

CENTRAL LANCASHIRE CORE STRATEGY

**RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF TAYLOR WIMPEY UK LIMITED
TO THE INSPECTORS LETTERS OF 15 JULY AND 27 JULY 2011**

RESPONDENT NUMBER 51 (PICKERINGS FARM, PENWORTHAM)

HOW Planning LLP, 40 Peter Street, Manchester, M2 5GP
Contact Partner: Gary Halman Telephone: 0161 835 1333



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 HOW Planning appeared at the Examination on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Limited (TW) and contributed to the discussion in response to a number of matters identified by the Inspector. HOW Planning represent TW's interests in relation to the significant landholding at Pickerings Farm, Penwortham, South Ribble.
- 1.2 Subsequent to the hearing sessions, the Inspector has issued two letters on 15 and 27 July 2011 to the Central Lancashire Authorities inviting comments from the Councils and participants on a number of matters which he raises. For the most part these matters are addressed in a Statement submitted by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners on behalf of TW to which HOW Planning have contributed. We align ourselves fully with the views expressed by NLP and, in the interests of brevity those matters are not repeated here.
- 1.3 We do however wish to add some further comment which we hope will assist the Inspector in considering the important matters of housing delivery he has necessarily raised and this note addresses three issues therefore being:
- (i) The particular suitability of the Pickering's Farm site for allocation as a strategic site in the Core Strategy;
 - (ii) Our response to the issue of flexibility and contingencies (paragraph 4 of the Inspector's 15 July letter); and
 - (iii) Some further observations on the draft National Planning Policy Framework.

The Pickerings Farm Strategic Site

- 1.4 The Central Lancashire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identifies (as site FW3 on page 65) the safeguarded land at Pickerings Farm as an urban site with potential for around 1,800 residential units¹. Importantly the SHLAA confirms the site is suitable, available and achievable subject only to a policy change through the LDF.

¹ Note that the Development Statement submitted to the Examination suggests around 2000 units is the likely capacity of the site.

1.5 The Council further assessed potential strategic sites and locations for inclusion within the submission version of the Core Strategy and set out the analysis underpinning their choice in Background Topic Paper (BTP(1) (March 2011). The site's attributes are summarised at paragraph 4.10 (page 15) of this document. This confirms that, from the Council's perspective the site possesses a number of key attributes:

- No particular environmental constraints have been identified;
- Access to public transport is good;
- Significant development will bring forward the need for the last remaining section of the cross borough link road, for which developer contributions will be needed;
- There are other highway improvements planned for the surrounding area which aim to increase capacity and reduce congestion levels;
- The priority bus route identified is a priority for funding to improve sustainable travel options in the area, and the site could include a new Park and Ride facility;
- The site could make a major contribution to growth and investment through the provision of sustainable homes and jobs in a high quality environment;
- As an urban extension it is well located in relation to the main spatial focus of the Core Strategy;
- Inclusion as a broad strategic location may help to speed up its delivery and help secure funding for infrastructure, in particular the cross borough link road.

1.6 Notwithstanding the absence of any identified environmental constraints and the acknowledged sustainability credentials of this location, surprisingly the Council did not consider the site to be of strategic significance, but did say its future would be considered further in site allocations work.

1.7 In its response to Matter 8 at the Examination the Council published a paper; this addressed Pickerings Farm at paragraph (c) (page 4). The Inspector is respectfully directed to the extensive list of advantages which the Council identified (many of which reflect those set out in BTP1), in respect of the Penwortham site.

- 1.8 In contrast only very limited disadvantages were identified by the Council, including the site's greenfield status; there was said to be moderate access to local services and that local education facilities have limited capacity.

