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Dear Sir / Madam

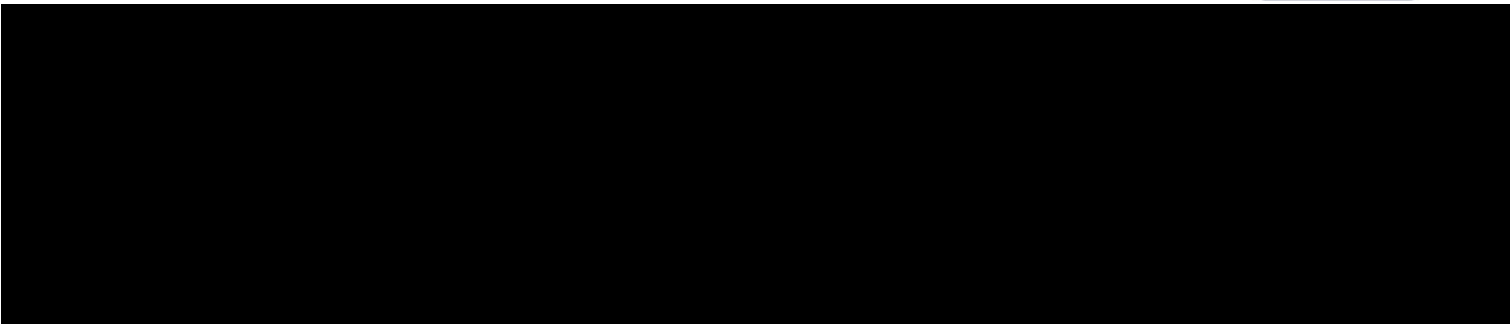
**Dudley Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation
Response by Worcester Lane Limited**

Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy is instructed by Worcester Lane Ltd. (“**WL**”) to submit representations to the Draft Dudley Local Plan (Regulation 18 consultation document) and welcome the opportunity to comment at this time.

WL are promoting land for residential development at Worcester Lane, Pedmore and have previously submitted details of the site to the preparation of the Black Country Plan and previously representations to the Black Country Plan Preferred Options consultation that concluded in October 2021. A Vision Document has been prepared setting out the merits of the site, including a concept masterplan confirming the capacity of the site and concludes that there are no technical, physical or environmental reasons that would prevent the development and delivery of the site. The Vision Document stated that the site can deliver in the region of 70 dwellings and is considered suitable for removal from the Green Belt and allocation for development.

The land at Worcester Lane was proposed to be removed from the Green Belt and identified as part of a draft housing allocation (DUH206, DUH207 and DUH209) with a capacity to deliver 115 dwellings in the now withdrawn Black Country Plan. Clearly we supported the Black Country authorities’ intention to allocate the Site for housing and submitted representations in support of the Site’s suitability to accommodate residential development. However, following the abandonment of the Black Country Plan the Site is no longer identified as a draft allocation and has been omitted from the Plan in its entirety.

The omission of the Site from the Plan is a result of a wider change in strategy that the Council is now advancing, which seeks to focus new development on previously developed land within the urban area. As part of the preparation of the new Local Plan the Council is no longer proposing to release land from the Green Belt to meet its development needs and, further to this, the Council are no longer considering the release of their Green Belt land as an option to meet its housing need, favouring exporting the problem to other yet undefined locations in the Housing Market Area (“**HMA**”).



The recent publication of the updated National Planning Policy Framework ('**The Framework**') states there is no requirement to review of change Green Belt boundaries when plans are being prepared, but it continues to allow authorities to choose to subject to demonstrating exceptional circumstances. In some ways, this is not a significant change from the previous version of the Framework, as there was no requirement to change Green Belt boundaries and exceptional circumstances needed to be demonstrated if Council were proposing to do so. However, it does place more of an onus on Council's to instigate this process and the weight of responsibility that comes with this should not be underestimated. Where it is identified that Green Belt needs to be released to meet the development needs identified, on the one hand it requires an understanding of the potential environmental impacts that could come from changing Green Belt boundaries, on the other the social and economic disadvantages of meeting the housing and / or economic needs identified. These being real impacts on local people and local business, who will suffer if the needs are not met. In this instance, we consider not delivering the housing need identified will have substantial social and economic impacts for thousands of people and we ask the Council to very carefully consider the impact on these people when deciding whether or not to amend their Green Belt boundary, especially when there are sites that make a limited contribution to the Green Belt could be released to meet this need.

