

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

16 JULY 2015

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Report Title	STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN: FURTHER MODIFICATIONS RELATING TO PROPOSED HOUSING REQUIREMENT FIGURE
Purpose of Report	To confirm that the Council will include in the Local Plan the recommendations of the Local Plan Inspector relating to the housing requirement.
Decision(s)	Following receipt of the Inspector's views on the proposed housing requirement figure, Council RESOLVES: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to include the recommended housing provision figure of at least 11,400 dwellings (2006-2031) in the amended Local Plan; 2. to retain the existing allocation of 450 dwellings at North East Cam (Policy SA3).
Consultation and Feedback	Extensive consultation has taken place on the housing requirement through the preparation of the Local Plan. Main modifications to the Local Plan will be subject to a six week period of public consultation from July to September 2015.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. David Stanley, Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754100 Email: david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications at this point with regard to this report. Alan Carr, Solicitor Tel: 01453 754357 Email: alan.carr@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Mark Russell, Planning Strategy Manager Tel: 01453 754305 Email: mark.russell@stroud.gov.uk
Options	The options are to consider increasing the number of dwellings at North East Cam.
Performance Management Follow Up	The Local Plan, when adopted, will form the development plan for the District and will be used to determine planning applications.

Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A – Inspector’s views on further modifications to the submitted Local Plan relating to the objective assessment of housing need and proposed housing requirement figure.
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Background

1. The Local Plan was submitted for examination in December 2013. In July 2014, the Local Plan Inspector, on the request of the Council, suspended the examination for further assessment to be undertaken to identify the housing requirement figure for the Local Plan period. The Council resolved in December 2014 to identify a housing requirement figure in the Local Plan of at least 11,200 dwellings by 2031 and to adopt housing growth option D Alternative M5 Catchment Stonehouse to deliver it. The Inspector held resumed examination hearing sessions into the Local Plan during May – June 2015 and has now issued his initial views on the housing requirement figure.

The Inspector’s views on the housing requirement figure

2. The Inspector has recommended an absolute minimum of at least 11,400 new dwellings (2006-2031). This figure represents the mid point of the job scenarios and provides a modest uplift to reflect the need for affordable housing. The figures put forward by participants at examination broadly ranged from around 11,000 to over 12,200 dwellings.
3. The Inspector has asked the Council to confirm that this recommended housing provision figure will be included in the amended Plan, subject to the Council undertaking the statutory public consultation and sustainability appraisal procedures.
4. The Council resolved in December 2014 to agree additional housing provision at West of Stonehouse and the Stroud Valleys, with potential for increasing the supply at Hunts Grove from 500 to 750 dwellings and at North East Cam from 450 to 750 dwellings, if required. The Inspector has now confirmed that the figure of at least 11,400 dwellings can be delivered using sites already identified in the submission Plan (including West of Stonehouse) and that further provision at Hunts Grove and North East Cam is not needed to achieve the housing requirement. However, the Inspector has recommended that Hunts Grove should be increased to 750 dwellings, to provide flexibility in the delivery of new housing as well as providing certainty in the longer term about the ultimate extent of this development area.
5. The Inspector has asked the Council to consider whether it wishes to amend the boundary of the North East Cam allocation to enable the capacity of the site to be increased from 450 to 750 dwellings and to include land opposite Cam & Dursley station as additional land within the site.

Planning considerations

6. The Inspector's note provides the Council with a clear indication of his likely recommendations at this stage, although this does not pre-empt or pre-judge his final conclusions on the soundness of the submitted Local Plan, which will be confirmed after formal consultation has been undertaken as part of the modifications procedure. To ensure that all parties have an opportunity to comment on this figure, it is recommended that the Council includes this figure in the amended Plan for the purposes of public consultation.
7. The Council's evidence submitted to the examination demonstrates that this housing requirement can be met from development identified in the Local Plan. Indeed, using this figure, the Council can now demonstrate more than a 7 years supply of deliverable sites. The Inspector's note is now a material consideration when assessing the planning merits of future planning applications and provides some defence against speculative proposals put forward in the absence of an up to date Local Plan.
8. A development of more than 450 dwellings at North East Cam is not necessary to deliver the housing requirement. A larger development was not supported previously by Cam Parish Council. The Inspector has also pointed out that a larger development may require further supporting development (such as a primary school) which has not been fully investigated at this stage. It is therefore recommended that the existing allocation at North East Cam is maintained and that any further extension to the development is considered against other alternatives in the future review of the Local Plan which the Council will be undertaking within 5 years.

Next Steps

9. As part of the Local Plan examination procedure, the Council has asked the Inspector to consider and recommend potential modifications to the Plan to ensure that the plan can be found sound. The Inspector's recommended housing requirement figure, together with other potential modifications which were discussed during the hearing sessions, will be subject to public consultation from the end of July to September 2015, before the Inspector decides whether the responses received raise matters which require the hearing sessions to be reopened in September.
10. If the Inspector is happy that no new issues have been identified, he will proceed to prepare his report, expected by late October 2015. If his report identifies that the Local Plan can be found sound, with or without modifications, the Council can consider adopting the Local Plan towards the end of this year.

