

Statement on Matters and Issues for
Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Core Strategy Examination

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Summary

Rural Solutions (RSL) on behalf of Barratt Homes and David Wilson Homes (BM&DWH) provide the following comments in response to the Schedule of Matters, Issues & Questions for the Bradford Metropolitan District Council (BMDC) Core Strategy Examination.

In general BH&DWH consider that the Submission version Core Strategy provides a cogent and justified strategy for the District. While the document appears fundamentally to be a sound one, BH&DWH and RSL raise specific concerns regarding the LPA's approach to Wharfedale's settlements, taken in response to ecological issues; this is an approach which we firmly believe requires modification. A number of additional specific points are raised in relation to individual policies and their impact on housing delivery, with proposed modifications put forward as appropriate.

MATTER 3: STRATEGIC CORE POLICIES

Policy SCI – Overall approach and key spatial priorities

Question 3.1a - How does the policy identify appropriate spatial priorities, and where is the justification and evidence?

I.1 BH&DWH have previously supported BMDC in relation to its overall approach to development and key spatial priorities. The company continues to support the overall approach and the areas where growth is directed but have concerns about how this is distributed across Bradford. There is also concern over the delivery by 2030 of the amount of housing development envisaged, on the basis that a Site Allocations document is unlikely to be adopted until late 2017. In particular the company supports criteria 6 which takes a positive approach to development in Local Service Centres (LSCs).

I.2 However, the criterion references meeting ‘local needs for homes’. ‘Local needs’ is not defined in the document and underemphasises the role that these comparatively large settlements can play in meeting housing need in the plan-area. The NPPF¹ states that:

“The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities” (RSL underlining)

I.3 The Framework then goes onto emphasise² the role that new housing can have in enhancing the sustainability of rural communities.

I.4 The supporting text for the Policy SCI advocates this, stating that:

“Other settlements have the potential to grow in a managed and sustainable way in particular the Local Growth Centres derived in Policy SC4. This will help to promote greater self-sufficiency in rural areas.”

I.5 Reference to ‘local needs’ may serve to confuse and it is considered that the criterion needs to be worded:

“Support the Local Service Centres as defined in Policy SC4, providing new housing to maintain and enhance local services”

¹ NPPF Para 52

² NPPF Para 55

Policy SC4 – Settlement Hierarchy

Question 3.2a - Is the Settlement Hierarchy for each town and settlement appropriate, effective, locally distinctive, justified and soundly based, and is it positively prepared and consistent with the latest national policy?

- I.6 BH&DWH have previously supported BMDC in relation to the overall approach to its settlement hierarchy and continues to so in general terms as an effective and soundly based strategy. In particular reference to Local Growth Centres (LGCs) making a “*significant contribution to meeting the districts needs for housing*” is supported.
- I.7 However, BH&DWH is concerned by the specific reference that in LSCs “*the emphasis will be on smaller scale developments*” and query whether reference should be to smaller scale ‘*development*’ (growth) rather than ‘*developments*.’
- I.8 BH&DWH are, if the intention was to refer to developments, concerned that there is no justification for seeking to meet housing need through smaller developments rather than larger ones. There is not considered to be any justification for the Council to require growth targets for an LSC to be met by a series of smaller developments, as opposed to one or more larger developments. A greater level of infrastructure and service contribution would be commonly delivered by a larger development than a series of smaller ones and it is also the case that many of these centres will have grown historically based on larger development.
- I.9 Clarification and amendment is considered necessary on this point to ensure that the policy is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Policy SC5 – Location of Development

Question 3.3a - What is the justification for setting the priorities and criteria for locating new development; is it supported by evidence, appropriate and soundly based?

- I.10 BH&DWH are concerned that there is inconsistency and a potential lack of clarity in terms of how Sections A and B of the policy interact.
- I.11 For example if there is a previously developed site, which has poor accessibility, would this site be preferred at the allocation stage to a Green Belt site which has good accessibility?
- I.12 In this regard the policy needs to be clearer in order to ensure transparency and effective site selection at the site allocations stage.
- I.13 The criteria included in Section B are supported but do not provide an exhaustive list of site selection criteria

Question 3.3b - Does the policy make the appropriate balance between prioritisation of brownfield land, use of brownfield land and windfalls, and greenfield land, and safeguarded land?

- I.14 As a company BH&DWH support the use of PDL sites and last year 63% of the new houses it built across the country were on such sites. However it considers that the introduction of minimum standards for PDL take-up is inappropriate and this is an issue raised in relation to Policy HOI.
- I.15 In this Strategic Core Policy it is considered that the first criterion should reflect national policy and 'encourage' the use of brownfield land. The first criterion should therefore make reference to use of PDL as an aspiration rather than requirement.
- I.16 In particular, it is considered that the policy wording of criterion I needs to include the additional wording, as underlined below, to ensure conformity:

“I. First priority, wherever possible, to the re-use of deliverable and developable previously developed land and buildings provided that it is not of high environmental value and the more efficient and effective use of existing developed areas within the City of Bradford, Principal Towns of Ilkley, Keighley and Bingley, the Local Growth Centres and the Local Service Centres.”