WL object to the proposed strategy on the basis that the Council has not explored all the options available to meet the housing need and that it has land available in its administrative boundary to meet its housing need identified, including sites that it has previously supported as draft residential allocations in the Black Country Core Strategy review. We consider there are exceptional circumstances that warrant the Green Belt being reviewed and land released from it to help meet housing needs, which include the substantial social and economic impacts for thousands of local people and businesses.

There is significant pressure across the HMA from constrained authorities who cannot meet their development needs within their administrative boundaries, with ten of thousands of homes and hundreds of hectares of employment land needing to be found. The number of authorities able to assist with this overspill in the HMA are limited and the evidence suggests they cannot be relied upon when the numbers they have proposed in their emerging plans to assist with addressing the overspill do not even scratch the surface. Consequently, where authorities have the land available, we consider they should be using this unless there is an overwhelming persuasive reason as to why that land should not be developed, with the argument that 'it is Green Belt land' not standing up to scrutiny, when it is inevitable that most of the overspill would need to be on land currently designated as Green Belt if the development needs identified are going to be met.

Further to the above, we consider that not only should Dudley be meeting its own housing need, but that it should also be assisting with meeting the overspill from other authorities, such as Birmingham, Sandwell and Wolverhampton, with whom it has a strong functional relationship and that it can provide the land in the locations to help meet the overspill from these authorities close to where the need is arising. We acknowledge that these residents might not fall in your administrative boundary, but when so many people stand to suffer from the lack of lack to meet the development needs identified we would implore the Council to not allow administrative lines to stand in the way of helping these people.

Below, we start by explaining why we consider WL's Site should still be identified as a residential allocation in the plan, address the concerns raised in the representations to the Black Country Core Strategy Review. We then provide our comments on the draft policies.

Proposed Housing Allocations – Land at Worcester Lane, Pedmore

WL are objecting to the draft Plan on the basis that the land at Worcester Lane has been omitted as a draft housing allocation, when it has previously been supported by the Council as a draft housing allocation in the Black Country Core Strategy Review and in the context of the significant pressure for authorities within the HMA to meet their own development needs and assist those who cannot wherever possible.

The inclusion of the Site as a draft allocation confirmed that in principle the Site was capable of being allocated for development and delivering new housing development to meet the needs of Dudley. Whilst the Black Country Plan has now been withdrawn the previous assessment work of the site and the conclusions drawn that led it to be included as a draft allocation cannot be discounted and indicate that the site is suitable for development.

The Worcester Lane site has been grouped together with the other draft allocations in the Black Country Plan that were proposed for removal from the Green Belt. We have reviewed the consultation responses to the Preferred Options Black Country Plan and note the level of objections received to this and the other sites proposed to be released from the Green Belt. A list of the general points made in response to the draft allocations are set out in the Summary of Consultation Responses report published by the Council alongside the draft Local Plan consultation. Whilst these are not all specific to the Worcester Lane they can be summarised as:

- Lack of existing infrastructure and amenities to cope with additional dwellings.
- Concerns over the existing road network and increased traffic.
- Loss of Green Belt.
- No exceptional circumstances to release Green Belt land.
- Detrimental impact on ecology and biodiversity.
- Loss of Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land.
- Development would result in increased pollution in terms of air, noise and light particularly during construction.
- No economic benefit to the area and impact on house prices.
- Cumulative impact of other developments in the area.
- Brownfield first approach should be taken.
- General concerns regarding flood risk, global warming, heritage and landscape impacts.

We note the volume of representations attributed to the Worcester Lane site. However, the Vision Document (copy attached) prepared by WL set out our initial assessment of the site and sought to address the various technical and environmental matters which have subsequently been raised in the consultation responses. The Vision Document concluded that the site was deliverable in this context.

The loss of Green Belt is the key factor raised in the objections. As highlighted above, the release of Green Belt is not unique to this Site. The land outside the urban area in Dudley is all Green Belt and the same is true for the authorities surrounding Dudley with potential capacity to meet its development needs. Discussions with these authorities will not lead to the concerns around the loss of Green Belt land being resolved. It will just change the location of any Green Belt that is to be released. The reality is that the only way to address the objection that Green Belt land should not be released is to not meet the development needs identified for Dudley or the wide HMA, and not provide the homes and jobs needed for local people.

