

**Peter Brett Associates on behalf of Barwood Land**

**Representor ID: PS041**

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## **Matter 3:**

### **Delivering the housing requirement over the plan period**

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#### **Introduction**

This statement has been prepared by Peter Brett Associates, now part of Stantec (PBA), on behalf of Barwood Land to discuss matters of soundness of the emerging Daventry Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2). This Matter Statement focuses on and answers questions which are pertinent. It follows on from representations made at Regulation 19 stage on their behalf.

#### **Issue 1**

**Question 1: Is there a specific reason or justification why the housing trajectory in the Plan and the Housing Land Availability Report 2018 (HOU7) when setting out the completions and housing land supply position as at 1 April 2018, exclude the NRDA component listed in the JCS? Does the Plan intend to support the delivery of the housing requirement in the NRDA in Daventry as set out in the JCS?**

1. We recognise that there is a commitment through the WNJCS for the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA) growth to be accommodated within Daventry District Council area. However, this growth has been deliberately exported because Northampton cannot meet its own needs and there should be a formal commitment to delivery it. At present, delivery of the NRDA is the responsibility of Daventry to deliver this growth through the granting of planning permissions and negotiating and signing of Section 106 agreements. The danger of this approach is what happens if this development is delayed or does not come forward for any reason? This is not within the control of Northampton to rectify and therefore Daventry must take responsibility for meeting any shortfall and contingency. Clear arrangements need to be in place now to set out what happens in practice if these sites do not deliver the required amount of development within the expected time period. Given that Northampton cannot bring forward other sites to rectify any under-provision it must be for Daventry, and possibly South Northamptonshire, to meet any shortfall. This situation needs to be properly addressed in this Plan because it has significant implications for the five-year land supply. Furthermore, addressing this through this Part 2 Plan is particularly important as an opportunity to ensure robust planning for growth is in place whilst the Authorities of Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire transition to a larger Unitary Authority of West Northamptonshire. With major administrative change it is inevitably going to delay the production of a new West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan targeted as being in place by 2022. Such uncertainty needs to be factored into a pragmatic approach to soundness and robust planning as set out elsewhere. At present no transitional arrangements have been made available and so it is

paramount that this Plan has the ability to make provision for sufficient planned growth across Daventry in the absence of any great number of Neighbourhood Plans, and to ensure that a 5 year housing land supply can be maintained.

2. This Part 2 Plan therefore should make a clear commitment to monitor, manage and address any shortfall by bringing forward additional sites in the event of any under-provision from the sites allocated to meet the NRDA growth. Including an appropriate level of contingency within this Plan and a less restrictive approach to growth in the Rural Areas will assist in providing this level of flexibility if NRDA sites within Daventry do not come forward as expected, especially given the very optimistic short-term delivery timetable (see responses below).

**Question 2: Is the housing trajectory in the Plan realistic? Does it demonstrate a supply of deliverable sites and developable sites that would meet the JCS housing requirement for Daventry District?**

3. We have concerns about the reliance on a few large sites in a single area within the trajectory. In particular the Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE) at Daventry, which have already been reduced downwards in terms of the contribution they can make to delivering homes within the plan period. The Daventry North East SUE is not actually allocated in this plan. It was previously considered to contribute 2,600 dwellings in total, although now only 1,100 are included within the plan period. At the time of the JCS a planning application was expected to be submitted in 2014. The information within the Housing Background Paper Version 3 (HOU 1) Dec 2018 anticipates that outline permission will be granted by July 2019. However, the application has still not been submitted and is now expected in June 2019. The 2019 HLA estimates that a reserved matters application will be submitted and approved within 8 months of outline approval being granted. This is unrealistic given the exceptionally slow progress so far, and the past record of the time taken to grant similar permissions. The likelihood of delivering 230 units within the next five years is highly optimistic and is not soundly based in evidence. Daventry South West also sets equally challenging timescales, although with slightly longer 13 months between the determination of the outline and determination of reserved matters. The delivery of even 70 units within the five-year period is dependent on no part of the timetable slipping further, which is unlikely.
4. The northern part of the Micklewood Park Extension assumes a period of 4 months from determination of the outline permission to determine Reserve Matters and clear planning conditions. This is completely unrealistic, especially as it includes the Christmas period.
5. Monksmoor Farm is identified as delivering 426 units in total between 2019-23, however, no evidence is provided to demonstrate that this is deliverable under the definition of the new NPPF.