- I.17 Including this additional wording would also ensure conformity with criterion 2 of 'Figure HOI: 10 Principles For Achieving Sustainable', which refers to '*Prioritising, wherever possible,*' the use of PDL land.
- I.18 BH&DWH are concerned that there the prioritisation of *greenfield* opportunities within settlements, over green belt releases, will not always be the most appropriate choice and is therefore not fully justified.
- I.19 The policy does not address safeguarded land, which is required in order to ensure that the Core Strategy has flexibility to ensure that Bradford can deliver its housing target. We cover this issue in more detail under Question 3.4d.
- I.20 BMDC have identified that '*exceptional circumstances*'³ exist to justify the release of Green Belt land for housing development. As part of the recommended review of Green Belt boundaries, it may be found that due to the growth of settlements over previous decades or other spatial planning reasons, some Green Belt sites no longer fulfil a recognisable purpose and may be removed from the designation (for development). At the same time it may be found that another non-designated piece of land could now be justifiably included in Green Belt and contribute to Green Belt functions.
- I.21 There may also be scenarios, where landscape harm will result from development of a greenfield site, but not a Green Belt site, particularly given significant variation in topography and character in the District's settlements.
- I.22 While the Core Strategy makes no reference to *adding* to the Green Belt as part of any review of boundaries, small scale additions and substitutions may be appropriate.
- I.23 The NPPF provides no indication that non-Green Belt sites should, in spatial planning and allocation terms, be preferred to sites designated as Green Belt.
- I.24 On that basis there is no justification for prioritising greenfield over Green Belt sites and fundamentally pre-determining the outcomes of a Green Belt review.
- I.25 In order to ensure that the policy is justified and effective, criterion 2 or 3 could be combined to state:
- "2. Second priority to other Greenfield opportunities or Local Green Belt releases, dependent upon the outcome of a selective Green Belt review."*

³ NPPF Para 83

Questions 3.3c - How will sites be assessed and are the accessibility standards inflexible?

- I.26 The accessibility criteria included within Appendix 3 of the Core Strategy and the caveat that sites should '*normally*' meet with these criteria, is generally supported by BH&DWH.
- I.27 Referencing comments made above a comparison of accessibility may in some cases mean that Green Belt sites should be prioritised over other site types at the site allocations stage.

Policy SC7 – Green Belt

Question 3.4ai Is the proposed approach to the Green Belt appropriate, effective, positively prepared, justified, soundly based and consistent with the latest national policy (NPPF; ¶ 84), particularly in terms of:

- i. **identifying the exceptional circumstances necessary for using Green Belt land;**

- I.28 BH&DWH consider that BMDC have clearly identified that ‘*exceptional circumstances*’, based on the scale of housing need in the District, exist to justify the release of Green Belt land for housing development. There are simply not enough *deliverable* housing sites outside of the Green Belt within Bradford to meet the housing targets of the Core Strategy and release of designated land is therefore essential.

Question 3.4b - Whether there should be a full or selective review of the Green Belt, and would such a review be co-ordinated and agreed with neighbouring authorities?

- I.29 BH&DWH consider that whichever form of review is undertaken, this must be focused upon securing a supply of a sufficient housing land to ensure that housing need is met.
- I.30 As referred to in relation to Policy SC5, BH&DWH consider that as part of a review of Green Belt review land to be carried out, local changes since the last review should be assessed and consideration given to substituting existing Green Belt sites to be released for development, with new Green Belt land i.e. greenfield sites should not automatically be preferred to Green Belt sites at the review and allocation stage.

Question 3.4d - Should the Green Belt review also include Safeguarded Land?

- I.31 Whatever form the review of Green Belt takes, BH&DWH this review should include the provision of Safeguarded Land. The NPPF states that:

“85. *When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:*

...

- *where necessary, identify in their plans areas of ‘safeguarded land’ between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;”*

- I.32 The Council’s Submission Statement of Consultation indicates that “*There is no absolute requirement to automatically allow for safeguarded land under paragraph 85.*”

- I.33 While we would agree that there is no *absolute requirement*, given the scale of housing need in the plan-area and the Council's ambitious targets for delivering housing on previously developed land, which raise serious concerns and question marks regarding deliverability, it is considered that the identification of safeguarded land amounts to good and positive, long-term planning and would provide opportunities for a timely review of the Core Strategy, if supply is shown to fail to meet need.
- I.34 The presumption in favour of sustainable development at para 14 of the NPPF states that:

“Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change...”
- I.35 The identification of safeguarded land would form one of a number of measures that would provide BMDC with flexibility to adapt (rapidly) to rapid change e.g. increases in housing requirements or housing underdelivery. In practice safeguarding land, would mean that if during the mid-point of the plan period a Local Plan review is required due to the lack of delivery of a sufficient amount of housing, this could be carried out more promptly without the need for an associated, further Green Belt review.
- I.36 NPPF Para 85 makes it clear that safeguarded land is not made available for development and therefore, in light of the challenges faced in meeting housing supply and the comments above, there are not considered to be sound reasons why reserved land should *not* be included within a Green Belt review.

Policy SC8 – South Pennine Moors

Question 3.5a. Is the approach towards new development with the South Pennine Moors and their Zone of Influence appropriate, effective, positively prepared, justified, soundly based and consistent with the latest national policy?

