LDF

From: John Fleming [redacted]
Sent: 16 March 2015 09:52
To: LDF
Cc: Policy Team
Subject: RE: Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan - Revised Proposed Submission consultation - GDL representations
Attachments: Affordable housing local plan - Gladman representations.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: Consultation Response



Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached Gladman's representations to the above consultation.

I would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this email and its contents.

Kind Regards

John Fleming

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RE: Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan – Revised Proposed Submission
(Representations submitted via email to LDF@Wealden.gov.uk)

Introduction

Gladman Development's Ltd (Gladman) specialise in the promotion of strategic land for residential development and associated community infrastructure. From this experience, we understand the need for the planning system to deliver the homes, jobs and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made to identify and deliver the full objectively assessed needs for housing, whilst responding positively to the wider opportunities for growth.

Gladman has considerable experience in contributing to the Local Plan preparation process, having made representations to numerous Local Plan's throughout England and have participated in numerous Local Plan examinations.

The Council is now seeking comments to the above consultation. The Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (AHDLP) seeks to replace the adopted Core Strategy's affordable housing policy (Policy WCS8) to better accord with Planning Practice Guidance. Gladman are aware that Wealden District Council is currently in the process of preparing a review of the Core Strategy as required by the Inspector following the examination of the Core Strategy.

Gladman submit that it may be more appropriate if the Council progressed with this policy as part of the Core Strategy's review. This will ensure that the affordable housing policy is based on adequate, up-to-date and robust evidence as required by national planning policy and guidance.

National Planning Policy and Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out the Government's objective to boost significantly the supply of housing and how this requirement should be reflected in the preparation of Local Plan's. The entire ethos of the Framework is underpinned at paragraph 47 which requires local planning authorities to use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area.

The starting point of identifying the full objectively assessed housing needs is set out in paragraph 159 of the Framework, which requires local planning authorities to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative

boundaries. It is clear from the Framework that the objective assessment of housing needs should take full account of up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic and social characteristics and prospects of an area, with local planning authorities ensuring that their assessment of and strategies for housing and employment are integrated and take full account of relevant market and economic signals (paragraph 158).

Once the Council has identified the objectively assessed needs for housing, these needs should be met in full, unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits for doing so (paragraph 14), with any unmet needs being accommodated through the Duty to Cooperate.

As the Council will be aware the Government published its final suite of Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on the 6th March 2014, clarifying how specific elements of the Framework should be interpreted when preparing Local Plans. The Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment chapter of PPG in particular provides a clear indication of how the Government expects the Framework to be taken into account when local planning authorities are identifying their objectively assessed housing needs. Key points from this document include:

- Household projections published by the Department for Communities and Local Government should provide the **starting point** estimate of overall housing need.
- Plan makers should not apply constraints to the overall assessment of need, such as limitations imposed by the supply of land for new development, historic underperformance, infrastructure or environmental constraints.
- Household projection based estimates of housing need may need adjusting to reflect factors affecting local demography and household formation rates which are not captured by past trends, for example historic suppression by under supply and worsening affordability of housing. The assessment will need to reflect the consequences of past under delivery and the extent to which household formation rates have been constrained by supply.
- Plan makers need to consider increasing their housing numbers where the supply of working age population is less than projected job growth, to prevent unsustainable commuting patterns and reduced local business resilience.
- Housing needs indicated by household projections should be adjusted to reflect appropriate market signals, as well as other market indicators of the balance between the demand for and supply of dwellings.

The Council need to consider adverse market signals as part of the OAN. The more significant the affordability constraints (as reflected in rising prices and rents, and worsening affordability ratio) and the stronger other indications of high demand (e.g. the differential between land prices), the larger the improvement in affordability needed, and the larger the additional supply response should be (Ref ID 2a-02).

The total affordable housing need should also be considered in the context of its likely delivery as a proportion of mixed market and affordable housing developments, given the probable percentage of affordable housing to be delivered by market housing led developments. An increase in the total housing figures included in the Local Plan should be considered where it could help deliver the required number of affordable homes (Ref ID 2a-029).

Core Strategy 2013 & Inspectors Final Report

The Council's adopted Core Strategy contains a housing requirement which is predicated on the now revoked South East RSS. The RSS required 11,000 dwellings over the plan period 2006-2026. However, the adopted Core Strategy seeks to deliver a significantly lower housing requirement of 9,440 dwellings over the plan period.

It is our understanding that the majority of SHMA's that were prepared under the previous guidance on SHMA preparation are not Framework compliant and do not consider the full range of factors that are outlined in the Framework and PPG.

Gladman note that the Council are currently in the process of preparing a new SHMA. However, the latest evidence provided by the 2009 Housing Needs Survey identifies a total net need of 812 affordable dwellings to be delivered per year, equating to a total affordable housing need of 16,240 across the plan period. This clearly demonstrates the level of affordable housing need alone is greater than the total housing requirement by a factor of 6,800 dwellings (i.e. 340 dpa). The Core Strategy's housing requirement is clearly incapable of delivering the level of housing required to reduce the worsening affordability trends which are currently affecting the district.