6. As shown above there is considerable doubt about the timing of delivery of the large Daventry SUEs. The two largest sites were allocated in the JCS which was adopted over 4 years ago and still do not have any planning application for development on the sites. Instead the supply comes from lots of small and medium size sites which are able to come forward quickly, with less complexity and infrastructure costs and associated delays. This demonstrates how essential it is to maintain a reliable and continuous supply of these types of sites to compliment large SUEs and to achieve a credible 5 year land supply position that addresses the Standard Method (given this year the WNJCS will be more than 5 year's old and in housing need terms, out of date).

**Question 4: Is there a sufficient range and choice of sites allocated in the Plan in terms of location, type and size, to provide adequate flexibility to meet the JCS housing requirement for Daventry District? Would the housing allocations ensure that the Plan would be consistent with the Framework, in so far as it seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing?**

7. This plan and its allocations at Daventry contradict the WNJCS vision and objectives which seeks to plan for a mix of housing based on demographic trends and reflecting local demand, as well as meeting affordable need. Focusing new development primarily in Daventry, at the expense of the rural areas, is contrary to the NPPF which emphasises the importance of ensuring sufficient land where it is needed in the future, not past. Paragraph 59 says:

*'To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay'* (our emphasis).

8. Reliance on large urban extensions at Daventry renders the Plan and the five-year land supply vulnerable. The Council are currently relying on 4 site allocations in Daventry to delivery around 1,570 homes. There is considerable over reliance on a single site (Daventry South West) to deliver the majority (1,100 dwellings). This strategy fails to recognise the needs of the rural areas and their ability to bring forward development to meet both the local needs and wider district needs. A good supply of small sites in a range of locations is required to provide a sufficient choice and mix of sites and to provide enough flexibility to respond of changing circumstances and provide adequate contingency to ensure a robust and deliverable five-year land supply.
9. The Independent Review of Build Out Rates (Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin) which was published in October 2018 recognised that building on small sites is intrinsically quicker than large sites. The report addresses the extent to which build out on very large sites is constrained. These

include constraints to delivery include delaying in discharging pre-commencement conditions, limited availability of skilled labour, limited supplies of building materials, limited availability of capital, slow speed of installation of utilities, difficulties of land remediation, lack of transport infrastructure as well as the absorption sales rate of open market housing. This is supported by work completed by Lichfields, 'Start to Finish, how quickly do large-scale housing sites deliver?' (appended to this statement). It confirms, on average that it takes over 5 years from submission of a planning application to first completions for housing sites over 1,000 dwellings and in excess of 6 years for sites upwards of 1,500 dwellings. This represents a good indicator that the expectations at Daventry are unrealistic and are not based on real delivery timescales (unlike the Lichfields work which is).

10. The NPPF confirms that housing is a key element of promoting sustainable development in rural areas. Paragraph 78 states:

*'Housing should be located where it will enhance and maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.'*

11. It is important that villages identified as Primary Service Villages are also recognised as sustainable, suitable and necessary locations for growth. These villages, especially Weedon Bec have an excellent range of services and facilities including shops and schools to meet the day to day needs of the community, provide access to employment opportunities and in a highly accessible location. The Weedon Bec draft Neighbourhood Plan confirms its status as a Primary Service Village and that bus services are relatively frequent. The Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper Version 2 (GEN04) recognises that Weedon Bec is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest rural settlement in Daventry District with a variety of shops as well as a large Employment Area (Cavalry Fields).

12. It is very surprising that Weedon, which is a Primary Service Village has only had 73 units completed since 2011 and is only expected to provide 19 new dwellings up to 2023. This is less than 8 houses per year which for a village with a population of 2706<sup>1</sup> means it is far from even meeting the needs of its own population and the changing structure of households. The only site that is large enough to potentially provide affordable housing is Roseacres which has planning permission for 14 dwellings. This level of growth is considerably less than any of the other Primary Service Villages. Weedon is therefore an ideal location for growth and any contingency could and should be accommodated here.