Turning to the comments received and general areas of objection raised WL respond as follows:

- Existing infrastructure - an assessment of existing capacity in local GPs, schools, use services and sewage and water facilities would have been undertaken as part of the development. If this highlighted that there was a lack of capacity or that the proposed development would place additional demands on existing provision then the developer would be required to mitigate the impact of the development through physical provision of new infrastructure or payment of developer contributions. The impact of the development could be mitigated through such an approach and thus the concerns regarding adverse impact on infrastructure are unfounded. Existing shortfalls in service provision in the local area are not as a result of the proposed development and it would only be the addition demand that any development would need to mitigate.
- Impact on the Highway - the proposed development will result in a limited increase in traffic on the local highway network which is not considered to be severe.
- The site is located in the Green Belt albeit that its removal from the Green Belt would have limited impact on the overall function of the Green Belt.
- In light of the case presented above about the need to release Green Belt land to meet the Council's housing need, particularly in light of the wider issues in the HMA and the inability of other authorities to meet their housing needs in full WL consider that there are exceptional circumstances to consider the release of land from the Green Belt. As it stands, the Plan is effectively stating that adjoining authorities will have to release land from the Green Belt to meet Dudley's needs or that if Green Belt is not released needs will have to go unmet.
- An initial ecological survey had been undertaken which did not identify any significant constraints that would prevent the development of the site whilst options exist to deliver BNG on site.
- In respect of agricultural land, this has not been assessed at present so it is not clear if the objections of the loss of Grade 2 and 3 quality agricultural land are founded or not. Due to the size of the site the loss would be minimal.
- Issues relating to air quality and light pollution are matters that can be controlled during the construction process and through the detailed design of the end scheme. Noise has been assessed and the findings and recommendations are set out in the Vision Document. As such we do not agree that they are in principle reasons that would prevent the development going ahead.
- The development of new houses would have significant economic local benefits in terms of construction jobs during the construction phase as well as the use of goods and services in the local vicinity and the wider area involved in the construction of the dwellings. Furthermore, during the construction process local shops and services would benefit from the construction workforce in the area. Following the completion of the development local shops and services would benefit through additional footfall and resident population in the vicinity of the facilities. It is a generally well regarded principle that a residential development would have significant economic benefits to the area. Furthermore, instead of impacting adversely on house prices the development can have a positive impact on a local area albeit that this is not a legitimate planning consideration.
- The site is located in Pedmore so would not impact directly on Kingswinford.
- The emerging Local Plan has a brownfield first strategy albeit that in promoting such a strategy it is unable to identify sufficient land to meet its housing need in full. As such, if the full housing needs of the Borough are to be met then some greenfield land is required

in order to meet this. The brownfield first approach will not result in the housing needs of the Borough being met hence why we are promoting a greenfield site as a proposed housing allocation.

- In respect of the other matters including flood risk, global warming, heritage, landscape and general design considerations these are matters that we consider could be dealt with through the planning application process and would not present an in principle reason as to why the site should not be allocated.

In light of the above, the objections raised to the inclusion of the site in the Preferred Options Black Country Plan are matters that do not present an in principle objection to the development of the site. Whilst clearly there was a significant level of objection to the draft allocation and the matters raised are in WL's view capable of being addressed through the allocation and planning application process.

Notwithstanding the above, the WL land has been identified as part of a larger site having an indicative capacity of 115 dwellings. When developed this would deliver a policy compliant level of affordable housing which would contribute to addressing the housing needs of the Borough and adding to the supply of affordable housing across the District. The delivery of affordable housing being a significant benefit of releasing Green Belt sites, due to the abnormal costs associated with delivering the previously developed sites that make up nearly the entire supply identified by the Council.

We now turn to the draft plan and the vision, objectives and policies within it.

The Vision for Dudley Borough by 2041

The Vision for Dudley sets out a number of areas that the Council wish to see achieved through the delivery of the Local Plan. These include making Dudley an attractive and desirable place to live, work and visit, having strong, inclusive resilient and thriving communities which enhance health and social wellbeing and providing a wide range of housing that will meet people's needs through their various life stages and is affordable to live in. We are generally supportive of the Vision in that it is aspirational and seeks to deliver the development needs of its residents over the Plan Period. We particularly welcome the intention to deliver a wide range of housing that will meet people's needs.