- I.37 It is clear from ongoing review of the plan's development that issues associated with the South Pennine Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) have resulted in dramatically reduced housing numbers in Wharfedale. The NPPF states ⁴ that:

“Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area.” (underlining by RSL)

- I.38 BH&DWH has previously raised concerns in relation to the approach taken by BMDC in significantly reducing the amount of housing to be allocated to settlements such as Addingham. Detailed commentary has been submitted by Baker Consultants, on behalf of BH&DWH and other interested parties, which clearly demonstrates that the Habitats Assessment 2014 does not constitute a reliable and justified evidence source for use in reducing contributions from certain settlements in the hierarchy and re-distributing this to other sub-areas in some cases distant from where that proportion of need arises. We are aware that ecologists acting on behalf of other parties not connected with BH&DWH, have reached similar conclusions.
- I.39 With regard to Addingham, the significant negative impacts of the proposed reduction in housing numbers is appraised in relation to Policies WDI-WD2. However for both this settlement and the Wharfedale sub-area, BH&DWH does not consider that the strategy as applied in relation to the South Pennine Moors SPA is appropriate, positively prepared, justified or consistent with national policy, which places significant importance on meeting market and affordable housing need.
- I.40 BH&DWH do not consider that every effort has been made to meet (locally occurring) housing need in Addingham or to make full use of the settlement's potential and capacity to contribute to delivering housing land in the plan-area.
- I.41 Having regard to good practice from elsewhere, Woking Borough Council, together with ten other authorities in the South East, have plan-areas that are impacted by the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (THSPA). The THSPA Avoidance Strategy 2010-2015 addresses this issue and would not allow development within 400m of an SPA. However, for areas within 400m-5km of the SPA, the Council, in part using its open space audit identified Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) that could provide alternative recreation facilities (to the SPA). A tariff for financial contributions from housing development was then developed to implement this alternative provision. This approach was carried forward in the submission version Woking Core Strategy (Policy CS8) and found sound by the Planning Inspectorate⁵.

⁴ NPPF Para 17, criterion iii

⁵ PINS/A3655/429/6

- I.42 We are not aware of appropriate justification having been presented for not taking a similar approach in this instance, avoiding the unnecessary restriction of development in Wharfedale's settlements.
- I.43 In the specific case of Addingham, where development proposed has been reduced by half from previous consultation documents⁶, despite the whole settlement being much further than 400m from the SPA, BMDC's evidence base⁷ notes that there is no park in Addingham and under provision of play areas. However, its SHLAA identifies a large site(s) (AD/004) in Addingham which would, either individually or together with AD/003, have the potential to deliver significant areas of recreation space, alongside new housing that would meet a local need and provide a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space to avoid any adverse ecological impact relating to the provision of 400 new houses as originally proposed. It should be noted that the delivery of AD/004 can be confirmed by BH&DWH, which has commissioned numerous technical reports in relation to the site.
- I.44 The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space on this site is just one example of a strategy that could have been developed locally in order to maintain originally planned growth levels.
- I.45 BH&DWH do not consider that the approach taken to the South Pennine Moors SPA is appropriate, positively prepared, justified or consistent with national policy.

⁶ Further Engagement Draft Housing Distribution (October 2011)

⁷ LDF Evidence Base Bradford District Settlement Study Update – October 2011

MATTER 4A: HOUSING REQUIREMENT

Policy HOI – The District’s Housing Requirement

Question 4.1a i - How has the Council undertaken an objective assessment of housing needs for Bradford, which is justified by robust and proportionate evidence and has been positively prepared, taking account of all the relevant factors, and does the Plan fully meet the objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in Bradford, along with any unmet housing requirements from neighbouring authorities, including:

- i. The Plan proposes to provide at least 42,100 homes (2013-2030). What is the basis, justification, assumptions and methodology for the proposed level of housing provision, having regard to the supporting evidence (including the SHMA & SHLAA, Housing Requirement Study (August 2013 update), Housing Background Paper⁸), recent population/household projections (including the 2008/2011-based household projections and 2012 sub-national population projections), demographic change, migration, household formation rates, housing market area, key housing drivers, housing demand and market signals, the need for affordable housing and the relationship with the economic strategy, in line with the guidance in the NPPF (¶ 14, 17, 47-55; 159) and Planning Practice Guidance (ID: 2a/3)?**

- I.46 Previous representations submitted on behalf of BH&DWH (and other developers) at the Publication Draft stage have made reference to the housing number proposed for the District, concluding on the basis of various evidence that a more realistic housing target for the District would at least 47,000.
- I.47 BH&DWH request that the Inspector closely considers the appropriateness of the housing target in the context of previous comments.
- I.48 In particular BH&DWH request that the Inspector considers carefully:
 - i) Bradford’s failure to deliver on its housing targets in recent years and the implications in terms of the need to apply a 20% buffer in accordance with NPPF⁹ requirements;
 - ii) The Council’s approach to phasing, considered in more detail below;
 - iii) The approach taken to PDL land in the Core Strategy, having regard to the challenging housing target and past housing performance. Can BMDC genuinely demonstrate through its SHLAA that 50% of the global figure i.e. at present 21,050 houses be accommodated on deliverable PDL sites?

⁸ Housing Background Paper 2 (February 2014); Examination Document (16)

⁹ NPPF Para 47

Question 4.1a ii - What is the current and future 5, 10 & 15-year housing land supply position, including existing commitments, future proposed provision, allowance for windfalls, phasing, balance between brownfield and greenfield sites, and provision identified in the latest SHLAA; and how will the proposed housing provision be effectively delivered?