A Highly Sustainable Site and Location

- 1.9 As the Central Lancashire Authorities have expressly recognised, use of greenfield land to meet the significant and urgent housing requirements for the sub-region is inevitable. This "disadvantage" therefore relates to the vast majority of the sites (and all potential strategic sites/locations) which might be considered for allocation and cannot be regarded as a determinative factor.
- 1.10 The availability of local services in proximity to the site is set out in detail in the Development Statement (March 2011) which accompanied our representations in respect of Matter 8. This includes a plan showing access to local facilities at page 24 and a wider context plan at page 8. The site is in close proximity to both Leyland and Preston City centres, as the higher order centres in the area. It benefits from very close proximity to Kings Fold Local Centre (to the north) and Tardy Gate District Centre (to the east) which include a wide range of local facilities. Increased spending power from a new urban extension will directly benefit these centres and help support their continued vitality and viability. In addition an urban extension of this scale would be expected to include within the mix of uses, appropriate local facilities (retail, leisure, community uses as well as extensive public open space) and in consultation with the Local Education Authority, to make provision on site for new education facilities to meet the needs arising from the increased population. These aspects therefore cannot be regarded as disadvantages of the site as they will be planned for as part of the master plan for the scheme.
- 1.11 The site is well served by public transport. It is within easy walking distance of major public transport corridors which provide direct routes to Leyland and Preston and cycle links to existing networks in the vicinity. There is scope to include a new Park and Ride scheme within the site and to incorporate Bus Priority routes in planning for the sustainable transport strategy which TW are committed to.

The Councils' Current Position

- 1.12 More recently the Joint Advisory Committee to the Central Lancashire LDF at its meeting on 1 September 2011 formally resolved that it *“Accepts the need to consider additional strategic sites or locations of land for housing, but to direct the Inspector towards selecting those sites which relate best to the existing pattern of development, including the phased and managed release of land at North West Preston and Pickering's Farm”*.
- 1.13 In summary the above amounts to a powerful case for allocation of Pickering's Farm as a strategic site in policy 4 (as intended to be redrafted) of the Core Strategy. The site is agreed to be suitable, available, deliverable, highly sustainable and capable of delivering significant housing (and other uses) in the first part of the plan period in a location very well related to the main urban area.
- 1.14 A significant amount of detailed work has already been carried out to demonstrate the site's deliverability as presented in the Development Statement. It has the backing of a major national house builder and the Homes and Communities Agency. If allocated, the Inspector can therefore be assured that, following full consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders and effective partnership working with the local planning authority, an early planning application will follow, together with an implementation plan to bring this land forward in short order.

Flexibility and Contingencies

- 1.15 The Inspectors 15 July letter (paragraph 4) invites the Councils to give further consideration to PPS12 (para 4.46) concerning flexibility, which he reaffirms goes to soundness. This follows the Inspectors suggestion at the Examination on 30 June, when draft text which addressed this point was put forward by him for discussion.
- 1.16 At that time the Council did not consider the Inspector's wording to be necessary, and confirmed this in an email to objectors on 8 July (attached as **Appendix 1**).

In light of the Inspectors later correspondence, it is assumed the Councils are now reconsidering their position.

- 1.17 TW regard it as helpful for the Plan to recognise that there will need to be effective intervention if housing delivery, for whatever reason, does not align with the Core Strategy's expectations. We therefore support the principle of additional text being inserted into the Plan, so as to give guidance as to what action will be taken in such circumstances.
- 1.18 Attached as **Appendix 2** is a further iteration of the Inspectors suggested text, designed to ensure that any response by the Councils to underperformance in delivery (once the measures set out in the Proposed Further Minor Changes have been implemented) is in line with the spatial priorities of the Core Strategy. It is less prescriptive in terms of exactly what the appropriate source of further development sites might be (for example it does not presume the release of employment land for housing). It therefore focuses more on **outcomes** in the form of planning permissions granted on sustainable sites consistent with Policy 1 and, importantly, on sites that are capable of contributing immediately to the 5-year supply position. Thus the candidate sites would need to be demonstrably developable within this time frame for the Council to consider granting planning permissions.
- 1.19 We anticipate that this matter will be the subject of further discussion prior to the formal close of the Examination, and hope that this contribution is helpful.

Draft National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.20 The Inspectors 27 July letter drew attention to publication of the draft NPPF and invited the Councils and others to comment on its relevance in the context of the Examination. This is covered in NLP's note on behalf of TW, which we support. To supplement this we draw attention to the PINS Advice Note to Inspectors (as revised 30 August 2011). The Advice Note (para 3) confirms that, whilst the NPPF is a consultation document and, therefore, subject to potential amendment, *"nevertheless it gives a clear indication of the Government's direction of travel in planning policy"*. Thus the advice to Inspectors is that the draft NPPF is capable of

being a material consideration, the weight to be attached to it being a matter for the decision maker's judgement in a particular case.