13. The current approach which allocates no sites in the Rural Area at villages unacceptably restricts sustainable growth. This approach is unsound because it is not positive policy or in

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 Census figure from Weedon Bec Neighbourhood Plan Jan 2016

line with national policy which supports the provision of rural housing in sustainable locations. In addition is explicitly conflicts with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan which identifies land for development on the edge of the village (see answer to Question 8).

14. The failure to allocate sites within the rural area and specifically small and medium sites around villages means there is inadequate choice and flexibility to provide a continuous and deliverable five-year land supply.
15. In order to meet the housing needs identified in the WNJCS, as well as those required by the Standard Method in the JCS Review, further allocations should be made. As discussed in our Matter 2 Statement this will future-proof this Part 2 Plan in the short-term and ensure that adequate flexibility is provided to ensure a sufficient supply of housing land to deliver a robust five-year land supply and address any further delay in the Daventry sites coming forward.

**Question 5: Are the sites that are relied upon for the supply of housing in rural areas - deliverable and/or developable? What evidence is there to support this?**

16. The NPPF sets out a new definition of deliverable which is a material consideration and will certainly be used in any planning appeal. The amended definition now means that large sites with outline permission should not be included within the trajectory unless there is robust evidence that they will come forward. It is essential that a robust view of deliverability should be taken to safeguard the plan and the Council from a lack of five-year land supply.
17. It is noted that Daventry has passed the Housing Delivery Test, although this was largely achieved by strong delivery in the rural areas. We note that the 2019 HLA Final Report includes a number of sites which are large sites with outline permission and which have either recently been granted reserved matters approval or an application has recently been submitted. It is essential that evidence is provided if it is to demonstrate that these sites will be delivered within the next 5 years.

**Question 6: Is the expected contribution from windfalls, as included in the housing trajectory for both Daventry Town and rural areas, realistic and justified by evidence?**

18. The vast majority (88%) of windfalls were delivered in the rural areas. The restrictive policies in places in the rural areas are likely to significantly reduce the number of windfalls that come forward in the future.
19. The 2019 HLA Final Report shows that the Council has considered windfall completion rates over the last 18 years. The Council rightly recognise that it would not be appropriate to take the average over this length of time. Instead the Council use an average from 2001, which equates to 106dpa, and reduces to 93dpa when garden land development is excluded. Rather than using 103 a reasonable and robust approach would be to use an adjusted figure for the 3 years.

**Question 7: Is it appropriate to apply a lapse rate of 20 dwellings per annum from 2018/19 onwards as set out in the housing trajectory for planning permissions or neighbourhood plan allocations in rural areas? Is such an approach justified by evidence?**

20. The allowance for future lapsed permissions is justified by the Council's data which demonstrates that there was an average of 12 permissions and 20 units which lapsed every year. This would appear to be a reasonable assumption. However, given the notoriously slow progress of Neighbourhood Plans coming forward an additional allowance should be considered.

**Question 8: Are the neighbourhood plan allocations that are identified in the housing trajectory consistent with those within made neighbourhood plans? If not, what certainty is there that any further allocations will be part of a made neighbourhood plan?**

21. The draft Weedon Bec Neighbourhood Plan (Jan 2016) identified site allocations for housing up to 2029 totalling 122 new homes. This included 5 sites outside the village boundaries. This has not been submitted and as it currently stands the emerging Neighbourhood Plan would be contrary to the restrictive rural area policies. The Council should be supporting communities like Weedon that have proactively identified sites for development to meet their local needs. Such restrictive policies are contrary to National Policies and Guidance.

**Question 9: What contingencies are in place should housing delivery fall below expectations within the housing site allocations in Daventry Town, the rural areas and/or in the NRDA in Daventry District? Would it be necessary to consider other areas for development?**

22. The Government has made it clear that older development plans cumulatively underprovided land for new homes in England. Here, the WNJCS is based on 2010 evidence prepared as part of the now revoked RSS and is very much out of date and inconsistent with the new NPPF. Whilst it is not PBAs position that this plan should re-write the WNJCS, it remains important to the soundness of this Part II plan that it is effective as part of a plan -led system. That effectiveness is the inclusion of a healthy contingency to address:

- A changing housing need.
- The potential for over-optimistic site delivery to under-deliver.

23. The need for a healthy contingency is further important here because, when assessing the OAN, the Council did not apply a 'market signal' uplift to the demographic starting point.