Objectives and Strategic Priorities

Table 4.1 sets out the Council's strategic objectives and priorities. We note Objective 1 is the conservation and enhancement of a natural and built environment including the strategic priority of addressing the climate and ecological emergency. We also welcome Strategic Priority 4 of fostering economic growth and investment and Strategic Priority 6 of creating thriving neighbourhoods by providing new and affordable homes in range of sizes, types and tenures to meet the Borough's housing needs. Similarly, we welcome Strategic Priority 7 that seeks to deliver the resources, infrastructure and services to support growth.

DLP 1 Development Strategy

Policy DLP 1 sets out the Council's targets for the delivery of new homes and employment land. In respect of new dwellings 10,876 new homes are proposed along with the development of at least 25 hectares of employment land. WL have significant concerns about the proposed development strategy and specifically around how the Council intends to meet its housing needs over the Plan Period. We also have similar concerns in respect of how its employment land needs will be met and we set out our detailed comments on these points below.

In respect of the Borough's housing target the policy sets out that the Council will deliver at least 10,876 net new homes over the Plan Period. Paragraph 5.12 confirms that the local housing need for the Borough is in fact 11,954 homes as calculated by the Standard Method. Paragraph 61 of the Framework confirms that Councils should use the standard method as the starting point for establishing a housing requirement for the area. It goes on to state that there may be exceptional circumstances that justify an alternative approach to assessing housing need. The Council are not claiming that there are exceptional circumstances that warrant divergence away from the use of the standard method. As such, it must be concluded that the housing requirement is 11,954 dwellings. However, the Plan identifies a shortfall of 1,078 homes that are required but where sufficient capacity within the Borough to accommodate has not yet been identified.

Having identified what the housing need is in the Borough, the Council undertook an assessment of different options for growth as described in Table 1 of the Dudley Local Plan Options to Preferred Strategy paper (October 2023). The three options tested looked at meeting all or the majority of the Borough's needs on previously developed land, through urban uplift in regeneration corridors, on low quality open space or elsewhere through duty to cooperate contributions. None of the spatial options considered release land from the Green Belt to meet the Council's needs. Whilst no doubt the publication of the updated Framework will be used to validate the Council's approach it will in Barberrry's view lead to significant housing need going unmet and the associated social and economic impacts that arise from this.

The spatial option that the Council have decided to pursue (Option 3) seeks to focus on meeting the development needs of the Council on previously developed sites within the urban area, use of low quality open space and through duty to cooperate discussions meaning that the Council will be looking to the other authorities in the HMA to accommodate its unmet need of 1,078 dwellings. WL object to this approach and do not consider it sound.

If the 1,078 dwellings are to be accommodated in adjoining authorities this would likely result in those authorities immediately adjoining Dudley, which also have significant areas of Green Belt, having to release land from their Green Belt in order to meet Dudley's needs. If land has to be released from the Green Belt in order to meet the development needs it is WL's view that Dudley should be looking at opportunities within its own administrative area first, including land in its Green Belt, before looking to its adjoining neighbours. If adjoining authorities take the same viewpoint as Dudley and decide that they also do not need to release land from the Green Belt, housing needs arising from Dudley and across the HMA are not going to be met.

The Plan, nor the Dudley Local Plan Options Preferred Strategy paper, does not elaborate on the Council's decision not to release land from the Green Belt to meet its needs particularly when the Plan highlights that there is a shortfall of what is needed against what land is available to accommodate this need. WL consider this to be a short-sighted approach particularly when land is available albeit it is in the Green Belt, which could help meet the Council's housing needs over the Plan Period. This point is particularly pertinent when under the Black Country Plan Preferred Options version the Council had proposed to release land from the Green Belt to meet the Council's needs as well as the unmet needs arising in the wider Black Country authorities. Again, the Plan does not provide clear or sufficient justification for the decision of the Council not to release land from the Green Belt nor why this unmet need should be met elsewhere when there is sufficient suitable land available within the Borough to meet these needs. Furthermore, whilst the updated Framework does not require Green Belt to be reviewed, it does state that it can still be reviewed in exceptional circumstances. Barberrry contend that exceptional circumstances exist that warrant a review of the Green Belt. These include:

- worsening affordability as demand outstrips supply,
- worsening delivery and provision of affordable housing,

- increased homelessness
- Worsening overcrowding and living conditions,
- Increased pressure on private rental sector with associated issues of unsecure tenancies and susceptibility to rent increases,
- Increasing ageing population with resultant increase in demand on social and health care services,
- economic impacts on the working age population as those adults who are able to work may not have suitable accommodation to live in thus resulting in increased commuting distances, worsening impacts on congestion and air quality, and
- the inability to attract workers into the HMA could have significant repercussions for the wider economy if the right type of houses are not available for those wanting to live and work in the conurbation.

