

**TEWKESBURY BOROUGH PLAN:
EXAMINATION 2020**

Matter 2 - OVERALL HOUSING PROVISION IN THE TBP

Statement on behalf of Bromford Housing Association (BHA) ID. 347

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Matter 2 - Overall housing provision in the TBP

Main Issue

Whether the TBP provides for the quantity and distribution of housing required by the strategic policies of the JCS

2.1 ***What distinguishes non-strategic housing sites within the remit of the TBP from strategic sites within the remit of the JCS? What is the current anticipated timescale for preparation of the JCS review?***

2.1.1 These questions are based on points raised by the Inspector under points 1 and 7 of his Preliminary Queries dated 7th September 2020 [EXAM001]. The Council published its response to these queries in November 2020 [EXAM001A, paragraph 2.2 and 5.2-5.4]. In relation to defining 'strategic' sites, the Council considers that a 'strategic' site would comprise a capacity of 'circa 500 dwellings' which was applied through the consideration of strategic allocations for the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). This position is itself based on information taken from advice issued by ATLAS in March 2010 [EXAM001A, Appendix 4: JCS Strategic Definition Note].

2.1.2 It is clear therefore that size matters when defining strategic sites within the JCS area. However, the JCS Strategic Definition Note also recognised that excluding sites of 500 dwellings or more "...allows for the Part 2 plans... to allocate land of a non-strategic scale thus respecting the principles of localism." (EXAM001A, Appendix 4). This would suggest that in addition to having capacities of less than 500 dwellings, 'non-strategic' sites should also only relate to the local needs of the individual JCS authority in question (in this case, Tewkesbury). This would set such sites apart from 'strategic' sites whose remit would include seeking to address the unmet needs of their respective neighbours, a function performed by the strategic allocations and urban extensions identified in the JCS. Such an approach is key to the JCS Spatial Strategy under Policy SP2 [DP001] which distributes a proportion of Gloucester and Cheltenham's identified need to locations on the edge of those respective built-up areas, but which are actually located in Tewkesbury administrative area.

2.1.3 In relation to the JCS review timetable, the review has only reached the Issues and Options stage to date and there remains a clear lack of clarity over the expected timeframe

for when the JCS is likely to be updated, as evidenced by the Council's response on this point [EXAM001A, paragraph 2.1].

2.2 *Given the provisions of the JCS, the current JCS review, and the subsidiary role of the TBP to allocate non-strategic sites, does the TBP make the required contribution towards meeting the housing needs of Tewkesbury borough over the plan period 2011-31? Will the remaining shortfall be provided through the JCS review, or in other ways, in the necessary timescale, and if not, is this a matter for the TBP?*

2.2.1 Yes. At the time the JCS was adopted (December 2017), a shortfall of 2,455 dwellings existed in Tewkesbury up to 2031 [DP001, para 7.1.19]. To address this, Policy REV1 of the JCS directed the JCS authorities to review Tewkesbury's housing land supply 'immediately after' the JCS was adopted [DP001, par 7.1.20]. Policy REV1 states that such a review is intended, "...to help meet any shortfall in housing supply against the JCS housing requirements...". Therefore, BHA contend that it is clearly the role of the JCS review to address the full housing needs and any identified shortfalls in land supply in Tewkesbury up to 2031, and is not a matter for the TBP [DP001, paragraph 3.2.18 and Policy REV1]. Nonetheless, there is clearly a need for non-strategic allocations as part of a plan-led approach and as a pre-cursor to progress being made on the JCS review

2.2.2 Furthermore, the Council has now updated its housing monitoring up to end of March 2020 [EXAM001B, Appendix 4]. This suggests that the identified shortfall in supply for Tewkesbury, at this date, has now reduced from 2,455 to 1,525 dwellings (without the TBP allocations) or down to 530 dwellings (with the TBP allocations) up to 2031 [EXAM001B, Appendix 4, Table 1 and 3 respectively]. The reduction in the shortfall is most likely attributable to an increase in supply from unallocated land, including sites approved on appeal [EB013, para 2.4].