- I.49 BH&DWH has concern with regard to the impact of the Council’s phasing policy and the extent to which this will undermine the Council’s ability to demonstrate a rolling five year supply of housing land.
- I.50 With regard to ‘Figure HO1 – 10 Principles for Achieving Sustainable Development’ which is a precursor to Policy HO1, BH&DWH support reference in criterion 2 of the policy to use of PDL ‘wherever possible’. This accords with the NPPF¹⁰ and should be the position adopted throughout the Core Strategy, clarifying that use of PDL is an aspiration rather than a requirement.
- I.51 However, BH&DWH objects to criterion 4 as it refers to phasing to prioritise PDL site developments. The Inspector’s Report¹¹ into the Rotherham Core Strategy outlines why a phasing approach would constrain housing delivery and not accord with the NPPF and required its removal.
- I.52 Paragraph 49 of that report states:
- “The Council explains that it has not prepared a detailed phasing policy to assist in delivering site allocations during the plan period but points to the need to prioritise the development of the most sustainable sites and the reuse of previously-developed land. This approach is set out in Policy CS3. It would appear, however, to be a phasing policy and, even though the Council considers that it would apply to no more than a handful of sites, it does not accord with the Framework. The approach of the Framework is to promote sustainable development which should go ahead without delay. Sites should be tested to ascertain whether they are sufficiently sustainable and deliverable to justify their development rather than phased according to their degree of sustainability. A phasing policy holding back greenfield sites until all or some previously-developed land is suitably re-used would have a beguiling attraction, but the status of any site as previously-developed land should be seen as just one consideration, albeit in some cases an especially important one.” (RSL underlining)*
- I.53 Paragraph 99 of the report goes onto conclude that:
- “...Anything which proposes or implies the phasing of a site or sites in preference to others should be excised.”*
- I.54 There are not considered to be any reasons in this instance why a phasing approach, which would apply to a significant number of housing sites and therefore potentially have serious implications in terms of housing delivery, should not be similar rejected.

¹⁰ Para 111

¹¹ File Ref: PINS/P4415/429/5

MATTER 4B: HOUSING SUPPLY

Policy HO2 – Strategic Sources of Housing Supply

Question 4.2a - Is there sufficient evidence to justify the main strategic sources of housing supply, including completions and commitments, former RUDP sites, including safeguarded land, new deliverable/developable sites, area-based initiatives including Growth Areas, including Urban Eco-Settlement in Shipley/Canal Road Corridor, Bradford City Centre, SE Bradford, Queensbury, Thornton, Silsden and Steeton with Eastburn, Holme Wood Urban Extension, and local Green Belt releases;

- I.55 BH&DWH, while not objecting to the inclusion of an urban extension at Holme Wood, are concerned regarding the scale of growth which is anticipated to be delivered within the plan-period. The Neighbourhood Development Plan¹² for the area anticipates the delivery of 2,700 homes in Holme Wood
- I.56 Urban extensions of any scale, particularly those such as Holme Wood, which are in a weaker market area and require significant infrastructure investment require a much longer gestation period and their early release needs to be encouraged if they are to be fully realised within the plan period.
- I.57 As a major house builder BH&DWH would anticipate that build rates on this site, in a weaker market area are likely to be low, given constraints on demand for new housing. Also, it is unlikely that the site would attract more than three housebuilders who would be competing against each other. Taking into account the lead in time for preparing a planning application, determination period, S106, discharging conditions and commencing on site with appropriate infrastructure, it would take a number of years to start on site. Even if development started on site now, based on a build out rate of between 60 to 80 dwellings per annum over 15 years to 2030, this would only result in between 900 and 1,200 dwellings. Based on an ambitious 80 dwellings being delivered from 2020 onwards, which would be difficult in this housing market, this would result in 800 dwellings. This would be 1,900 dwellings less than is being suggested. To ensure housing delivery, it is important to have lots of outlets instead of relying on large strategic sites which can't deliver sufficient housing over the plan period.
- I.58 The NPPF states that "*Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic*" and there are concerns as to the extent to which this urban regeneration project can make a major contribution to housing supply over the plan-period.
- I.59 BH&DWH considers that a more cautious approach, involving the reduction of housing numbers for this area of Bradford and reallocation to outlying settlements which can make a more certain contribution to meeting the District's housing need would be appropriate. Any additional housing numbers delivered at Holme Wood, over and above a more cautious estimate, would be treated as windfalls.

¹² Holme Wood & Tong Neighbourhood Development Plan Final Report January 2012

MATTER 4C: HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

Policy HO3 – Distribution of the Housing Requirement

Question 4.3a a. Is there sufficient evidence available to justify the proposed distribution of housing development to the various towns and settlements in Bradford; and is the proposed distribution supported by the evidence?