The land at Worcester Lane was identified as a draft allocation in the Black Country Plan Preferred Options as a housing site capable of accommodating 115 dwellings. Clearly at some point, the Council considered that the Site was suitable to accommodate residential development sufficient for it to be identified as a draft allocation. The Site was considered suitable and deliverable and WL remain of the view that it should be included as a draft allocation in the Plan. In allocating the land at Worcester Lane, it could potentially reduce the shortfall in housing that is required but unable to be currently accommodated in the Borough. We set out above why we consider that the Site is suitable for development and why it should be allocated as a site for housing in the Borough Plan.

The issue of unmet housing need arising across the HMA and how this will be addressed is a key issue that the Plan will need to address. Whilst the Dudley Local Plan identifies a relatively modest shortfall in housing land there are wider issues specifically arising in Sandwell that may compound the issue of where and how housing need is met. Sandwell Council is also currently consulting on its Preferred Option Local Plan which identifies a shortfall of 18,606 dwellings that the Council need but which are unable to accommodate within its own administrative area. The Council will also be looking to its adjoining neighbours, of which Dudley is one, in order to see whether their need can be met outside of its administrative area. Furthermore, the consultation on the Birmingham City Issues and Options that concluded in December 2022 also highlighted that it too has a housing shortfall of approximately 78,415 dwellings that will also need to be met elsewhere within the HMA. Dudley in seeking to meet part of its unmet need by agreeing with adjoining authorities in the HMA will to a degree be competing with other authorities that also have a much more significant shortfall to meet and which have less land, including Green Belt land to meet this. This reinforces WL's view that the Council should be doing all it can to meet its needs in full in its administrative area even if it means releasing land from the Green Belt to do so. By meeting all its development needs within Dudley this would reduce the wider pressures within the HMA on other adjoining authorities to help meet the unmet needs arising principally in Sandwell and Birmingham but also potentially in Wolverhampton City as well.

Policy DLP 3 Areas Outside the Growth Network

Part 5 of the policy confirms that the Council's Green Belt boundaries will be maintained and protected from inappropriate development. In light of the comments we have set out in respect of policy DLP 1 above WL object to this approach on the basis that maintaining the Green Belt and seeking to direct growth to only previously developed sites will result in housing need being unmet and a shortage of employment land being delivered through the Plan unless the Council is able to agree with other authorities in the HMA for them to accommodate some of this unmet need. As noted previously the Council had intended to release land from the Green Belt when preparing the Black Country Plan in order to not only meet Dudley's needs but contribute to meeting the wider needs of the HMA. WL reiterate that the release of land from the Green Belt within Dudley will help ensure that Dudley is able to meet its housing

requirement of 11,954 in full within its own administrative areas without having to resort to its adjoining neighbours. The decision to not release land from the Green Belt to meet Dudley's needs in full will have a number of adverse consequences for the supply of new homes and particularly the delivery of affordable homes, making the aspiration for home ownership beyond the reach of many who live in the Borough.

Policy DLP 4 Achieving Well Designed Places

WL generally support the objectives of the policy in terms of ensuring new development is of high quality and well designed, recognising that this would have a positive impact on a character of the Borough as well as future residents and occupiers of new development. WL also recognise that design has a key role to play in achieving sustainable development by responding to known constraints and delivering high density development that makes effective use of previously developed land. The role of design in new development is, therefore, key in delivering a wide range of policy objectives set out in the Plan.

Policy DLP 6 Infrastructure Provision

WL support the intention that all new development should be supported by the necessary on and off site infrastructure to serve the needs of those occupying new development. In providing new infrastructure to meet the needs of future residents the request to fund them must ensure that the resulting development is viable and that the development can support the requirements being requested.