2.4 *The JCS states (on page 26) that the 2015 Settlement Audit will be refreshed prior to submission of the TBP. Has this been done, and if so what are the results of the refresh and would any changes to the settlement hierarchy be justified?*

2.4.1 Yes, an update to the 2015 Settlement Audit was published in July 2017 and forms part of the evidence base for this examination [EB011a]. In respect to Winchcombe, the settlement is ranked 3rd in the overall hierarchy of all 65 settlements assessed in the Borough [EB011a, table at section 4.8, and Appendix 1]. This clearly shows that in overall

terms Winchcombe remains one of the most sustainable locations for development in the Borough, relative to other settlements.

2.4.2 Consequently, the evidence supports the continuing role and function of Winchcombe as a Rural Service Centre as defined in the TBP, therefore there is no justification for changing the settlement hierarchy.

2.5 Is the methodology used for identifying housing sites in the TBP, as described in the Housing Background Paper (HBP), appropriate?

2.5.1 In overall terms, yes. The site assessment approach set out in the Housing Background Paper [EB013, Chapter 5] is considered broadly consistent with national policy and guidance on site assessment, recognising that the final selection of sites is a matter of planning judgement. The main source of sites assessed in the HBP is drawn from the land availability assessment work (updated 2018/19) [EB015a] which has a focus on the deliverability of sites [EB013, para 5.3]. This approach reflects national guidance on the consideration of land availability in plan-making¹ as a basis for the site assessment process [EB015a, para 2.1/Figure 1].

2.5.2 The approach is also broadly consistent with the adopted JCS with respect to the locations of appropriate sites [DP001, Policy SP2, criterion 5], and has been subjected to a proportionate sustainability appraisal [CD006, Appendix VI], though this is subject to specific objections raised by RPS through representations to the TBP on SA issues.

2.5.3 However, BHA has also made representations at the Regulation 19 stage (in response to Policy RES1), regarding the approach taken by TBC to releasing sites at Winchcombe which has resulted in a continuing shortfall in provision of housing in the face of under-provision of housing in the settlement over the last decade years since 2011. These are updated in our response to question 2.8 of this statement taking into account more recent monitoring information submitted by the Council [EXAM001B, Appendices 2, 3 and 4].

2.5.4 Whilst the Council is proposing to release land at Winchcombe, which BHA supports, the remaining boundary remains tightly drawn around the settlement, which is likely to inhibit

¹ Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 3-005-20190722 Revision date: 22 07 2019

the ability of Winchcombe to accommodate additional growth over the longer term, to the detriment of its continuing role and function in the JCS settlement hierarchy. This will inevitably result in the need for the further review of the inner settlement boundary at Winchcombe as part of subsequent plan reviews.

2.5.5 Further details on our response with respect to Winchcombe settlement is set out under questions 2.8 and 2.11 below.

2.6 *JCS Table SP2a appears to require the TBP to identify further potential for 315 dwellings. Is this correct, and if so has this requirement been met?*

2.6.1 No, this figure has now been superseded by more recent information published by TBC set out the Housing Background Paper [EB013, para 15.1/Table 10; EXAM001B, Appendix 4, Table 5] which includes the housing site allocations proposed in the TBP.

2.7 *The JCS provides for housing development at Tewkesbury town ‘in line with its role as a market town’ but sets no specific housing requirement for the town area. The HBP notes in paragraph 3.7 that smaller scale (non-strategic) sites within the TBP would contribute towards the shortfall in provision identified in the JCS but also states it is not appropriate for the plan to define a housing requirement for the town. Rather, the HBP states that the plan includes all the (non-strategic) sites within or adjacent to the town that are suitable for allocation given the site selection criteria. In this light, is the overall housing provision in the TBP for Tewkesbury town justified, consistent with the JCS and has the plan been positively prepared in this respect?*

2.7.1 Yes. The approach to identifying the quantum of non-strategic sites at Tewkesbury Town is consistent with the JCS, which recognises the ‘...*significant constraints and availability of land around the urban area..*’ that exists at the town [DP001, para 3.2.17] and which has therefore impacted on the amount of deliverable and developable land that can reasonably be expected to come forward up to 2031 through the TBP. This is in part the reason for the need to identify land at Mitton (for 500 dwellings) as a contribution towards meeting the needs of Tewkesbury.

