

EiP Statement

Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015 – 2030

Taylor Wimpey UK Limited

Representor ID: 1224983

Our ref 60174/05/CM/NMi
Date March 2021

Subject Matter 4: Location of Development

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Lichfields is instructed by Taylor Wimpey UK Limited [TW] to make representations on its behalf to the Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015 – 2030 [FLDP].
- 1.2 This statement has been prepared in response to the Matters, Issues and Questions raised by the Inspector for the Matter 4 Examination in Public [EiP] hearing sessions.
- 1.3 Separate representations have been submitted in respect of the following Matters:
- 1 Matter 3: Strategic Growth (inc Strategic Sites)
 - 2 Matter 7: Provision of Sustainable Housing Sites (including housing requirement)
 - 3 Matter 12: New Housing Development Proposals (inc Density and Mix)
 - 4 Matter 16: Green Barriers
- 1.4 These Matter Papers representations should be read in conjunction with previous submissions on the FLDP [Representor ID: 1224983].
- 1.5 These representations are made in relation to Taylor Wimpey's land interests in Mynydd Isa, namely the development of the Ffordd Fer site [the Site]. The Site has been promoted for residential development through the emerging FLDP but has not been identified as an allocation. The Ffordd Fer site is free from planning, physical and ownership constraints. It is economically viable, and would support the creation of sustainable communities, and it is therefore considered to be 'deliverable'.
- 1.6 This statement expands upon TW's previous representations made throughout the FLDP preparation process in light of the Inspector's specific issues and questions. Where relevant, the comments made are assessed against the tests of soundness in the Welsh Government's Development Plans Manual [DPM], Edition 3 (March 2020) and the relevant national planning guidance.

2.0 Planning Issues

Key Issue:

Is the spatial strategy coherent and based on a clear and robust preparation process? Are the spatial strategy and relevant strategic policies realistic, appropriate and logical in the light of relevant alternatives and are they based on robust and credible evidence?

a) What is the purpose of the settlement hierarchy? Will it guide new development to the most sustainable locations? Is it clear what types and amount of development, other than housing, will be appropriate in each tier of the hierarchy?

- 2.1 TW supports the application of a settlement hierarchy as this helps to ensure that development is directed towards the most sustainable locations. The 5-tier approach established within Policy STR2 is generally supported and it is appropriate to apportion a higher quantum of development to those settlements identified in Tiers 1 and 2 to ensure that housing development takes place in sustainable locations where sites are viable and deliverable.
- 2.2 However, TW considers that the settlement of Mynydd Isa, which is a Tier 2 settlement where ‘modest levels’ of new housing development will be directed, should be re-categorised as a Tier 1 Settlement. In this regard, TW notes that Topic Paper 7 (Spatial Strategy) includes the findings of the UDP Inspector’s report in respect of settlement hierarchy. In the Topic Paper¹, it sets out that the Inspector considered it “*illogical and backward, rather than forward looking*” that settlements that were once separate but form a continuous built up area are categorised separately within the settlement hierarchy. The Inspector specifically references Buckley (Tier 1) and Mynydd Isa (Tier 2) as examples of this.
- 2.3 Accordingly, Topic Paper 7 recognises² “*the need to move away from identifying individual settlements in planning terms, recognizing sustainable urban areas and settlement grouping*”. In this respect, the Settlement Audit Reports³ recognise the role that Buckley plays in serving Mynydd Isa and the physical connection between the two settlements. It notes the following:
- “The town physically adjoins Mynydd Isa to the west, Alltami to the north and Drury to the north east and enables each of these settlements to benefit from shared services and facilities”.*
- 2.4 However, this consideration does not appear to have been carried through into the FLDP as Buckley and Mynydd Isa are still defined as separate settlements. As Mynydd Isa and Buckley form a continuous built up area, it follows that Mynydd Isa plays a strategic role in the delivery of services and facilities along with Buckley and should be identified as a Tier 1 settlement.
- 2.5 Mynydd Isa is a sustainable settlement with a number of facilities and in our representations to the Deposit FLDP we identified a number of local services and facilities which currently serve the local community which includes a primary and secondary school, pharmacy, convenience shop, cafes, Church, fitness centre, public house and restaurant and post office. The settlement therefore benefits from its own local facilities as well as those provided by Buckley and the Settlement Audit Reports⁴ recognise this distinct interrelationship of service provision:

¹ LDP-EBD-TP7 Topic Paper 7 (Spatial Strategy) page 5

² LDP-EBD-TP7 Topic Paper 7 (Spatial Strategy) page 5

³ LDP-KSD-KM2 Settlement Audit Reports

⁴ LDP-KSD-KM2 Settlement Audit Reports

“Mynydd Isa has a good level of service provision and benefits from being close to Buckley and Ewloe. As the illustrative map of service provision suggests service provision in Mynydd Isa is very good and the close proximity of Buckley and Ewloe further improve service provision to the benefit of local residents”.

2.6 In conclusion, TW considers that the identification of Mynydd Isa as a Tier 2 settlement fails to reflect the UDP Inspector’s comments and take account of the Council’s own evidence on the physical connection with Buckley and the benefits provided from shared services and facilities in the area, in combination with the services and facilities which serve the local community. The FLDP should be taking a positive and forward looking approach to the location of future development which capitalises on the development potential of the most sustainable settlements in close proximity to facilities and services including Mynydd Isa.

2.7 For the above reasons Mynydd Isa should be identified within the same settlement boundary as Buckley and re-categorised as a Tier 1 settlement.

b) What is the rationale for the proportions of development split across the tiers?

2.8 The split of new development is set out in the table accompanying §5.13 of the FLDP. The table refines the breakdown set out in the Preferred Strategy Document, based on allocations and windfalls, completions and commitments. The FLDP sets out that the Plan does not seek to apportion development spatially using numerical or mechanistic methods. Therefore, it is not clear that this split between Tiers has been fully justified as the breakdown is largely based on previous delivery, rather than looking forward to promote growth in sustainable settlements.

2.9 Therefore, TW considers that Policy STR2 is not based on a sound evidence base justifying the breakdown and apportionment of growth, primarily housing development, within each Tier. For the Plan to be sound the Council needs to revisit its evidence base to provide a clear review of the breakdown of development within each Tier.

2.10 The FLDP should apportion a higher quantum of development towards those more sustainable settlements, including Mynydd Isa, to meet the upper end of its housing need.

c) Why is it necessary to assess the comments of the UDP inspector with regard to the definition of settlement boundaries?

2.11 TW considers that the comments of the UDP inspector on settlement boundaries are important as the Inspector had a number of clear concerns with the approach taken in the UDP. There have been updates to national policy since the UDP was examined but key planning principles in relation to the creation of sustainable development remain. The Inspector has raised some fundamental issues which remain valid in the context of current national guidance and require through consideration through the FLDP process.

2.12 In this context, the Inspector’s comments on the relationship between Buckley and Mynydd Isa remain valid as it is illogical for Mynydd Isa and Buckley to be identified as separate settlements. They form a continuous built up area, benefit from shared services and facilities and should be identified within the same settlement boundary. Additional development in this area, including TW’s Ffordd Fer site, would contribute to supporting these services and facilities, help ensure a strong community, and minimise the need for long distance commuting, in line with Planning Policy Wales⁵.

⁵ Planning Policy Wales: Edition 11 §§3.41 and 3.50

d) Where is the methodology for the assessment of settlement boundaries described? Has it been applied consistently? Where are the results of the assessment set out?