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
EXAMINATION OF THE STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN
INSPECTOR'S VIEWS ON FURTHER MODIFICATIONS TO THE SUBMITTED
LOCAL PLAN RELATING TO THE OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED
AND PROPOSED HOUSING REQUIREMENT FIGURE**

1. A considerable amount of evidence has been submitted by the Council and other participants about the objective assessment of housing need, including the relationship with housing and economic factors and the housing requirement figure that should be included in the Stroud District Local Plan. Following the discussions on these matters during the various stages of the examination (both at the Stage 1 original and resumed hearings and the Stage 2 hearings), I have now formed a view about the appropriate housing figure to include in the Plan.
2. In the submitted Local Plan, a figure of at least 9,500 additional dwellings (2006-2031) was proposed, based on the 2011-based household projections. However, the Inspector's Initial Conclusions¹ highlighted several concerns about the approach and methodology used in establishing the objective assessment of housing need and the housing requirement figure. As a result, the Council agreed to suspend the examination and to undertake further work on this matter. In December 2014, on the basis of an updated and revised assessment of housing need, the Council resolved to support a new housing requirement figure of 11,200 (2006-2031)². Subsequent work has been undertaken to assess the implications of the latest 2012-based household projections, review the need for affordable housing and review the economic factors, including aligning the housing requirement figure with the alternative job scenarios³. This work concluded that the amended housing requirement figure of 11,200 dwellings would be slightly below the mid-point of the various job growth scenarios (which estimated a requirement for between 10,600-12,200 dwellings). The figures put forward by participants at the examination broadly ranged from around 11,000 to higher figures of 12,200 or more dwellings.
3. Following the discussions at the hearing sessions, I asked the Council to look at two alternative scenarios, based on the mid-point and upper-point of these job scenarios (either 11,400 or 12,200 new dwellings)⁴. There seems to be general agreement that the demographic need for new housing based on the latest 2012-based household projections is around 11,000 dwellings. However, some uplift is needed to reflect the relatively high need for affordable housing (446 units/year (unadjusted) and to ensure there are sufficient economically active people to take up the 6,800-12,500 new jobs estimated by the latest economic forecasts. Having considered all the evidence, discussions and representations, I conclude that the Council should include a housing requirement figure in the Local Plan of an absolute minimum of **at least 11,400 new dwellings** (2006-2031) within Core Policy CP2 and the associated text, calculations and housing trajectory; the provision of 950 additional bedspaces in Class C2 care homes is in addition to this figure. This figure would represent the mid-point of the job scenarios, as well as providing a modest uplift to the demographically assessed housing need in order to reflect the need for affordable housing and align better with the economic growth strategy.
4. In line with the guidance in the NPPF (¶ 14), I have also considered the overall capacity for housing development within Stroud district. Although there are significant swathes of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the district, along with other constraints (such as flood risk, landscape and sustainability issues), unlike neighbouring areas, there is no Green Belt within the district. From the evidence provided by the Council, using sites already identified in the submission Plan (including the proposed West of Stonehouse site), it would seem that a minimum of 11,400 dwellings could be delivered in the period to 2031 without any further changes to the Plan. With further changes to the submitted Plan, including increased housing provision at Hunts Grove extension (+250) and North-East Cam (+300), a figure just short of 12,200 dwellings could be delivered.

¹ Examination document: PS/D21

² Examination document: PS/E12

³ Examination document: REX/B17; Table 2

⁴ Examination document: REX/D05

5. The increased provision at Hunts Grove extension could be delivered within the existing proposed allocation, with a small increase on the south-western boundary to "round-off" this development area⁵. However, I understand that increased provision at North-East Cam could require additional land and further supporting development (such as a primary school) which has not been fully investigated. It will be for the Council to decide whether to amend the boundary of this allocation to enable this additional capacity to be provided, as well as to reflect the latest suggestions of the prospective developer (including an employment element at the northern end of the site). However, increased allocations at North-East Cam and Hunts Grove extension would not be necessary to meet the 11,400 dwelling figure. Nevertheless, I consider the proposed allocation at Hunts Grove extension should be increased to 750 dwellings, to provide flexibility in the delivery of new housing as well as providing certainty in the longer term about the ultimate extent of this development area.
6. Although alternative levels of housing requirement have been debated at the hearing sessions, the revised figure would need to be subject to the Main Modifications procedure and the associated sustainability appraisal and public consultation. This can be undertaken as part of the consultation and sustainability appraisal related to other amendments to the Plan as currently envisaged. The full reasoning for my recommendations on this matter will be included in my final report to the Council.
7. In forming my views on the most appropriate level of new housing development to be provided within Stroud district, I am aware of the current discussions taking place during the examination of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) for Gloucester, Cheltenham & Tewkesbury. The submitted JCS aims to fully meet its housing needs within the area of its plan, without requiring any other authority to assist in meeting any unmet needs. However, it is apparent that the Inspector examining this plan has requested the JCS authorities to undertake some further work on the housing, employment and retail strategy of the submitted Plan, and it is likely to be some time before these matters are finally resolved. Consequently, I consider it would not be in the best interests of establishing an up-to-date planning framework for Stroud district to delay the examination of the Stroud District Local Plan any further than is necessary at this time, particularly since the Plan already includes a commitment to early review if this proves necessary.
8. I would welcome confirmation from the Council that the recommended housing provision figure will be included in the amended Plan, subject to the consultation and sustainability appraisal procedure already envisaged. However, I confirm that this does not pre-empt or pre-judge my final conclusions on the soundness of the submitted Local Plan, which will be confirmed after formal consultation has been undertaken as part of the Main Modifications procedure.
9. This note is issued to provide guidance to the Council on the appropriate housing requirement figure to include in the Stroud District Local Plan. It is being published for information only, but is not open to comment from other parties, since they will have the opportunity to respond to these matters when the Plan is subject to consultation as part of the Main Modifications procedure.

Stephen J Pratt - Development Plan Inspector
3 July 2015

⁵ Examination document: PS2/D07