2.7.2 Consequently, the quantum of land identified at the town is considered to be appropriate and, in the context of the constraints on growth acknowledged in the JCS, the TBP has been positively prepared.

- 2.7.3 Furthermore, given Tewkesbury Town is the principal urban area (PUA) in the Borough, any consideration of options for additional growth of a strategic scale at this location would be more appropriately dealt with as part of the JCS review process.
- 2.8 ***The JCS provides for about 1,860 dwellings at the Rural Service Centres, Bishop's Cleeve and Winchcombe. Under Policy RES1, three sites are allocated at Bishop's Cleeve and one at Winchcombe. As at April 2020, taking these allocations, existing commitments and completions into account, the TBP would provide for 2,044 and 354 dwellings respectively in the two settlements, a total of 2,398 dwellings and some 538 in excess of the JCS figure. In this light, is the overall housing provision in the TBP for the two Rural Service Centres justified, consistent with the JCS and has the plan been positively prepared in this respect?***
- 2.8.1 Yes, though in part. In terms of the overall supply picture, the Pre-Submission TBP acknowledges that the site allocations for the Rural Service Centres (and Local Service Villages) will collectively provide in excess of the remaining JCS requirement (under Policy SP2). Nonetheless, the TBP identifies three good reasons for why this is appropriate. Notably, the TBP recognises that these requirements are not to be applied as caps or maximum limits on growth at the settlements, as well as the need to maintain the supply of sites on an annual basis (see BHA's response to question 2.11 on five-year supply issues in the Borough), and to ensure sufficient flexibility exists in the overall supply to respond to changing circumstances [CD001, para 3.20]. Consequently, BHA consider the numerical over-provision of land to be entirely reasonable and broadly welcomes the approach taken by TBC in this regard, which represents a pragmatic response to the allocation of land in the TBP.
- 2.8.2 However, at the settlement-scale, it should be noted that the extent of the provision at the Rural Service Centres being planned for in the TBP, as a whole, is not in BHA's view being spread equitably across the two RSCs but, in fact, is heavily skewed towards Bishops Cleeve. For example, as set out in our Regulation 19 representations, the total current supply at Winchcombe RSC (at April 2019) was 271 dwellings [MN003, Table 6], which included existing committed sites with planning permission along with net completions delivered since 2011. This represented just 4.3% of the total identified supply across the Borough totalling 6,160 dwellings at April 2019 [MN003, Table 5]. This compared with Bishops Cleeve RSC whose proportion of the total supply borough-wide was 26.5%, or 1,638 out of 6,160 dwellings at April 2019.

- 2.8.3 BHA has revised this comparison in light of the updated monitoring data submitted to the examination covering the period 2011 to 2020 [EXAM001B]. The figures indicate that, at April 2020, the current supply of land at Winchcombe now comprised 274 dwellings [EXAM001B, Appendix 3, Table 6] against a Borough-wide supply of 7,461 dwellings [EXAM001B, Appendix 3, Table 5]. This equates to just 3.6% of this total, a worsening of the situation at Winchcombe since 2019. In comparison, the same data tables indicate the total supply now evident at Bishop's Cleeve is 1,894 dwellings, still equating to 25.3% of all committed supply in the Borough at April 2020.
- 2.8.4 Similarly, when taking into account the future known supply identified in the TBP (including site allocations) the proportion of growth directed to Winchcombe remains depressingly low. For Winchcombe, the total provision of 354 dwellings equates to 3.9% of the total future supply of 8,983 dwellings², excluding windfalls [EXAM001B, Appendix 4, Table 5]. In comparison, the provision of 2,044 dwellings at Bishops Cleeve equates to 22.7%.
- 2.8.5 The Council has also sought to apply 'indicative requirements' as part of the process of distributing housing growth across the RSCs (and LSVs). For Bishops Cleeve, the requirement is 1,263 dwellings, whilst for Winchcombe the figure is 597 dwellings. In proportionate terms, this would represent 6% of the JCS requirement (9,899) to be provided for at Winchcombe, with 12.7% to be met Bishops Cleeve. The overall result is a simultaneous over-provision of housing at Bishops Cleeve to the tune of 781 dwellings, with a commensurate under-provision of housing at Winchcombe of 243 dwellings, against the indicative requirement for each RSC [EXAM001B, Appendix 4, Table 6]. The Council note the level of under-provision in Winchcombe as part of the 2018 Housing Background Paper [EXAMEB013] where, in paragraph 11.6, the Council note that this shortfall has not been able to be met, due to a lack of available sites at Winchcombe. What has not been noted here is the potential for increased densities on sites proposed for allocation, which is a matter of difference between the Council and BHA as the site promoter for WIN1. RPS welcomes careful consideration of this matter, which is clearly linked to the indicative