Policy DLP8 Health and Wellbeing

We welcome the proposal that Health Impact Assessments should only be undertaken on larger residential developments of more than 150 dwellings.

Policy DLP 9 Healthcare Infrastructure

WL acknowledge that in new residential development there may be a requirement to mitigate the impact of the development by providing additional healthcare infrastructure where there is an increase in demand on this. This can, however, be mitigated through the provision of additional capacity of existing GP surgeries or through the creation of new facilities secured by developer contributions of CIL as part of the planning application process. Clearly any obligations or contributions arising through new development would need to ensure that the development remains viable in order to deliver these and would need to be considered as part of an overall package of measures and policy aims to be set out in the Plan.

Policy DLP 10 Delivering Sustainable Housing Growth

We have set out above our comments in respect of the proposed housing requirements and the Council's strategy for meeting the housing need within its own administrative area. Notwithstanding this approach there is still a shortfall of 1,078 that are required but which sufficient land is yet to be identified to accommodate.

Putting the shortfall aside we have a number of concerns about the sources of housing land supply that the Council sets out in Table 8.1 of the Plan.

In respect of sites with planning permission or prior approval it is not clear whether an implementation allowance has been applied to this source of supply. Typically, a 10% implementation allowance would be applied to such sites.

Table 7 of the SHLAA also identifies potential supply from occupied employment sites albeit that a 15% non-implementation allowance has been applied to this source. It is noted that

reliance on redevelopment of existing employment sites was a key theme for delivering new houses through the adopted Black Country Core Strategy. However, the intended strategy was not wholly successful as issues relating to the release of multi-ownership employment sites did not result in significant new residential development coming forward. Furthermore, retention of employment sites in employment use proved commercially as viable, if not more viable, than developing for residential use. The outcome being that a number of employment sites that had been earmarked for residential development remained, and continue to remain, in employment use. It is questionable whether the same reliance on existing employment sites to deliver new residential development in the current Plan would have resulted in a different outcome. As such, the application of only a 15% non-implementation allowance seems on the low side and that a much higher non-implementation allowance should be applied. Due to the uncertainties associated with this source of supply coming forward and making any meaningful contribution to the supply of housing there is an argument to say it should be removed completely from the potential supply of new homes.

A windfall allowance of 179 dwellings per year has also been allowed for. Whilst the Framework confirms that where an allowance is made for windfall sites as part of the anticipated supply there should be compelling evidence that they will provide a reliable source of supply. The windfall allowance that has been allowed for equates to nearly 25% of the total housing requirement which is a significant proportion of the overall supply that is expected to come forward on non-allocated sites. It is also noted that the windfall allowance is on top of the supply that is also identified on occupied employment land sites and other sites within town centres and the regeneration corridors.

In respect of occupied employment land sites such as those identified in Brierley Hill there is again a question mark over whether these will come forward and specifically when they will come forward for development. Whilst Table 8.1 indicates that these would not start contributing to the supply until 2028 there is no certainty that this source of supply will contribute to the overall supply of housing.

Table 8.1 also includes a centre uplift allowance which accounts for a number of sites increasing the density of development that that site is capable of accommodating. Whilst in theory this may be possible there is a question mark over whether this would actually deliver as intended. Due to the uncertainty that this will occur and the limited contribution it makes to the overall supply this element of the supply should also be removed.

A further source of supply is from a redevelopment of offices in Brierley Hill waterfront. This has been included on the basis that office demand has decreased following the Covid pandemic and that the office capacity would be available for redevelopment for housing through the plan period. There is a degree of uncertainty over whether this would happen or not and as such it cannot be guaranteed that the element of supply would be deliverable. If it did take place this would be considered a windfall and doesn't need to be identified a separate source of housing in the supply.

Totalling up all the sources of supply in Table 8.1 equals 10,876 homes. This is the same number as the proposed housing requirement set out in the Plan. The Plan does not propose to over-allocate against the housing requirement in case for whatever reason certain sources of the supply do not come forward as expected. As it stands, all sources of the supply would have to come forward to meet the housing requirement. This risks the housing requirement not being met in full if sites do not come forward as anticipated. Clearly, if the Council were to over-allocate against the housing requirement this would identify additional sites for housing that could meet the Standard Method housing requirement that the Council are currently stating that they cannot meet in full. As it stands WL are concerned that the sources of supply that have been identified would not be sufficient to meet the housing requirement as proposed and that due to various reasons relating to non-implementation or delivery of certain sites/sources of supply there would be a shortfall in supply against the housing requirement.

