029-20190315). We question why these SoCGs are not being drafted and regularly updated now, as recommended by the PPG (Reference ID: 61-020-20190315). The duty to cooperate is a legal requirement that if the Council is found lacking in some regard, it cannot be remedied once the Local Plan has been submitted.

Question 7: a) Do you support the proposed strategic housing allocations in policies SA1-SA4? Yes but additional comments

If no, please explain your reasons for this. b) Do you agree that given the scale of the 4 sites detailed in policies SA1-SA4, these warrant their own policy to set the vision for the site, alongside a requirement for a detailed masterplan and design code?

We support the allocation of Land East of Bilbrook (Policy SA1). However, as stated in our response to Question 1, we consider that our client's land (reference 500) should be included within the strategic allocation in order to provide a revised Green Belt boundary that is clearly defined by permanent and physical features (NPPF paragraph 143f).

The proposed 'Parameters Masterplan' submitted by Bloor Homes with their representations to the Issues and Options consultation, shows potential pedestrian connections into our client's land. We consider that the development of Site Reference 500 forms a logical extension to Strategic Allocation SA1 and pedestrian and green infrastructure links could be provided to strengthen the accessibility and environmental net gain of the overall allocation.

As part of allocation SA1, an area is designated for 'Green infrastructure' to the south. The allocation of site 500 could bolster this designation and create improved green infrastructure connections between Lane Green Road to the west and Barnhurst Lane to the east.

We also consider that the Council should provide a housing trajectory for all of the allocations within the District to demonstrate that housing needs will be met across the plan period (NPPF paragraph 74). The plan should demonstrate that all of the strategic allocations have a reasonable prospect of being delivered within the plan period and that infrastructure providers have been engaged to discuss requirements (PPG Reference ID: 61-060-20190315).

Question 8: Do you support the proposed housing allocations in Policy SA5? Yes

Please reference the site reference number (e.g site 582) for the site you are commenting on in your response.

Policy SA5 sets out the proposed allocations across the District. We support additional growth being directed to Bilbrook. However, as stated in our response to Question 5, we consider that an uplift should be applied to the minimum local housing need and a greater contribution towards the HMA shortfall may be required in light of recent evidence that the shortfall is likely to be significantly more than the existing figure.

In light of the above, we considered that Bilbrook is a suitable location for additional growth given it is one of the most sustainable settlements in the District. We consider that our client's land (site reference 500) forms a logical extension to proposed Strategic Allocation SA1 and its allocation will assist the Council in demonstrating a more defensible Green Belt boundary.

Question 11: Do you agree with the proposed policy approaches set out in Chapter 6? No

If no, then please provide details setting out what changes are needed, referencing the Policy Reference number (e.g HC1 - Housing Mix).

Policy HC1 – Housing Mix

The policy proposes that 75% of properties should be 3 bed or less on major residential development sites. Although this requirement broadly complies with the needs set out in the SHMA 2021, (23.9% 1 beds, 31.8% 2 beds, 20.5% 3 beds and 23.9% 4+ beds), we do not support applying a blanket requirement across the District. Although the policy could provide useful guidelines to the type of dwellings that the District would seek to be provided on a site (e.g. stating that 'a greater amount of 1, 2 and 3 bed dwellings is encouraged'), it is important that the final housing mix on a site is determined on a site by site basis taking relevant market signals (Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Reference ID: 61-038-20190315), site location and needs assessments at the time of the application in to account. If the figures from the SHMA are included within the policy, then they should only be 'encouraged'.

Additionally, we also request that when determining housing mix for a site, consideration is given to the size of properties (sqft or sqm) proposed rather than just bedroom numbers as housebuilders produce different sized properties for the same number of bedrooms. Therefore some housebuilders are unfairly penalised if their product is smaller but with the same number of bedrooms as other housebuilders delivering the same mix.

Policy HC2 – Housing Density

The Policy proposes a minimum density of 35dph in developments within or adjoining Tier 1 settlements, in infill locations within the development boundaries of other settlements in the district or in urban extensions to neighbouring towns and cities. As set out in our response to Policy HC1, we do not support a blanket approach to density being taken. Housing density should be determined on a site by site basis and consideration should be given to site context and its accessibility.

Policy HC3 – Affordable Housing

We object to the proposed requirement for 50% of the affordable housing to be delivered in the form of social rent. Paragraph 8.11 of the SHMA sets out that 50% of the affordable housing requirement of the affordable housing provision to be both affordable rented/ social rented. A distinction needs to be made between affordable and social rent, and this should be reflected in the policy.

Policy HC4 – Homes for Older People

This policy states that major residential development will be required to make a contribution to meeting the needs of the district's aging population, for example, through the provision of bungalows or other ground floor accommodation. The Policy also states that 30% of all market and affordable homes should be built to meet Building Regulation Standard part M4(2). Clarity is requested as to whether the 30% M4(2) standard housing will fully meet Policy HC4's requirement to 'contribute to meeting the needs of the District's ageing population' or if additional contributions are sought.