² EXAM001B, Appendix 4, Table 5 indicates a total supply of 9,370 dwellings from all sources. When excluding the windfall allowance (414 dwgs), this reduces to 8,983.

requirement of Policy SP2 of the JCS, the parent policy for how the Borough Plan should be framed.

- 2.8.6 The significantly elevated level of growth brought forward at Bishops Cleeve is primarily due to a considerable number of planning approvals granted (including on appeal) at Bishops Cleeve in recent years on unallocated sites located in the rural area outside the current adopted settlement boundary, predominantly along the northern edge of the settlement (outside the Green Belt). The Council's updated evidence base lists six approvals on large sites ongoing at Bishops Cleeve [EXAM001B, Appendix 3, Table 9]. The six applications in question total 784 dwellings, which accounts for all the over-provision quantified in the updated figures.
- 2.8.7 Consequently, the significant increase in provision seen at Bishops Cleeve in recent years, whilst increasing the overall supply, has not been plan-led but has occurred on an ad hoc and incremental basis brought forward outside the development plan process. This, however, should not be seen as justification for limiting or reducing the provision of land for housing at Winchcombe simply because a numerical target has been met. In fact, by allocating sites at Winchcombe this would ensure that delivery of housing to meet local needs can be genuinely plan-led and not at the mercy of speculative proposals brought forward outside of the plan.
- 2.10 *The TBP identifies six Urban Fringe Settlements (Brockworth, Churchdown, Hucclecote, Innsworth, Longford and Uckington) which are recognised as sustainable settlements closely associated with Gloucester or Cheltenham but no specific housing requirements are set for them in the JCS. Under Policy RES1, two sites are allocated at Brockworth. In this light, is the overall housing provision in the TBP for the Urban Fringe Settlements justified, consistent with the JCS and has the plan been positively prepared in this respect?***
- 2.10.1 Consistent with our response to question 2.1 above, BHA considers that those sites within or in close proximity to the Urban Fringe Settlements constitute 'strategic sites' as they are more likely to be addressing the needs of Gloucester and Cheltenham, and not Tewkesbury. Therefore, the consideration of sites in these locations is matter more appropriately left to the JCS review.
- 2.11 *On adoption of the TBP and in advance of the JCS review, would there be a satisfactory five-year housing land supply position and if so, for how long? What are the implications of any shortfall and how far, if at all, is this a matter for the TBP?***
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Housing Land Supply Update (April 2020)

- 2.11.1 The Council's updated evidence on housing land supply for Tewkesbury, and in particular the updated five-year land supply position, is set out in the Council's response to the Inspector's Preliminary Queries [EXAM001B, Appendix 3 and 4]. Appendix 3 (figure 1) of the updated assessment [EXAM001B] indicates that for period 2020/21-2024/25 the supply position is **4.35 years** (representing a deficit of 186 dwellings, based on a 5% buffer). It is noted that this supply position excludes the TBP site allocations, but also discounts 1,124 dwellings from the five-year requirement figure based on what the Council describes as 'advanced delivery' of completions achieved between 2011/12 and 2019/20 [EXAM001B, Appendix 3, para 6.3/Figure 1].
- 2.11.2 The update then considers the potential impact of the proposed allocations in the emerging Tewkesbury Borough Plan if they are added to the housing supply [EXAM001B, Appendix 4]. Table 4 of Appendix indicates that the effect would be to increase the supply position to **7.27 years** (representing a surplus of 644 dwellings). It is noted, once again, that this supply position incorporates the same discount (1,124 dwellings) into the five-year requirement figure as described above. Consequently, based on this evidence the Council is claiming that a five-year supply position can be achieved at the point of adoption but only with the inclusion of the TBP allocations.
- 2.11.3 However, RPS considers the five-year supply calculation in the update to be incorrect, with particular regards to the incorporation of the 'advance delivery discount'. This is because the Council's approach misinterprets national policy and guidance, as well as conflating delivery and supply considerations. In terms of national guidance, the PPG states:

“How can past over-supply of housing completions against planned requirements be addressed?”

Where areas deliver more completions than required, the additional supply can be used to offset any shortfalls against requirements from previous years.” (Paragraph: 032 Reference ID: 68-032-20190722 Revision date: 22 July 2019)

- 2.11.4 This is the only reference in national policy to matters dealing with over-provision of housing completions against planned requirements. The guidance clearly states that any over-provision in later years can be applied to past under-delivery against requirements

‘from previous years’. This, however, is not the same as recommending using the over-provision to reduce the future (five-year) requirement. This was a matter considered in other recent local plan examinations in 2017 (notably, at Telford³) where the Council sought to reduce the five-year housing requirement figure to account for over-provision during the first five years of the plan period. The Inspector (Michael Hetherington) rejected this, describing this as ‘inappropriate’ (TWLP, IR, para 75).

2.11.5 The Inspector at Gothington also considered this approach in the context of that planning appeal, and concluded that,

“...it is my view that additional supply is not a tool that can be used to discount the Council’s housing requirement set out in its adopted strategic policies.” (IR63)

2.11.6 The approach being taken by TBC is therefore clearly wrong as it is not consistent with planning guidance or recent decisions as referenced above. Based on this, RPS contends that the past over-provision should not be discounted from the five-year housing requirement as is suggested by the Council. The impact of removing the discount from the supply calculation is summarised below (Table A), alongside the Council’s calculation for comparison purposes.

2.11.7 It can be seen that when properly accounting for past delivery up to the present (end of March 2020), in line with the PPG, the supply position for the period 2020-2025 is substantially worse than is being claimed by the Council. RPS contends that the true measure of land supply is **3.96 years**. The lack of a demonstrable supply of deliverable land is evident even when taking into account the supply from TBP site allocations within next five-year period (to 2025).

Table A

Housing Calculation – Tewkesbury	Supply TBC		RPS	
	Without TBP sites	With TBP sites	With TBP site; No ‘Surplus’	No
1. Previous Delivery				
JCS Requirement	4,455	4,455	4,455	

³ Report into the Examination of Telford & Wrekin Local Plan, 6th November 2017

REPORT

Actual Delivery	5,579	5,579	5,579
'Surplus'	1,124	1,124	0
2. Requirement (2020/21 to 2024/25)			
JCS Requirement = 495 dw x 5 yrs	2,475	2,475	2,475
Minus 'Surplus'	1,351	1,351	2,475
Buffer (5%)	68	68	124
Total Five-Year Requirement	1,419	1,419	2,599
3. Deliverable Supply total	1,233	2,063	2,063
4. Five-Year Calculation	4.35	7.27	3.96
Difference.	(-186)	(+644)	(-536)

2.11.8 Notably, a recent Inspector decision for Gotherington at paragraph 63, issued on 12th January 2021 indicates that TBC can only demonstrate 1.82 years' worth of deliverable land in Tewkesbury. This provides further justification for the need for short-term growth opportunities on suitable sites that can deliver homes in the next five-year period.

2.11.9 Any shortfall in five-year supply is a matter for the JCS review to address. As noted above, the review is underway having reached the Issues and Options stage and is being brought forward in line as intended under the JCS Policy REV1, which states that "...A partial review of the housing supply for Gloucester and Tewkesbury will commence immediately upon adoption of the JCS...".