Following the examination of the Core Strategy, the Inspector's report clearly identifies that the Core Strategy's housing requirement is not based on an objective assessment of need. What is clear from the Inspector's report is a clear commitment to review the Core Strategy by 2015. This is confirmed at paragraph 25 which states '*For the plan to be justified and accord with the Framework and the SEP there must be a commitment to a review at the earliest opportunity once progress has been made towards identifying a solution to the WWTWs issue (by 2015 at the latest). Working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities, the review should meet the requirements of the Framework in terms of assessing full housing needs. It should include an assessment of current and future levels of need and demand for housing in a revised Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).*

Once the evidence has been updated taking into account the relevant paragraphs of the Framework and PPG, the level of housing need is likely to be significantly higher than was previously identified by the 2009 Housing Needs Survey. The Council will need to consider how they will effectively reduce the deteriorating affordability gap and should take full account of the relevant market signals and the need for a significant uplift to the total housing requirement.

Affordable Housing Development Local Plan

The provision of affordable housing is a key priority that should be addressed through the Council's emerging Local Plan. The only way to improve affordability and reduce the worsening affordability trends currently effecting the district is through the provision of additional housing.

Policy AFH1 seeks to implement an affordable housing requirement of 35% on sites of 11 dwellings (net) or more with a combined gross floor space of 1,000 sqm in locations defined by the affordable housing policy area defined on the policies map. In all other areas future housing proposals will be required to deliver 35% affordable housing on development sites of 6 dwellings (net) or more.

The approach taken by the Council is inconsistent with the requirements of the Framework and PPG. The affordable housing requirement must be based on adequate, up-to-date and robust evidence as required by paragraph 158 of the Framework and should be undertaken in a systematic and transparent way.

Gladman note that the AHDLP is seeking to implement two tenure mixes. These are:

- Sites of 49 dwellings (net) or less to provide 80% of the total number of affordable homes as social rented accommodation, with the remainder to be delivered as intermediate.
- Sites of 50 dwellings (net) or more are required to provide 40% of the total number of affordable homes to be social rented accommodation, 40% affordable rent and 20% intermediate accommodation.

Carter Jonas on behalf of Gladman submitted detailed representations to the Council's CIL draft charging schedule (February 2014) and the revised draft charging schedule (October 2014). Carter Jonas recommended that the Council should either adjust its approach to split affordable housing to be delivered on all sites in the district (i.e. 40% affordable rent, 40% social rent and 20% intermediate accommodation) not a separated tenure mix as illustrated above, or more appropriately to lower the proposed residential CIL charge to ensure the delivery of new housing development across the district is not compromised.

In accordance with paragraph 159 of the Framework the Council should seek to identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period.

This should be undertaken as part of the pending SHMA. The Council should not 'presume' its tenure mix based on evidence which is considered to be inconsistent with national planning policy and guidance and out of date.

Policy AFH1 seeks to ensure all affordable housing will be delivered on site, except in instances of proposals for 6-10 dwellings where this will be provided through commuted sums. Gladman recommend the Council should consider the benefits of allowing affordable housing to be delivered off site or through commuted sums on all future residential proposals. This will effectively enable the Council to ensure affordable housing is delivered in areas which demonstrate the greatest level of need.

Sustainability Appraisal

The Council has produced a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), PPG and SEA directive requires that the AHDLP must consider all reasonable alternatives through the production of an SA. However, the SA fails to analyse a suite of reasonable alternatives in respect of whether the Council is capable of delivering affordable housing through an increase in the total number of housing required.

Once the OAN has been identified the Council should test its SA against whether a higher housing requirement that would encourage a 'pro-growth' scenario in line with the requirements of the Framework to meet the full OAN for market and affordable housing can be delivered.

This approach will help the Council address the significant affordability gap currently being experienced in the local authority.

Conclusion

What is clear from the Framework, and from the Government's agenda to boost significantly the supply of housing, is that the premise of the whole process is the identification and delivery of the full, objectively assessed needs for both market and affordable housing in an area unless there are adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of doing so.

Through these representations we have raised concerns as to the soundness of progressing with a strategy prior to the identification of the full objectively assessed housing needs. A strategy which does not seek to deliver the full housing needs based on up-to-date evidence is unsound and inconsistent with the requirements of national planning policy and guidance. Progressing with the AHDLP as set out in its current form, may be found unable to meet the tests of soundness as required by paragraph 182 of the Framework.

Gladman submit that it would be more appropriate if the Council cease further work on the AHDLP and incorporate this policy as part of the Core Strategy review, ensuring that the requirements are in line with national planning policy and guidance.

I hope you have found these representations constructive, if you require any further assistance please contact myself or a member of the Gladman team.

Kind Regards

John Fleming

Gladman Development's Ltd