24. While it is accepted this is a Part 2 Plan, and the housing target is not an issue to be addressed, when considering the contingency, it is relevant to note that the Government's current view of

need and market balance is very different. Under the Standard Method Daventry receives the highest possible uplift because homes are exceptionally unaffordable. Affordability is an important matter of soundness for this plan even under the NPPF2012. Homes are nearly 11 times earnings here – Government considers 4 times earnings as the point when homes start becoming unaffordable. At nearly 11 times earnings, Daventry receives the highest market signal uplift the Method can award.

25. There is also some strong local evidence that demand for new homes is higher than the Council's view for the remainder of the plan period. Over the Part I Plan period the Council's target increased from 264 dpa in 2013/14 to a high of 590 dpa in 2018/19 back to 430 dpa in 2023/24. Against the target the Council over delivered – currently 310 over the first 8 years.
26. This may not sound significant (around 11%) but the period includes part of the housing recession period and is therefore an untypical time period. It stands to reason that if housing delivery over a recessionary period can still exceed the old target then the previous targets were set well below the actual market demand for new homes.
27. Both delivery against the Plan to date, and more recent evidence from Government about the need for new homes and a much more aggressive uplift suggests that this Part 2 Plan ought to consider a contingency of additional sites.
28. This is especially pragmatic given the age of the JCS (approaching 5 year review Dec 2019). A flexibility allowance would provide the Plan the best opportunity to address future needs via a plan led approach and ensure it reduces the risk that it will fail the five-year land supply before the JCS Review is adopted.
29. Relying on a supply which is too closely tied to the housing requirement figure means the plan is vulnerable and will not enable it to respond quickly and dynamically to issues which may further reduce the ability of sites to deliver on time. This Plan is therefore unrealistic.
30. Throughout the NPPF, there is a consistent theme of flexibility in both plan making and during application stage to allow development coming forward to adjust to changes in market conditions and to prevent sustainable development being stalled. The NPPF at paragraph 157 states that "*Crucially, Local Plans should...allocate sites to promote development and flexible use of land*".
31. The Rural Areas are able to deliver housing and have a proven track record of achieving completions on small and medium size sites. This has enabled Daventry to meet its Housing Delivery Test and to demonstrate a five-year supply. There is no reason why this source of supply should be curtailed in favour of the SUE's. Different sites and locations are important and represent choice and flexibility in the market often by different housebuilder. This is

recognised in the most recent revision to the NPPF<sup>2</sup> which now requires local authorities to promote the development of a good mix of sites. Consequently, further allocations should be made in the rural areas to provide this flexibility contingency.

32. It is recommended that at least a 20% flexibility allowance is included within the plan to address issues of delivery and to ensure the plan meets the Standard Method number as soon as possible. This would equate to an additional 2,546 homes to be provided within Daventry District.

## Issue 2

### **Question 1: Was the methodology used to assess and select the proposed site allocations appropriate? Were reasonable alternatives considered and tested?**

33. Whilst no additional comment is made on the selection of sites at Daventry, it is suggested that were a contingency needed, it would be reasonable for the reasons set out in this statement to consider Weedon Bec (and the Barwood Land sites), as reasonable alternatives.

### **Question 3: Have any potential effects of the proposed site allocations on the predicted annual delivery rate of housing at the Daventry North East Sustainable Urban Extension (JCS allocation) and/or the NRDA been adequately considered? What is the current situation with respect to those sites allocated in the JCS?**

34. As discussed above we have concerns about the SUEs and their rates of delivery as well as the programme set out in the 2019 HLA. Our experience demonstrates that further delay is likely, leading to a short-term land supply shortage that this plan could have avoided.

### **Question 4: Are the proposed housing site allocations appropriate and justified in the light of potential constraints, infrastructure requirements and adverse impacts? Is there any risk that any infrastructure requirements, site conditions and/or constraints might prevent or delay development or adversely affect viability and delivery?**

35. As discussed above we have concerns about the SUEs and their rates of delivery as well as the programme set out in the 2019 HLA. Our experience demonstrates that further delay is likely, leading to a short-term land supply shortage that this plan could have avoided.

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<sup>2</sup> NPPF 2019 Paragraph 68