In order to address this, additional land will be made available to protect against any non-implementation that may occur.

Policy DLP 11 Housing Density, Type and Accessibility

The policy specifies the density and type of new housing that should be provided, with new housing development to be informed by the need for a different type and range of size of accommodation, levels of accessibility and the need to achieve high quality design. The policy then goes on to state that developments of 10 or more homes should provide a range of house types and sizes and that developments of 10 or more homes should achieve the density target set out within the policy. These range from 100 dwellings per hectare on sites that are within strategic centres or town centres, down to 45 dwellings per hectare where a site is accessible for a high density housing site or 40 dwellings per hectare for a moderate density housing development. In seeking to achieve the density targets set out above we note the evidence contained in the Black Country Housing Market Assessment (March 2021). This sets out the size of housing required within each tenure within Dudley for owner-occupied, rented, shared ownership or social rented / affordable rented properties. What is clear is that for nearly all 4 of these tenures nearly 50% of the properties are required to be 3 or 4 bedroom properties. It is, therefore, highly debatable whether sites of 10 or more dwellings would be able to deliver the full range of dwellings required and the density specified within the policy. Three or four bedroom dwellings tend to be houses as opposed to apartments and would therefore deliver a much lower density development than a wholly flatted scheme.

Similarly, if high density development is to be achieved then this is likely to be comprised of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and would not therefore deliver the full range of housing that the policy seeks.

Whilst it is noted that a range of densities are proposed in different parts of the Borough the Black Country Housing Market Report is clear that there is a significant demand across all tenures for 3 and 4 bedroom properties. If this need is to be met then sites and town centres or in the strategic centres, where new development is proposed to be focused, these area and sites are unlikely to deliver the larger properties that are required. This reinforces WL's view that the range of different sites are required in order to help meet the housing needs of the Borough going forward.

A further consideration in seeking to achieve the density assumption set out in the policy also relate to meeting other aspirations and policy objectives in the Plan. This could include provision of open space, achieving high quality design and incorporation of National Described Space Standards. A combination of these and other policy considerations can and will impact on the density of development that can potentially come forward on sites.

Policy DLP 12 Delivering Affordable, Wheelchair Accessible and Self Build / Custom Build Housing

The policy sets out the thresholds for providing affordable housing on different value zones throughout the Borough. It is not clear where the basis for the different thresholds has been derived from although it is assumed that this is down to the viability of specific sites in these areas being able to accommodate affordable housing.

The policy stipulates that on greenfield sites of medium value zones 20% affordable housing will be sought. It is noted that of the new allocations proposed in the Plan only 3.5% of the

supply is on greenfield land. As such, there is very limited prospect that much affordable housing will come forward on these sites. Furthermore, the requirement to provide 10% affordable housing on previously developed sites on all sites in lower value zones and brownfield sites in medium value zones is likely to raise issues with the viability of such sites being able to deliver this. On unviable sites it will reduce the ability of developers to deliver affordable housing leading to affordable needs going unmet.

We note that the Worcester Lane, which is located in a higher value area, is relatively unconstrained and is a greenfield site. In light of the lack of constraints affecting the site it would be one such site that could potentially deliver a policy compliant level of affordable housing (30%) making a significant contribution to the overall needs of the Borough. The provision of affordable housing in an area that is well related to the countryside and the opportunities that this offers for residents is considered a significant benefit in contrast to providing affordable homes in town or strategic centres that are less accessible to the countryside.

The site would also be capable of delivering houses of different types and tenures rather than high density apartment schemes. Again, this would help meet identified needs as set out in the Black Country Housing Market Report.

In respect of National Wheelchair Accessibility Standards WL object to the differentiation in the requirement to provide wheelchair accessible houses according to the different value areas that the proposed houses are to be built in. A wheelchair user in a low value area would have the same requirement for a wheelchair accessible house as a wheelchair user in a high value area. Wheelchair users are not therefore going to be solely located in high value areas and their needs would need to be accommodated irrespective of the value area that the house was to be built in.