- I.60 BH&DWH accepts that Bradford as the regional city and major settlement in the plan-area, must act as a focus for new housing development.
- I.61 However it raises concern regarding the amount of housing (3,500 houses) directed towards Bradford City Centre. This level of housing is only likely to be delivered principally via apartment developments and there is skepticism of the extent to which the delivery of conversion and new building schemes is likely to be viable in the near future.
- I.62 As outlined in relation to Matter 4B, there is also concern over the extent to which it is realistic that an urban extension at Holme Wood can deliver the number of dwellings (2,700) envisaged in the plan period.
- I.63 BH&DWH supports the identification of Local Growth Centres and Local Service Centres, which have the opportunity to make a significant contribution to meeting housing supply. Providing housing in these settlements, which have widely ranging housing market conditions that are often different to Bradford itself, can make a meaningful contribution to housing supply in the district, without adversely impacting upon the regeneration focus included in the Core Strategy.
- I.64 In terms of the Local Growth Centre it is considered that Thornton has the capacity to accommodate a greater level of housing (700) than proposed. The settlement compares favourably to both Silsden and Queensbury in terms of the extent to which it can accommodate new development and make a contribution to meeting the Strategic Objectives of the Core Strategy.
- I.65 The Bradford Growth Assessment for Local Growth Centres notes in relation to Thornton that:
- “The settlement has a good range of local community facilities and services and public open space and recreation facilities. Thornton is also on the high frequency bus service between Bradford and Halifax. There is an identified housing need and demand within the settlement.”*
- I.66 It also notes that there is a significant amount of unconstrained land (59%) surrounding the village and are some significant opportunities for sustainable Green Belt release.

I.67 Specifically in relation to Silsden it is considered that there are a number of sound spatial planning reasons why Thornton could accommodate at least (or greater) amount of housing given that it has good local services and a high frequency bus service.

I.68 In particular, when compared to Silsden, Thornton:

- Is closer to Bradford City Centre with easy access via bus or private car, meaning that additional housing in the village can support the role of the regional city;
- On the basis of this proximity, new housing here rather than Silsden is likely to limit transport emissions and capacity issues;
- Has a far larger proportion of unconstrained land - 59% unconstrained compared to 28%;
- Has a greater proportion of available housing land – Strategic Land Parcels and SHLAA sites – 252ha compared to 203ha;
- Has a far greater level of deprivation (Thornton is ranked as 14 out of 30 most deprived Wards in the District in the Bradford Ward Economic Profiles, whereas Craven is one of the least deprived) and therefore provides a far greater opportunity for new, well-planned housing developments to deliver regeneration.

I.69 For the above reasons BH&DWH consider that the amount of housing apportioned to Thornton in comparison to Silsden is not justified and the housing allocation attributed to these settlements should be reassessed.

Question 4.3 b - Does the policy pay sufficient regard to viability considerations?

I.70 In relation to viability considerations BH&DWH homes is concerned that the amount of housing proposed for Bradford City Centre does not have sufficient regard to viability considerations.

I.71 The plan proposes to accommodate 3,500 new houses in the city centre.

I.72 Viability appraisal¹³ of the plan calls into serious question the potential to deliver these houses in uncertain conditions.

I.73 Para 5.1.3 of the appraisal states that:

“there remain stark differences in viability across the District with some of the lower value areas unlikely to be able to meet all the policy standards sought.”

I.74 Para 5.1.4 then goes onto state that:

¹³ Bradford District Local Plan Core Strategy Publication Draft – Viability Assessment – December 2014

“The combination of site constraints and market frailties mean that plans for growth and regeneration will require intervention to facilitate delivery in the short term, particularly in respect of priority sites in inner Bradford.”

- I.75 The NPPF requires Local Plans to be ‘*aspirational but realistic*’ and to ensure that any sites which are included within the five year housing land supply are deliverable, “*with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years*”¹⁴ Paragraph 173 of the NPPF emphasise the importance of plans being deliverable and the need for careful attention to viability in the plan-making process.
- I.76 BH&DWH are concerned that there are not realistic prospects of Bradford’s City Centre delivering the level of housing attributed to it over the plan-period.
- I.77 The company also has concerns regarding the 4,500 new homes attributed to Keighley and question deliverability here, on the basis of marginal viability. BH&DWH has a site for 190 units houses in Keighley, which started on-site, three years ago, so has first-hand experience of the challenges associated with developing new housing in Keighley. It is considered that less housing should be attributed to Keighley with a reduction redistributed to Local Growth Centres and Local Service Centres, in order to ensure the delivery of required housing levels.
- I.78 In order to ensure that the plan is deliverable, a proportion of the housing attributed to the City Centre, would be better attributed to outlying settlements, with stronger market conditions.

Question 4.3d - Does the policy pay sufficient regard to constraint policies (especially in Airedale & Wharfedale)

- I.79 With regard to constraint policies applied in relation to Wharfedale and as outlined in relation to Matter 6C BH&DWH are concerned that the amount of housing distributed to Addingham (200 houses) is unacceptably low, having been halved from the 400 houses proposed in the Council’s Further Engagement Draft Housing Distribution (October 2011).
- I.80 This reduction will have implications for the sustainability of the settlement and will have a not insignificant impact on the Council’s ability to maintain a five year housing land supply.
- I.81 BH&DWH are concerned that the amount of housing proposed for Addingham is not fully justified (by evidence that all alternative options, to meet the previous housing identified for the village, have not been considered). The company consider Addingham to be a strong market area, as reflected by BMDC’s evidence base, which can guarantee housing delivery.

¹⁴ NPPF Para 47, footnote 11

MATTER 6C: SUB-AREA POLICIES – WHARFEDALE

Policies WDI-WD2 – Wharfedale

Question 6.10a - Is there sufficient justification and evidence to support the broad distribution of development as set out in Part A of the Policy?

