

Independent Examination of the Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan Part Two : Land Allocations and Detailed Policies

Hearing Statement submitted on behalf of
Redrow Homes NW (Representor No: 778027)

Matter 7: Approach to Settlement areas
(Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port, Winsford,
KSCs and LSCs)

August 2018

Matter 7: Approach to Settlement areas (Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port, Winsford, KSCs and LSCs)

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of Redrow Homes NW ('RHNW'). It considers the issues and questions posed in relation to Matter 7 (Approach to Settlement areas (Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port, Winsford, KSCs and LSCs), and responds to those of relevance to RHNW.
- 1.2 The Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (LPPO) provides the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic policies for the borough to 2030. It sets the level and location of housing and employment land, as well as the identification of a number of strategic sites. The purpose of the submitted Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies (LADP) is to provide the policies and land allocations required to deliver the overall strategy, set out in the LPPO.
- 1.3 RHNW made representations to the LADP Publication Draft ('Publication Draft Representations'). The representations focussed on the overall housing requirement and the need to plan positively for a level of growth envisaged through the LPPO. It also considered particular issues relevant to different spatial areas within which the company has land interests (Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford). The need for further housing allocations in these spatial areas was identified and concept development frameworks and supporting highway information were submitted in respect of each of the sites suggested for allocation. Those documents demonstrated that by RHNW's sites are deliverable, developable sites capable of accommodating sustainable housing developments to meet housing needs in the short term.
- 1.4 RHNW's Matter Statements have been prepared specifically in respect of its land interests at Marton House Farm, Winsford and relate primarily to matters of relevance to Winsford. Statements for Matters 2, 7 and 11 have been prepared and are cross referenced as necessary.
- 1.5 It is noted that under the Transitional Arrangements set out in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 ('NPPF2018') *'policies in the previous Framework will apply for the purpose of examining plans, where those plans are submitted on or before 24 January 2019'*. All references to the NPPF therefore relate to the NPPF2012.

Issue 1: General Questions

- 1.6 The submitted plan defines the extent of settlements in the urban and rural areas.
- Q1. What is the approach towards the definition of settlements?**
- 1.7 The settlement hierarchy is already established through the LPPO (Policies START2 – 8). There are four main urban areas (Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford) which are the focus for the majority of development. The remainder is to be located in the key service centres and local service centres in the rural area.

- 1.8 Winsford is one of the larger towns in Cheshire West and Chester and the largest in the east of the borough. The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan (WNP¹) recognises that Winsford is a key industrial and distribution business location. It has a reasonable supply of industrial land and premises, with successful employment areas. These are largely located at the eastern and western edges of the town and are easily accessible via main roads. It has a railway station on the Birmingham – Liverpool line which provides access to a range of benefits from direct services to Liverpool, Runcorn, Acton Bridge and Hartford to the north and to Crewe and selected stations to Birmingham to the south². It also has a range of services and facilities, with the majority focussed on the town centre. It is therefore one of the more sustainable settlements in the borough and is a suitable location for growth and expansion, particularly given the absence of Green Belt constraints which affect the other urban spatial areas. It is therefore entirely appropriate that it is one of the main focusses for development as identified through the settlement hierarchy.
- 1.9 The LPPO states³ that the Council will identify settlement boundaries for the four urban areas, key service centres and local service centres through the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies Plan.
- 1.10 RHNW's response is particularly focussed on Winsford. The proposed settlement boundary is defined through Map Change 155. There is no explanation as to how the settlements boundaries are to be defined though it is apparent that in the case of Winsford, the settlement boundary has been drawn tightly around the existing urban area as defined by:
- Existing built development and physical features around the periphery of the settlement; and
 - land which is allocated for development through the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).

Q2. How have they been defined?

- 1.11 See response to Q1.

Q3. Is the approach taken justified, robust and effective?

- 1.12 It is RHNW's view that there is a need to ensure that further housing land is provided in Winsford and that the settlement boundary is amended to reflect this. The need is based on the issues of housing delivery set out in the Matter 2 statement; RHNW is of the view that the failure to plan positively to meet (and exceed) the development requirements in Winsford threatens to undermine the LPPO vision and strategic objectives as reflected in its strategic policies. These strategic policies include STRAT6 which, inter alia, defines the minimum housing (and employment) requirement for Winsford. This level of development is required to assist the regeneration of the town, as stated by Policy STRAT6, and meeting market and affordable housing needs).

¹ KSD042,

² EB092, Winsford Transport Strategy, paragraph 2.1.5

³ Paragraph 5.73

- 1.13 In drawing the settlement boundary tightly around Winsford (including existing WNP allocations), no flexibility has been made for additional housing sites to come forward beyond those identified in the supply. RHNW's Matter 2 statement identifies a number of serious concerns about the assumptions the LPA has made regarding supply in Winsford. The Council's evidence demonstrates a clear under performance of housing development in the town to date; highlighting that this has occurred despite the LPPO and WNP). Ultimately, that Statement concludes that due to the failure to identify sufficient development sites in Winsford the LADP is inconsistent with the LPPO in that it is not positively prepared will to meet the minimum housing requirements for the town and will fail to meet the specific strategic regeneration objectives identified in the part one plan and recognised in the WNP. This is despite the evidence clearly pointing to a need to do so.
- 1.14 Further allocations of sustainable, developable housing sites will serve to address this issue and those around delivery of housing which are set out in its Matter 2 statement to ensure an appropriate level of future supply. This will ensure that the Local Plan provides a positive and justified policy response to the issues identified through the Council's evidence base.
- 1.15 The land at Marston House Farm is demonstrated to be such a site through RHNW's representations to the LADP Publication Draft. It is capable of providing a high quality family housing development (around 400 homes), which would be delivered by a national housebuilder with extensive record of accomplishment in Cheshire West and Chester, as well as at a regional and national level.
- 1.16 RHNW's LADP representation made clear that the site is a developable housing site which:
- The Council has concluded is potentially suitable, available and achievable for housing development within the plan period (with no ownership / ransom issues or insurmountable environmental issues)
 - Is adjacent to a residential allocation in the WNP (site ref. O1) where planning permission has been granted and development is underway. The suitability of this part of Winsford for additional housing growth is clearly supported in the WNP and background documents to that plan and was has been accepted by an Independent Examiner (i.e. the WNP examiner) and the Council. The expansion of Winsford in this location is clearly well established
 - Is in a sustainable location for development; close to a range of employment facilities (at Woodford Park, a short distance to the south of the site) and dedicated cycle routes (including off-road routes adjacent to parts of the A54). Its boundaries are defined by existing physical features, include existing highway (the A54) to the northern and eastern boundary and established field boundaries (delineated with mature hedgerows) along the southern and eastern boundaries. Such features have been used to define the settlement boundary elsewhere in Winsford.
- 1.17 The allocation of the site would be consistent with LPPO policy STRAT 2 which states that sites must be located in or on the edge of a main urban area or key service centre

where there is an identified need to allocate land. Such a need has been clearly demonstrated through the RNHW representations and in the Matter 2 Statement; on that basis land at Marton Farm should be allocated for residential development in the LAPD.