In light of the fact that the Plan seeks to differentiate the delivery of wheelchair accessible properties between lower and high value areas indicates that the Council acknowledge that delivery of wheelchair accessible properties will have an impact on the viability of these developments. The inference being that there is an additional cost involved and that this can only be sustained where a higher land value can be sustained from the development. If this is the case then additional sites in higher value areas should be allocated in order to deliver the policy requirements that the Council is seeking.

In respect of self-build properties paragraph 8.20 confirms that there are currently 83 individuals on the self-build and custom build register for Dudley. If each of these individuals were to construct a house it would equate to 0.76% of the total housing requirement for the Borough. The policy suggests that sites of more than 100 dwellings 5% of dwellings should be made available for self-build or custom build housing. WL consider that a 5% requirement is in excess of the actual numbers of people on the self build register which is set out above equates to less than 1% of the total housing needed. WL suggest that a 1% requirement on sites of 100 or more housing would be a more appropriate figure.

Policy DLP 16 Education Facilities

WL agree that if new development places additional demands on existing schools over and above their existing capacity, then it is entirely appropriate that additional capacity should be created either through an extension to an existing facility, provision of a new facility or a financial contribution to create additional capacity. This is a well established principle underpinning new residential development. Furthermore, the potential need to make financial contributions toward education provision must also be seen in the context of the other policy requirements that the Plan seeking to achieve and therefore, collectively may well have an impact on scheme viability. Again, we welcome the inclusion of reference to a Viability

Assessment if there is any question mark over the viability of development if such contributions are sought.

Policy DLP 32 Nature of Recovery Network and Biodiversity Net Gain

Following the enactment of the Environment Act there is now a statutory requirement to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain through new developments. This is now a statutory requirement so there is no need for it to be included in a policy. Notwithstanding the above, we note that policy DLP 32 sets out a requirement that all development shall deliver a minimum of 10% net gain.

Policy DLP 39 Design Quality

WL have a number of concerns with the policy particularly where there are overlapping forms of control such as Part 1D which refers to Secured by Design, which is now covered by Part Q of the Building Regulations. As both are covered in other legislation we query why it is necessary to include it within a policy in the Plan.

Part 4 of the policy states that all new residential development will be required to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards (“**NDSS**”). The PPG is quite clear that Councils need to gather evidence first to determine whether there is a need for additional standards in their area and justify setting up appropriate policies in their Local Plan. Has sufficient evidence been gathered to demonstrate that all new properties are required to meet NDSS?

Notwithstanding whether there is evidence to require the provision of all new dwellings to accord with NDSS if the requirement were to be applied this would have a number of significant implications for the Council. Firstly, NDSS means larger houses have to be built in order to comply with the standards. This would mean the density of development would decrease and the number of houses that can be delivered on land identified on housing will decrease. The decrease will result in fewer homes being delivered within the Borough and thereby decreasing the supply of housing and potentially resulting in housing need going unmet. A further consequence is this could place additional pressure on adjoining authorities in order to have to make up an even larger shortfall of housing that is needed in Dudley but which cannot be accommodated within the area.

Delivering NDSS could also potentially have implications on scheme viability particularly when this is taken into account along with remediation costs, design quality, provision of open space, achieving biodiversity net gain and achieving energy efficiency targets. In seeking to achieve all of these policy objectives could have an adverse impact on scheme viability that would restrict the delivery of new homes in the Borough.

Policy DLP 47 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and BREEAM Standards

We note the requirement in Part 3 of the policy that major developments creating 10 or more homes must incorporate the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources sufficient to offset at least 10% of the estimated residual energy demand of development on completion. It is not clear on what basis the requirement for a 20% energy reduction has been based on and it seems an arbitrary figure without any justification. Whilst WL are supportive in principle of new development achieving energy reductions and sustainability we consider that building regulations are the most appropriate way of securing energy reduction targets. Building regulations are constantly updated and will ensure that new development is able to achieve the requisite energy reduction standards in place at the time of construction. Building regulations are, therefore, more responsive to changes in Government and national policy whereas the Local Plan policy would be static until the Local Plan was reviewed. The policy is a duplication of control with other legislation and as such it is considered unnecessary.

We trust you will take our comments into consideration and we welcome the opportunity to participate further at the pre-submission draft consultation stage and look forward to being notified of this in due course. Should you have any questions about the above or wish to discuss please do not hesitate to contact either Sam Silcocks or myself.

Yours faithfully