- I.82 All the four settlements in Wharfedale have seen significant reductions in housing levels from the Further Engagement Draft of the Core Strategy. The proportion of reduction in housing numbers which has the potential to impact upon all of the settlements is not uniform and there does not appear to be clear justification for this (the reduction in general or the different proportion of reduction applied to different settlements).

Question 6.11b Is there sufficient justification and evidence to support the proposed housing development at Addingham, limited to meeting local need, and has the policy considered the infrastructure requirements and local facilities, and is it clear, effective, positively prepared, deliverable, soundly based and consistent with the latest national guidance (NPPF/PPG)?

- I.83 BH&DWH consider that there is not sufficient justification and evidence to support the low level of proposed housing development at Addingham.
- I.84 The number of proposed houses has been reduced from 400 in the Further Engagement Draft Housing Distribution consultation (October 2011) to 200 in the submission version Core Strategy. The principal reason for this significant reduction relates to the Council's approach to the South Pennine Moors SPA, which is considered in detail in our comments in relation to Policy SC8. There are no settlement specific constraints for Addingham that have led to this reduction and the SHLAA demonstrates that the settlement has clear opportunities to grow.
- I.85 The Council's Evidence Base¹⁵ demonstrates the following four 'Key Planning Issues' for Addingham.

- *Population imbalance and an ageing population;*
- *Lack of and need for affordable housing within the village is a key issue;*
- *Availability of local school places;*
- *Protection of green spaces;*

- I.86 BH&DWH consider that the lower level of housing is unlikely to address the first two key planning issues effectively. In particular the reduction by half of the overall housing provision for Addingham is likely to result in a reduction of (at least) half in the amount of affordable

¹⁵ LDF Evidence Base Bradford District Settlement Study Update – October 2011

housing provided in the settlement, as the amount of affordable housing delivered on mixed-tenure sites reduces.

- I.87 Figure I below shows that between the 2001 and 2011 census Addingham's population aged quite significantly. A fall by 164 of residents aged 30-44 (set against an overall increase of 131 in the population) is particularly concerning. Ageing populations in Wharfedale's communities and a low-level of and high need for affordable housing are highlighted as key housing market issues in Bradford's SHMA 2013 Update. The reduction by half of the proposed allocation to Addingham will reduce the amount of affordable housing delivered and on that basis is likely to have an adverse impact on the retention of working age people in Addingham, to the detriment of social sustainability.
- I.88 In terms of green space, the Council's evidence base also refers to the lack of a park in Addingham and gaps in the provision of children's play areas. Reference to 'smaller scale development' at SC4 and reduction by half of the proposed housing allocation, will not only cause housing market problems but will also mean that opportunities to fill these gaps in provision may remain unmet.
- I.89 It is apparent that the meaningful provision of a significant area of public open space is more likely to take place on a larger site, which provides the necessary land area *and* necessary investment. SHLAA site AD/004 (possibly in conjunction with AD/003) has the potential to make a contribution of well in excess of 200 houses with the provision of public open space. At the same time smaller developments are less likely to make meaningful infrastructure contributions. BH&DWH has an interest in site AD/004 and has commissioned a number of technical reports, which clarify the site's deliverability.
- I.90 BH&DWH query the reference to the creation of '*associated community facilities*' in the policy and seek clarification on these required facilities and whether other facilities, in addition to public open space, are required within the village. If '*associated community facilities*' refers to facilities for which there is an existing need, then these needs are more likely to be met by the delivery of a significant quantum of development on site AD/004, which has the potential to make significant infrastructure provision and deliver any commensurate facilities.
- I.91 BH&DWH do not consider that there is sufficient justification for the proposed reduction by half in the level of housing development proposed in Addingham. This will negate possibilities to provide new infrastructure and facilities either on or off site and will fail to address sufficiently, the identified problems with an ageing population and lack of affordable housing supply.
- I.92 There is significant need and demand for housing in Addingham, which is a high house price area and has developer interest in delivering housing. On that basis the settlement can play a role in providing a place for certain housing delivery, helping to ensure that the Council is able to deliver an appropriate level of housing supply.

- I.93 BH&DWH consider that the policy as it concerns proposed housing numbers for Addingham has not been positively prepared, is not soundly based and does not accord with national planning policy guidance.
- I.94 Green Belt releases in Addingham will have to take account of reserve land requirements to provide further certainty of overall supply and flexibility in delivery.

MATTER 6D – SUB-AREA POLICIES – SOUTH PENNINE TOWNS & VILLAGES

Policies PNI – PN2 – South Pennine Towns & Villages

Question 6.16 a Is there sufficient justification and evidence to support the broad distribution of development as set out in Part A of the Policy?

- I.95 BH&DWH have previously supported proposals for growth in the South Pennine Towns, as identified in Policy PNI.
- I.96 BH&DWH have land interests at Thornton, relating to a deliverable housing site, which has the potential to make a significant contribution to the 700 houses provides for this Local Growth Centre.
- I.97 As outlined in relation to Matter 4C BH&DWH queries why a lower level of housing has been proposed for Thornton, as opposed to other LGCs on the basis of its lack of constrained housing land and the opportunities for new housing development to support regeneration in the settlement and in nearby Bradford.
- I.98 Green Belt releases in the South Pennine Towns and Villages will have to take account of reserve land requirements to provide further certainty of overall supply and flexibility in delivery.