The PPG states that Councils have the option to "*set additional technical requirements exceeding the minimum standards required by Building Regulations in respect of access*" where there is a justified need for this requirement (Reference ID: 56-002-20160519). The NPPF also requires all policies to be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence which should be adequate, proportionate and focused on supporting and justifying planning policies (paragraph 31). The PPG (Reference ID: 56-005-20150327 to 56-011-20150327) sets out the evidence necessary to justifying a policy requirement for optional standards which includes:

- the likely future need;
- the size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed;
- the accessibility and adaptability of the existing stock;

- variations in needs across different housing tenures: and
- viability.

In addition to the above, the PPG is clear that “*Local Plan policies should also take into account site specific factors such as vulnerability to flooding, site topography, and other circumstances which may make a specific site less suitable for M4(2) and M4(3) compliant dwellings, particularly where step free access cannot be achieved or is not viable. Where step-free access is not viable, neither of the Optional Requirements in Part M should be applied*” (Reference ID: 56-008-20160519) [Savills emphasis].

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (‘SHMA’) 2021 states that about 7.4% of the total housing stock delivered should meet M4(2) standards (para 7.41). It is considered that further evidence is required to justify why the Council is seeking to deliver 30% in Policy HC4 when this is significantly greater than the need identified in the SHMA.

Any proposed standards in the Local Plan Review will need to accord with the requirements of the NPPF and PPG and ensure that they do not negatively impact on the viability of a site. We consider that the policy should be worded flexibly and allow proposals to be determined on a site by site basis.

Policy HC7 – Self & Custom Build Housing

We support the proposed wording within this policy in relation to determining the provision of self-built and custom plots as part of major developments on a site by site basis.

Policy HC9 – Design Requirements

This Policy states that all developments will be required to incorporate tree lined streets. We consider that the policy should be worded as set out in the NPPF. Paragraph 131 states that “*planning policies...should ensure that new streets are tree-lined*” with footnote 50 adding “*unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate*”.

It is proposed that the policy will include a ‘hook for local design codes to be prepared for specific areas of the District’. Confirmation is sought on who the Council envisages will produce the codes? We consider that input should be had by developers to ensure that the design codes are market facing and deliverable.

Policy HC11 – Space about dwellings and internal space standards

Policy HC11 states that all dwellings will be required to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards. The PPG states that where there is a need for internal space standards then justification should be provided taking account of the need for certain dwellings, impact on viability and timing of the policy to ensure developers can factor the cost of space standards into future land acquisitions (Reference ID: 56-020-20150327). Therefore, the Council should provide justification on the requirement to meet the NDSS and provide further information on the potential impact on viability.

Policy HC12 – Parking Standards

Policy HC12 proposed to adopt the same parking standards as set out in the adopted development plan but has also proposed an additional requirement for the provision of a 7kW charging point per dwelling and 20% of parking spaces for flats to be fitted with charging point. 20% of available spaces should also be provided with power supply to allow for additional fast charge socket in future. We consider that the wording of this policy should be worded in order to allow flexibility for developers to provide the infrastructure (e.g. power supply point) without the specific charging point. This allows purchasers of dwellings to choose what charging point they want to install to meet their needs.

Across the plan period, it is likely that electric vehicles and supporting infrastructure are likely to change / advance therefore this policy should allow for flexibility.

Policy HC14 – Health Infrastructure

The Policy states that major development proposals will be assessed against the capacity of existing healthcare facilities and proportionate financial contributions will be sought if there is an unacceptable impact. We do object to this statement.

CCGs are funded for extra patients arising from predicted population flows because planned population increases are included in ONS projections. NHS Trusts are then funded by CCGs. Our understanding is that NHS Trusts request contributions from developers to pay the cost of funding extra patients whilst the NHS funding system 'catches up' 1-2 years later – the funding from developers 'plugs the gap'. However, if the CCG and NHS Trusts are properly consulted at plan-making stage and are aware of the level of growth planned then they should be able to update their funding accordingly prior to the commencement of development so that there is no gap to plug.

In June 2020, the Secretary of State ('SoS') supported an Inspectors conclusion that a planning obligation sought by the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust to mitigate the short-term impact of the additional residents on healthcare services were not justified (Appeal reference - APP/P1133/W/18/3205558). The application was a known development within the adopted plan which was the subject of consultation with health providers therefore the Inspector and SoS agreed that it was not justified to require a developer to plug a gap in funding. This is a position that certain appeals (e.g. Malvern Hills APP/J1860/W/21/3267054) and planning committees (e.g. South Worcestershire – Planning Committee Meeting 3rd November 2021) across the country have taken since.

In light of the above, we support the Council's engagement with health providers at plan-making stage but we do not consider that contributions should be sought from health providers for any allocations within the plan as they will be known developments.

Policy HC15 – Education

A primary school is proposed to be delivered as part of Strategic Allocation SA1 to the east of Bilbrook. When this school is delivered it will be in walking distance of our client's land making it even more sustainable and accessible (SHELAA reference 500). As part of any proposed development of site 500, financial contributions could be provided towards the provision of the new primary school.

