



Our Ref: P1472/JP/hr
 Date: 26th November 2024

Planning Policy
 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
 Council House
 Freeth Street
 Oldbury
 B69 3DE



BY EMAIL ONLY: planning.policy@dudley.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

**Dudley Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft (Regulation 19)
 Response by Bloor Homes Western**

Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy are instructed by Bloor Homes Western (**'Bloor'**) to submit representations to the Dudley Local Plan Preferred Options consultation. Bloor are currently promoting a number of sites across the HMA and wish to submit comments in respect of the Dudley Plan. Whilst Bloor's interests are not explicitly located within Dudley Borough, the way the Dudley Plan is currently drafted will have a number of repercussions on the delivery of housing across the wider HMA. It is within this context that Bloor's representations are submitted, and we trust you will read our comments in this context.

Policy DLP1 Development Strategy

Bloor object to the development strategy set out within the Dudley Local Plan on the basis that it proposes to only meet the Borough's housing needs on previously developed land within the urban area. In pursuing such an approach not all housing need within the borough met. The Standard Method housing requirement for Dudley is 11,169 dwellings however there is only currently capacity to accommodate 10,470 of these. There is, therefore, a shortfall of 699 dwellings which are needed but which the Council is unable to accommodate within its own administrative area. The Plan is not currently proposing to release land from the Green Belt and whilst the recently updated National Planning Policy Framework (**'the Framework'**) removes the requirement to review the Green Belt, the fact that it has a shortfall in the amount of housing that is needed against which it can currently provide will mean that the shortfall of 699 dwellings will have to be accommodated elsewhere within the HMA in adjoining authorities if housing needs are to be met in full. Paragraph 11b) still states that strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for the objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring area.

BIRMINGHAM
 0121 455 9455

STOKE-ON-TRENT
 01782 272555

NOTTINGHAM
 0115 947 6236

WORCESTER
 01905 22666



Bloor considers the Council's approach to be unsound largely on the basis that if the 699 dwellings have to be provided elsewhere, this will reduce the availability of any alternative capacity to meet the needs of other authorities in the HMA that have much a greater unmet need, which will effectively be competing with Dudley for this capacity, when the Council has available land including Green Belt land within its own administrative area that it could use but

which has chosen not to release. In looking to adjoining neighbouring authorities, it is highly likely that if they were to agree to accommodate any of Dudley's needs it would have to be on Green Belt land.

Clearly, if this is the case then it should be demonstrated first that Dudley has exhausted all sources of potential land within its administrative area first, including Green Belt land, before looking cross boundary. If there is no alternative, then Dudley will need to work with adjoining authorities to agree with them to meet its needs. Whilst it is now the choice of the Council to decide to review the Green Belt, the decision not to will result in a significant number of adverse effects arising as a result of not planning for an adequate number of houses to meet the needs in Dudley. These will include significant numbers of Dudley's residents who want to live in the Borough being unable to do so leading to wider economic issues with ensuring that the Borough has enough people of working age able to work in the Borough. Delivery of affordable housing will erode even further and lead to worsening living conditions for those in cramped and overcrowded houses. As such, Bloor contend that exceptional circumstances exist that warrant a review of Green Belt boundaries.

A significant wider unmet need exists

The shortfall of land for housing is not unique to Dudley and is a long-established concern within the HMA.

Birmingham Development Plan

The Birmingham Development Plan ("BDP") was adopted in January 2017. Policy PG1 – Overall Levels of Growth, advised that 89,000 dwellings are required during the course of the plan period (2011 to 2031) to meet the growth requirements of the City. However, only 51,100 additional dwellings can be accommodated within the City's administrative area. This leaves a shortfall of 37,900 homes including 14,400 affordable homes (that will need to be delivered elsewhere within the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area). The BDP stipulated that Birmingham's unmet need was to be met by other authorities in the HMA as and when they produced individual Local Plans. This has not happened.