MATTER 7B: MANAGING HOUSING DELIVERY

Policy HO4 – Phasing & Release of Housing Sites

Question 7.5a. What is the justification for the Council's proposed approach to phasing and releasing housing sites?

- I.99 BH&DWH is concerned that policy HO4, which proposes to split the plan period into two in terms of housing delivery, is overly complex and is not adequately justified.
- I.101 The stated aims for the policy are to manage infrastructure delivery and maintain a brownfield focus, however there is insufficient evidence to indicate that this approach, which is not in accordance with national policy, is justified or necessary.
- I.102 Outside of the main urban area and in, for example, a Local Service Centre there may not be any brownfield sites which need to be prioritised and development upon one or more large housing sites could provide all of the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of new residents.
- I.103 The policy makes the assumption that new development will only provide infrastructure which meets the needs of future residents, whereas in reality, larger housing developments can often deliver infrastructure on-site e.g. green infrastructure or off-site e.g. significant contributions to community facilities or education facilities, which actively benefit existing residents. The policy and its justification also lacks reference to the fact that larger developments and the infrastructure they provide will often be phased over a long period, ensuring that infrastructure provision keeps up with housing supply

Question 7.5b - Is the approach to phasing in line with national guidance (NPPF; ¶ 47)?

- I.104 Reference is made in relation to Matter 4a to the Rotherham Core Strategy report and the Inspector's conclusion as to why a phasing approach would constrain housing delivery and not accord with the NPPF and required its removal.

Paragraph 49 of that report states:

“The Council explains that it has not prepared a detailed phasing policy to assist in delivering site allocations during the plan period but points to the need to prioritise the development of the most sustainable sites and the reuse of previously-developed land. This approach is set out in Policy CS3. It would appear, however, to be a phasing policy and, even though the Council considers that it would apply to no more than a handful of sites, it does not accord with the Framework. The approach of the Framework is to promote sustainable development which should go ahead without delay. Sites should be tested to ascertain whether they are sufficiently sustainable and deliverable to justify their development rather than phased according to their degree of sustainability. A phasing policy holding

back greenfield sites until all or some previously-developed land is suitably re-used would have a beguiling attraction, but the status of any site as previously-developed land should be seen as just one consideration, albeit in some cases an especially important one.” (RSL underlining)

- I.105 Paragraph 99 of the report goes onto conclude that:
“...Anything which proposes or implies the phasing of a site or sites in preference to others should be excised.”
- I.106 There are not considered to be any reasons in this instance, why a phasing approach, which would apply to more than ‘a handful of sites’ and therefore may have more serious implications in terms of housing delivery should not be similar rejected.

Question 7.5c - Would the phasing approach lead to shortfalls in housing provision, putting at risk 5-year housing land supply?

- I.107 In relation to meeting BMDC’s housing need and its ability to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply it is not clear how the first 8-year phase would provide for the requirement to meeting housing undersupply, using the Sedgefield method, over a 5-year period.
- I.108 It is considered that a sound approach to housing delivery would involve the removal of a phasing policy and the identification of appropriate sites on site-by-site and settlement-by-settlement basis.
- I.109 This approach would meet with the NPPF requirements established at paragraph 47, for Local Planning Authorities to ‘boost significantly the supply of housing’ and ensure consistency of supply and accord with the wider aim of the NPPF that appropriate development should proceed ‘without delay’.

Policy HO5 – Housing Density

Question 7.6e - Is the approach to housing density in accordance with national policy?

- I.110 While not objecting to the broad thrust of the policy, to use land efficiently, the policy does not provide justification for the use of a 30dph target (as opposed to any other target). The 30dph has been removed from national planning policy, with the rationale for this eloquently explained in the NPPF Impact Assessment¹⁶.
- I.111 On the basis of the government's considered removal of a specific density target, there is not considered to be any specific justification for reintroducing this target (or another one) in this scenario.
- I.112 Bradford's plan-area is characterised by significant diversity in topography and character. Having regard to topography, the requirement to provide access to sloping sites and locating houses upon them in a sensitive way means that a minimum density target has the potential to make sites undeliverable.
- I.113 The policy still has the potential to be effective without the inclusion of a specific arbitrary density target for the whole plan-area and could be used to prevent on a development specific basis, inappropriately low-density housing.
- I.114 Part C of Policy HO5 confirms that the Council itself acknowledges that a minimum density target of 30 dwellings per hectare is not achievable across the whole of Bradford. Therefore the minimum density referred to in part b of the policy should be deleted.
- I.115 While it is considered that criterion B should be removed to ensure effectiveness, at the very least it could be reworded to refer to an 'aim' to achieve any specific density, which should be referred to as a 'target' rather than a minimum.

¹⁶ NPPF Impact Assessment, July 2012

Policy HO6 – Previously Developed Land

Question 7.7i - Is the Council's approach to prioritising development on Previously Developed Land consistent with the latest national guidance in the NPPF/PPG?