- 2.13 TW notes that no specific assessment of settlement boundaries appears to have been prepared, although the Council's Assessment of Candidate Sites and Alternative Sites⁶ does appear to consider whether sites are located within or adjoining an existing settlement boundary and whether sites are a potential extension to an existing settlement or divorced from the settlement. The impacts of sites on settlements and the surrounding area also appear to have been considered in some instances. Given the comments on the suitability of settlement boundaries in the Inspector's Report for the UDP, in order for the FLDP to be robust, a specific assessment of settlement boundaries should have been prepared. In the absence of a specific settlement boundary report TW considers that the LDP is not appropriate and is not effective.
- 2.14 As TW's Ffordd Fer site was promoted at the Deposit FLDP stage, it was not considered in the Council's Assessment of Candidate Sites and Alternative Sites, and was instead considered in the Council's responses to the Deposit Plan representations. TW does not agree with the conclusions reached on the suitability of the site for allocation in the Council's response. For the reasons set out in our response to Matter 16 and our representations to the Deposit FLDP, it is considered that TW's Ffordd Fer does not contribute to the purposes of the Green Barrier and is suitable for removal. The Site provides clearly identifiable physical features that can be used to establish defensible boundaries. It is well contained by the existing built environment to the east, by the Mold Bypass to the north and west, which provide a substantial physical barrier to the countryside, and to the south by a thick mature tree belt which provides a clear physical visual barrier. These boundaries disconnect the Site from the wider Green Barrier designation and open countryside.
- 2.15 The Site therefore forms a logical extension to the urban area, consolidating the established pattern of development with strong, permanent boundaries. It would result in the natural extension of the existing built up area of Mynydd Isa. TW therefore considers that the Ffordd Fer site at Mynydd Isa should be allocated for residential development and included within the settlement boundary.

e) Are the settlement limits drawn sufficiently widely to enable the predicted amount of growth?

- 2.16 For the reasons set out below, and the other reasons we have outlined in our previous representations, TW considers that additional non-strategic sites, which are both available and deliverable within the plan period, should be allocated to ensure that the local housing requirements are appropriately met and the above matters are addressed. This would result in the need to re-draw settlement limits in order to accommodate further growth.
- 2.17 It is considered that the Council should:
- 1 Plan for a longer plan period and ensures that the FLDP, when adopted, covers at least a 15-year plan period (ideally 20-years) to ensure longevity and, to provide certainty to the development industry.
 - 2 Increase its housing requirement above the upper end of its objectively assessed housing need (using this upper end figure as a starting point) to deliver aspirational levels of housing and employment to align with national policy.

⁶ LDP-EBD-BP8 Assessment of Candidate Sites and Alternative Sites (September 2019)

- 3 Review commuting patterns to reflect the current position (40%) and to factor this into the housing requirement.
- 4 Review the evidence base to provide robust evidence for a housing requirement that will support proposed economic growth targets.
- 5 Place less reliance on the delivery of windfall sites contributing to its housing supply and instead plan positively by identifying an appropriate level of allocations particularly bearing in mind the uncertainty over the supply of windfalls and the relatively short plan period.

2.18 We are also concerned that Strategic allocation STR3A is not fully deliverable within the plan period and will not therefore be effective in supporting the Council in meeting their housing need.

2.19 Taking the above matters into account, it is considered that the Council should identify sufficient housing land within the LDP, including TW's Ffordd Fer site at Mynydd Isa, which is available to meet the housing requirement. In our response Matter 16, we have outlined the reasons as to why the Site is suitable for removal from the Green Barrier.

f) Is it appropriate for there to be a green wedge designation within the Deeside Enterprise Zone? Will it be an unacceptable constraint on the ability to maximise economic opportunities in this area?

2.20 TW has no comment on this matter.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 In conclusion in relation to Matter 4 'Location of Development', TW would note:

- 1 Mynydd Isa as a Tier 2 settlement fails to reflect the UDP Inspector's comments and take account of the Council's own evidence on the physical connection with Buckley and the benefits provided from shared services and facilities in the area, in combination with the services and facilities which serve the local community. As such, Mynydd Isa should be identified within the same settlement boundary as Buckley and re-categorised as a Tier 1 settlement;
- 2 The FLDP should apportion a higher quantum of development towards those more sustainable settlements, including Mynydd Isa, to meet the upper end of its housing need;
- 3 In order for the FLDP to be robust, a specific assessment of settlement boundaries should be prepared. In the absence of a specific settlement boundary report TW considers that the LDP is not appropriate and is not effective; and
- 4 TW considers that additional non-strategic sites, which are both available and deliverable within the plan period, should be allocated to ensure that the local housing requirements are appropriately met and the above matters are addressed. This would result in the need to re-draw settlement limits in order to accommodate further growth.