Birmingham City Council has now commenced a review of its Local Plan and consulted on Issues and Options for a draft Plan concluding in December 2022 and more recently undertook Regulation 18 consultation concluding in August 2024. The Regulation 18 Plan advised that the Standard Method housing requirement for the period 2020 to 2042 is 149,180 dwellings. The Plan stated that a supply of 103,027 dwellings had been identified leaving a shortfall of 46,153 dwellings. The supply is made up of reuse of employment sites along with a number of SHLAA sites. The shortfall of 46,053 dwellings relies upon all SHLAA sites coming forward for development and the provision of a significant number of windfalls. Bloor have submitted representations to the Birmingham plan querying whether the identified supply is robust.

Black Country Core Strategy Review

Previously, the four Black Country authorities had been preparing a Joint Plan although this has now subsequently been abandoned in favour of the preparation of individual Plans for

each authority. Notwithstanding the above, the Preferred Options Black Country Plan proposed a housing requirement based upon the Standard Method which was the sum of the four individual authority housing requirements. The housing requirement for the four authorities was 76,076 dwellings, however, there was only an identified capacity of 47,837 dwellings leaving a shortfall of 28,239 dwellings to be directed to other authorities. Now, each authority will calculate its own housing requirement using the standard method calculation. The requirement in Sandwell is 26,350 dwellings, however, Sandwell claim only to have capacity to deliver approximately 10,434 leaving a shortfall of 15,916 dwellings. Wolverhampton have also just reported its Regulation 19 plan to its Cabinet which confirms a shortfall of 10,398 dwellings. Walsall is yet to publish a draft Plan although it is anticipated that there will be a further shortfall in what is required against the capacity when it does.

Overall Shortfall

If the housing shortfall figures for the Dudley, Birmingham, Sandwell and Walsall Plans are added together it totals 73,166 dwellings. As noted above, this has the potential to increase even further when any shortfall arising in Walsall is added. This is a substantial number of homes and represents a substantial number of people and families that will go without homes should a definitive solution not be found.

Objection

Bloor object to Policy DLP1 on the basis that it is not positively prepared, not effective and not consistent with national policy. The policy and approach to meeting housing needs within Dudley will result in housing need going unmet leaving those in need of housing having to incur increasing costs of housing be that through purchase or renting costs, increased overcrowding and a greater number of people living in housing that is not suitable for their needs. As well as the social cost of not providing enough housing the economic impacts of not meeting the needs of the population are potentially as significant, if not more so, if those of working age population cannot find somewhere to live in the Borough they will leave and work elsewhere. This outward migration could lead to an ageing population being left with a smaller working age population present which could impact on the delivery and provision of services. The impacts are significant and as such, the approach set out in the plan is unsound.

In order to address our concerns, the Council need to establish and agree with other authorities in the HMA how and where its unmet needs are going to be met. This needs to be a tangible and workable solution as opposed to the mere suggestion of working together. Without a signed memorandum of understanding between the HMA authorities with each setting out what proportion of unmet need each is due to take there is no realistic prospect that Sandwell's housing needs are going to be met in full.

Policy DLP10 Delivering Sustainable Housing Growth

Bloor 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% of 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.

A windfall allowance of 184 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.

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.

Totalling up all the sources of supply in Table 8.1 equals 10,470 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 (albeit it would still be 699 short).

In light of the comments above, Bloor do not agree that the identified supply is deliverable and have a number of concerns over whether the sources identified will deliver. If they do not, it will result in significant housing need going unmet.

Bloor therefore object to Policy DLP10 on the basis that it is not effective, and as it is, 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 Bloor's concerns additional land should be made available to protect against any non-implementation that may occur and to allow flexibility in meeting the needs.

Duty to Cooperate

Paragraph 24 of the Framework confirms that Local Planning Authorities are under a duty to cooperate with each other on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Paragraph 26 goes on to state that joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary and where development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular area could be met elsewhere. The level of unmet need arising within HMA is one such area where the Duty to Cooperate should be employed in order to determine where this unmet need should be directed.

Having regard to the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area there are 14 authorities within it which include Birmingham, the four Black Country authorities and 9 other surrounding authorities. In light of the shortfall arising in Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton this effectively leaves 10 remaining authorities where the need could be distributed.