- I.116 BH&DWH appreciates the need to deliver *urban* regeneration through the use of previously developed land and last year delivered 63% of its new houses across the country on previously developed land.
- I.117 While the company therefore supports the principle of using previously developed land for new housing, it must raise significant concern over any policy requirement to provide 50% of houses over the plan-period on previously developed land. BMDC acknowledges in the Core Strategy the upscaling of housing delivery required to meet housing need and the NPPF places a fundamental and overriding emphasis on meeting housing need.
- I.118 On that basis the extent to which 21,500 new homes (50% of the overall plan-period housing requirement) can be met on PDL sites (in uncertain economic times and market conditions) must be questioned.
- I.119 With regard to the specific wording of the policy as it stands, it is important that criterion B should be reworded in order to ensure flexibility and effectiveness, to state (additions underlined):

“B. District wide, a minimum target of 50% total new housing development over the Local Plan period will be sought on previously developed land.”

- I.120 Amendment of the policy criterion in that way would ensure conformity with the NPPF reference¹⁷ to ‘*encouraging*’ rather than requiring, the use of previously developed land.

Question 7.7j - Will the proposed targets stifle development and undermine meeting housing need and supply?

- I.121 In relation to section C, it is considered that this section of the policy places an undue requirement on LGCs and LSCs to deliver prescribed percentages of PDL housing.
- I.122 While regeneration can provide the justification for targets in urban areas, where this need for regeneration does not exist then accordingly there is no requirement for a specific target.
- I.123 While the justification for the policy states that BMDC is not “*proposing that a site's status as green field or brown field land should be the only factor in the determination of which sites are*

¹⁷ NPPF Para 111

allocated within the Allocations, Bradford City Centre and Shipley and Canal Road DPD's” in many of the District’s smaller settlements, the wording of the policy fundamentally creates a very strong bias towards brownfield sites.

- I.124 While some smaller settlements will have little, if any PDL sites, where there are a variety of green and brownfield site options, a pre-disposition to allocating PDL sites could have potential negative economic impacts, through incentivising the redevelopment of current or former employment sites which would otherwise be reused or redeveloped for a commercial use. Often PDL sites are located in areas where employment uses are historic and form a more appropriate location for commercial development than edge-of-settlement greenfield sites which are more suited to housing.
- I.125 The policy would be more effective in terms of ensuring a sufficient supply of housing land if, for LGCs and LSCs, the seemingly unjustified targets were removed. As a minimum it is considered that if a PDL target is to be maintained for LGCs and LSCs this should be a combined *target* in order to increase flexibility at this lower tier.

Policy HO9 – Housing Quality

Question 7.9a - Is the Council's approach to housing quality consistent with the latest national guidance (NPPF/PPG), particularly with the recent national consultation about how the government intends to deal with many of the code standards through the Building Regulations?

- I.126 BH&DWH, while supportive in principle of BMDC's intention to create high quality housing and neighbourhoods and the policy as a whole, has significant concerns in relation to the proposed introduction of specific and stringent design requirements (the "*highest possible sustainable design and construction standards*" as referred to in the policy). This policy should seek to encourage rather than require specific standards, especially as these are likely to change over the life of the plan period.
- I.127 BH&DWH are actively involved in pushing up design standards and is the only major house builder actively committed to Building for Life 12. However, the company does not consider there to be sufficient justification for the introduction of a specific standard, as referred to in Criterion B of the policy, which go beyond that required by current and future iterations of the Building Regulations.
- I.128 Negative and unintended consequences of the introduction of stringent construction standards, which go above and beyond national requirements are likely to be:
1. A reduction in housing supply – Where LPAs have more stringent construction requirements this may disadvantage them in terms of securing developer investment in housing delivery in their plan area, particularly when some adjoining LPAs, as is the case here e.g. Craven, Harrogate, Calderdale, Pendle, do not have such stringent (if any) specific design requirements;
 2. Deter developers from building in certain market areas, especially the City Centre, inner areas and Keighley where there will be marginal profit margins;
 3. A reduction in (the speed of) housing supply - Although the policy allows for viability justification where appropriate this can, even if consensus is reached, significantly slow down the delivery of planning consents. This has implications as to the extent to which the Council will be able to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land;
 4. A reduction in developer contributions - A reduction in the amount of off-site contributions towards other infrastructure or on-site affordable housing, which might otherwise have been viable, due to high construction costs;
 5. Increasing house prices, making access to housing options less affordable.
- I.129 The clear direction of travel for government over recent years, points to its desire to significantly *increase* housing supply across the country, through significantly *decreasing* onerous

requirements levied against housing developers. The recent Housing Standards Review Consultation refers to optional rather than mandatory housing standards.

- I.130 Therefore while BH&DWH support the overall policy and its rationale it considers that criterion B is not justified or consistent with national policy and guidance.
- I.131 With specific regard to space standards given the ongoing review and assessment of housing standards, it is considered that it is premature to introduce BMDC specific policies which constrain house builders and it would be preferable to await the outcomes of the government's review and introduce a Supplementary Planning Document as appropriate.
- I.132 In terms of housing delivery, BH&DWH wishes to point out that national house builders play a critical role in meeting housing need. The introduction of local-area specific space standards can impact upon the viability of housing schemes, as it means that individual properties have to be fundamentally redesigned internally to ensure conformity with locally specific policies.
- I.133 BH&DWH while supportive of good design, requests that the Inspector to very carefully considers the impact of locally specific standards on housing supply and viability (particularly when considered in tandem with the Council's aspiration to deliver 50% of the plan-area's new houses on PDL sites) and amend the policy to ensure greater effectiveness.

Ends.