

Gladman Developments Ltd.

Matter 6 Hearing Statement

Harborough Local Plan

Spatial Strategy and Countryside Protection



September 2018

Matter 6 – Spatial Strategy and Countryside Protection

1.1. Q6.1 Is the Spatial Strategy as set out in Policies SS1 and H1 and their supporting text soundly based? Is the settlement hierarchy soundly based?

- 1.1.1. Gladman support the Spatial Strategy as set out in Policy SS1 including the identification of Fleckney as a Rural Centre and Great Bowden as a Selected Rural Village which will be one of the main focuses for rural development.
- 1.1.2. As set out in the Local Plan, Fleckney is an extremely sustainable settlement with services which serve both the settlement itself and its rural hinterland. Fleckney is one of the largest Rural Centres offering a range of shops and services and has a substantial employment provision. It is therefore entirely appropriate for Fleckney to be a focus for new residential development through the Local Plan.
- 1.1.3. Great Bowden is also considered a suitable, sustainable settlement for growth. The settlement is host to a range of services and facilities, including a shop, Post Office, a café/homeware store, pubs, a primary school and recreational facilities including a tennis and cricket club. This means that the day-to-day needs of the residents can be largely met within Great Bowden.
- 1.1.4. Great Bowden also relates well to the principle town of Market Harborough where a wide range of services and facilities can be found such a medical and dental facilities, employment, a large town centre with a range of shops and restaurants and secondary education facilities.

1.2. Q6.4 Is Policy GD2 a sound approach to allowing additional development in sustainable locations?

- 1.2.1. Gladman support in principle Policy GD2. Settlement boundary policies are considered to be too inflexible to cope with changing circumstances across a Plan Period and do not allow sustainable development to come forward on the edge of settlements in order to address a shortfall in the 5-year housing land supply in a district.
- 1.2.2. Policy GD2 sets out a more flexible approach to development which is Framework compliant and which still offers considerable protection against unsustainable and inappropriate development.
- 1.2.3. Gladman do however object to criterion (a) which sets an arbitrary target for growth in individual settlements based upon the proposal not cumulatively leading to the housing requirement set out in the Local Plan being exceeded by more than 10%.
- 1.2.4. This criterion is considered to be unnecessary and contrary to the Framework as it artificially restricts potentially sustainable development from coming forward to meet overall housing supply within

the district. The remaining criteria set out in Policy GD2 provide sufficient protection against unsustainable development coming forward including ensuring that the proposal reflects the size of the settlement concerned and the level of service provision within that settlement (criterion (b)) and that it respects the form and character of the existing settlement (criterion (c)).

- 1.2.5. It is therefore considered that criterion (a) should be deleted from Policy GD2 to ensure that it is sound.

1.3. Q6.5 Are the range of policies GD3 to GD7 governing rural development and the protection of landscape and the countryside sound?

- 1.3.1. Gladman rely upon our original representations made to the Proposed Submission Plan on Policies GD5 and GD7, repeated here:

Policy GD5 – Landscape and Townscape Character

Gladman wish to point out that impact on the landscape is one factor that should be considered by the decision maker when determining any planning proposal and ultimately it is a balance of the harm of development against the benefits. It is only where the harm significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits should planning permission be refused. Clause (b) of Policy GD5 sets out that proposals should avoid the loss of features of landscape, townscape, historic/heritage, wildlife or geological importance. Whilst this is understandable, it should be recognised that any adverse impacts that a proposal has on these issues should be factored into the planning balance when making a decision rather than it being a sole reason for refusing any application.

Policy GD7 – Green Wedges

Policy GD7 relates to green wedge designations which are not referred to in national policy, however they are not in of themselves inconsistent with the Framework. Notwithstanding this, the boundaries of green wedges are often historic in nature due to them having been formulated alongside the now outdated evidence of development needs that underpinned previous local plans. They also often cross administrative boundaries due to them originally having been ‘broadly defined’ within former county-wide structure plans. The green wedges within Leicester and Leicestershire therefore continue to be a strategic issue to be considered through the Duty to Cooperate and the Strategic Growth Plan to ensure that development needs can be met in full across the HMA.