Turning to each of the remaining authorities it is highlighted above that there is potentially a shortfall that will arise in Walsall when it comes to publish a draft Plan. Redditch Borough is effectively built up to its boundary and already has to look to its adjoining neighbour, Bromsgrove, in order to accommodate its housing need. It would be unable to accommodate any further unmet need arising in the Black Country or wider HMA. Similarly, Tamworth had to look to its adjoining neighbours of Lichfield and North Warwickshire in order to meet its current housing requirement in its adopted Local Plan. It too would be unlikely to be able to accommodate any unmet need arising. Cannock Chase's capacity is restricted due to

environmental constraints including the Cannock Chase's SAC and AONB. A small part of Stratford-upon-Avon District falls within the Housing Market Area whilst North Warwickshire have previously committed to delivering 3,790 dwellings to meeting Birmingham's needs up to 2031 in its adopted Local Plan (2021). The response of North Warwickshire to the recent Birmingham Regulation 18 consultation indicated that they would be unlikely to agree to providing further land to meet Birmingham's needs this again. Solihull have recently withdrawn their Local Plan from examination. The Council had been proposing to provide 2,000 homes to meet the needs of Birmingham. It remains to be seen if the Council will do the same when it comes to prepare its new plan.

This effectively leaves Lichfield, South Staffordshire and Bromsgrove as the three remaining authorities that would be able to make any meaningful contribution to meeting housing needs arising in the wider HMA. However, a review of what these local authorities has been proposing to help meet the housing shortfall across the HMA falls woefully short of what is needed.

South Staffordshire have previously proposed to accommodate 4,000 dwellings to meet the needs arising in the Black Country although this was subsequently reduced to just under 700 homes when the Council re-consulted on a Pre-Submission draft Plan in April 2024. Lichfield were proposing around 2,000 homes before withdrawing their plan. Bromsgrove has yet to publish a draft plan and so it is yet to state how many dwellings it may be prepared to accommodate. Collectively this equates to just under 700 homes that are currently being made available to meet the unmet needs of the HMA (this may increase if Bromsgrove propose to meet some unmet need) which will fall woefully short of addressing the housing need of local people and families across the HMA.

The outcome of the above is that there is a significant unmet housing need arising principally from Birmingham, Sandwell and Wolverhampton with additional need from Walsall also likely to add to this, and at the current time there is no agreement or clear strategy between the 14 HMA authorities as to where or how this unmet need is to be met. Furthermore, in the few authorities that could assist in meeting the overspill, with land available around the conurbation to assist with meeting the housing overspill, there are no firm agreement or proposals in place to adequately address the shortfall.

It is clear from the above that the emerging position across the HMA is one where there is a significant housing need that exists, but where certain authorities, such as Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Birmingham and to a lesser extent Dudley, cannot currently meet its needs in full. Bloor contend that these un-met needs must be met by the HMA authorities in the next round of plans that are now being prepared. If this need is not met in full, it risks giving rise to a number of significant knock on effects on the delivery and provision of housing across the Greater Birmingham area. These impacts 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.

Objection

In light of the Council's need and the shortfall that the Council is faced with, Bloor do not consider that the Council has met its duty to cooperate. We urge the Council to enter constructive and productive discussions with the other HMA authorities, including Bromsgrove, to seek agreement on how and where this unmet housing need is going to be delivered. Meeting the housing needs of the HMA cannot be achieved on an authority by authority basis and that a joined up approach that crosses administrative boundaries will be required if there is to be any chance of meeting the HMA's housing needs both in terms of quantum and the required mix, including affordable homes.

It is our view that the focus for addressing the shortfall in Dudley should be those authorities closest to them. Bromsgrove and South Staffordshire are the closest authorities with a meaningful ability to address the shortfall and with land available adjacent to the conurbation. The Bromsgrove plan review is still at an early stage and there is still plenty of scope to hold meaningful discussions to provide land to meet the needs arising in Sandwell.

We trust you take our comments into consideration, and we look forward to being notified of further stages of consultation on the Local Plan. If you have any questions or need to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