Policy HC17 - Open Space

Policy HC17 requires the provision of "*0.006 hectares of multi-functional, centrally located open space per dwelling*". There is no justification as to why the open space needs to be 'centrally located'. We do not support this restriction as we consider the provision of open space should be determined on a site by site basis and based on a suitable landscape strategy which has sought to connect to existing green infrastructure networks and direct open space to the most suitable locations on site which may not necessarily be in the centre. For example, our client's site (reference 500) is located immediately adjacent to Strategic Site SA1 where public open space is proposed along the southern / eastern boundary. We would expect open space proposed on our client's site to connect Site SA1's open space and create a green buffer along its southern boundary to extend the existing green infrastructure to the south.

The Policy also states that "*small incidental green infrastructure without a clear recreational purpose*" should not form part of the on-site open space standard. No definition of what constitutes 'small' is provided nor how applicants can demonstrate that it serves a purpose. Further clarity is sought on this matter as landscape buffers identified as 'semi natural / natural open space' can play an important role in connecting green infrastructure and pedestrian links.

Policy NB1 - Protecting, enhancing and expanding natural assets

As stated in our response to Policy HC9, we consider that any reference to tree lined streets should be compliant with the NPPF. Paragraph 131 states that “*planning policies...should ensure that new streets are tree-lined*” with footnote 50 adding “*unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate*”.

Policy NB2 – Biodiversity

Policy NB2 states that 10% Biodiversity Net Gain is required for all major developments. The policy states that net gain should be met on-site where possible. If not, then financial contributions will be sought towards off-site projects informed by the Nature Recovery Network mapping by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. We consider that the Council should also allow the Applicant to offer off-site land too, particularly if it is in the same landownership and / or in close proximity to the application site. Further details on the calculation for off-site contributions which may be sought by the Council should be provided.

It is considered that our clients land (site reference 500) will be able to demonstrate at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain if it were released from the Green Belt and allocated for development.

Policy NB4 - Landscape Character

Policy NB4 proposes to amend the adopted Landscape Character policy to strengthen the protection of trees and hedgerows. The NPPF protects ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees (paragraph 180c), there is no national requirement to protect all trees. However, that being said, we understand the important contribution trees can make to the character of an area. We consider that the policy should seek to protect ancient and veteran trees unless there are wholly exceptional reasons to justify their removal. Trees classified as Category A or B should be protected ‘where possible’. We do not consider that Category C or U trees should be afforded any specific protection within the policy.

Policy NB6 - Energy and water efficiency, energy and heat hierarchies and renewable energy in new development

This Policy states that major developments must achieve 31% carbon reduction improvement and exceed the carbon emission targets set by UK Building Regulations through fabric and energy efficiency measures alone whilst achieving the additional 31% carbon reduction improvement target. These requirements are considered to be over and above the requirements of PPG which states that Local Plans “*can set energy performance standards for new housing or the adaptation of buildings to provide dwellings, that are higher than the building regulations, but only up to the equivalent of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes*” (Reference ID: 6-012-20190315). Although the Government consulted on a potential carbon reduction target of 31%, this is not yet policy. This requirement should therefore be monitored throughout the plan-making period and only included within the plan if the Building Regulations are update.

The PPG also states that if a Council is “*considering policies on local requirements for the sustainability of other buildings, local planning authorities will wish to consider if there are nationally described standards and the impact on viability of development*” (Reference ID: 6- 009-20150327). The Viability Study 2021 has assumed a +4% increase on build costs to meet these targets. As stated elsewhere in our response, the Viability Study will need to be updated once potential financial contributions are confirmed by infrastructure providers, particularly education, health and highways.

Barratt Developments is the nation’s leading housebuilder and have made significant commitments to become the leading national sustainable housebuilder. In order to achieve this, Barratt has developed a Sustainability Framework which includes a range of carbon reduction targets.

Policy NB10 - Canal Network

We support measures to integrate the canal network into the wider Green Infrastructure network through biodiversity net gain. Our client's site is adjacent to the Shropshire Union Canal Main Line. As part of any development of site 500, the green infrastructure strategy could improve the link between Bilbrook and the Canal.

Question 12: a) It is proposed that the fully drafted policies in this document (Policies DS1-DS4 and SA1-SA7) are all strategic policies required by paragraph 21 of the NPPF. Do you agree these are strategic policies? b) Are there any other proposed policies in Chapter 6 that you consider should be identified as strategic policies? If yes, then please provide details including the Policy Reference (e.g HC1 – Housing Mix)

The NPPF states that *“strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for”* housing, infrastructure, community facilities and conservation of the natural and historic environment (paragraph 20). Plans should also clearly state which policies are strategic (NPPF paragraph 21). The tables in Chapter 6 of the Preferred Options plan have been broken down into key topics. We think the policies within each of these tables should be supported by an overarching strategic policy.

I trust the above is helpful. I look forward to receiving confirmation of receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely



Jessica Graham
Associate

Encs.