- 1.21 The most recent changes in the draft NPPF include clarification over the impact of requiring Councils to identify an additional 20% of deliverable sites against their 5-year housing requirement. The PINS advice note (para 16) confirms that this objective is to ensure that Councils can meet **at least 120% of the annual housing requirement in the first 5 years of the plan**, which is intended to be a front loading of supply rather than an increment to the overall total. This further emphasises the Government's intent to make an immediate step change to housing delivery at a national level, and sends a clear message to Local Planning Authorities that a robust 5-year supply position (plus 20% margin) is a fundamental tenet of policy.

Summary

- 1.22 The Inspectors provisional conclusions on soundness are welcomed by TW and important changes to the housing policies of the Core Strategy are fundamental to the soundness of the plan.
- 1.23 The identification of a need for further deliverable housing land in the form of a strategic site/location is welcomed. Pickerings Farm is ideally suited to allocation as a strategic site; it is sustainably located, suitable, available and deliverable in the short-term, has no significant constraints and was originally safeguarded so as to enable it to contribute to housing and other development needs at an appropriate time. That time has now come.
- 1.24 The Government's draft National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in this Examination and further emphasises the importance of accelerating delivery of housing to meet the need for affordable and market homes. Revision of policy 4 of the Core Strategy, debated at the Examination and discussed by the Inspector in his subsequent correspondence, along the lines proposed by TW is capable of ensuring the Core Strategy is fit for purpose and can deliver the homes which Central Lancashire needs, which the Government is strongly encouraging, and which the housebuilding industry is anxious to deliver.

Gary Halman
Partner
HOW Planning LLP
September 2011

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APPENDIX 1:

Gary Halman

From: Tim Dean <t.dean@gladman.co.uk>
Sent: 11 July 2011 08:16
To: Gary Halman; Sam Ryan
Subject: FW: Flexibility and Contingencies: Central Lancashire Core Strategy
Attachments: Flexibility and Contingencies 010711.doc

Importance: High

FYI

Tim Dean MA. Dip TPS. MRTPI

**Planning & Development Manager
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From: Porter, David (ENV) [mailto:David.Porter2@lancashire.gov.uk]
Sent: 08 July 2011 15:47
To: Tim Dean; Tim Dean
Cc: Jackson, Julian
Subject: FW: Flexibility and Contingencies: Central Lancashire Core Strategy
Importance: High

Tim,

Further to my email of last Friday, the Central Lancashire authorities have given consideration to the 'flexibility and contingencies' wording as suggested by the Inspector at the hearing on Wednesday last week. Our view is that the Inspector's wording should not be incorporated in the Core Strategy, and we will feed this back to the him along with all the other material that he has requested in advance of the next day's hearing on Tuesday 12th July. I am aware that this means we are unlikely to agree on any common ground on this matter, and doubtless you will be making your representations to the Inspector.

Regards,

David

From: Porter, David (ENV)
Sent: 01 July 2011 11:30
To: 't.dean@fipland.co.uk'
Cc: Jackson, Julian
Subject: Flexibility and Contingencies: Central Lancashire Core Strategy

Tim,

Further to our brief discussion at the end of yesterday's hearing, and am attaching a typed up copy of the Inspector's suggested wording. I have slightly adapted his wording to turn some of his 'shorthand' wording into a sentence – attempting to retain the meaning. I have used italics to indicate this.

APPENDIX 2:

Flexibility and Contingencies

To be effective, the Core Strategy must demonstrate that it can deal robustly with changing circumstances. This presents especial challenges at present, given the generally depressed state of the national and local economy. It means that the delivery of its housing strategy cannot be guaranteed throughout a plan period of at least 15 years from the date of adoption.

To deal with this uncertainty and to ensure adequate flexibility, the Councils would *implement contingency options A, B and C relating to Policy 4 as set out in Appendix 2 of the Proposed Further Minor Changes document (4.20).*

Should there be a more significant shortfall in annual housing completions, the Councils would grant further planning permissions on sites which are in line with the spatial pattern and sustainability requirements of Policy 1, provided applicants could demonstrate such sites were capable of and likely to be developed within 5 years.

A 'more significant shortfall' would be regarded as the delivery of no more than 80% of annual requirements during any 3 consecutive years, and would trigger the alternative strategy.

Richard Hollox
29 June 2011.

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Deleted: identify additional land to handle this uncertainty, and to prevent the undermining of the strategy. This alternative strategy would include the identification of additional sources of housing land, as follows:
Land earmarked for employment uses;
Safeguarded land;
Other land with convincing sustainability credentials in accordance with Policy 1.