

# Matter 2 – Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Examination

## St Modwen Homes

September 2018

### Matter 2 Strategy and Strategic Policies

1. St Modwen Homes own land within the allocation DSR1, a mixed use allocation of 300 homes and 48 hectares of employment land, adjacent to Blythe Bridge. This Statement focuses on Question 1.1-1.4 concerning the Spatial Distribution of development; Question 2.1 concerning the Spatial Hierarchy and Question 3.1 concerning settlement boundaries.

### The Spatial Distribution of Development

#### *Is the strategy for distribution justified?*

2. Yes, the strategy for the distribution of development is justified. Policy SS3 distributes 25% of the net housing requirement to the Rural Area, and the remainder between Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle. The settlement hierarchy is outlined at paragraphs 7.14-19 of the Submission Local Plan (SLP) and expressed within Policy SS2. This is supported.
3. Blythe Vale is one of the Larger Villages within the District and is within the spatial strategy category of Rural Areas. *'The Rural Areas outside of the Peak District make up over two thirds of the plan area in terms of land coverage and contain nearly half of the Plan area's population'* (para .7.15 SLP). The Local Plan distributes 25% of the housing requirement to the Rural Areas.
4. The distribution of growth to the hierarchy of settlements, reflects their function and capacity to accommodate growth (para. 7.1.6 SLP). Policy SS2 reflects this in establishing the Settlement Hierarchy.
5. The three towns all share a good range of services and facilities, as is evidenced in the table below. Blythe Bridge is included here also, by way of justifying why 25% of the housing requirement is appropriate to be distributed to the Rural Area. More specifically, that 793 additional homes (Table 7.2 SLP) as at 2017 was deemed appropriate by the SLP to distributed to the Rural Area, and given that 300 of those homes were identified for allocation at DSR1, Blythe Bridge.

|                             | Existing category | % Housing Allocated from the H2 Allocations (2847 dwellings)* | Railway station | First/ Middle School | High School | Health Care Provision | Post Office | Public house | Library | Bank |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|------|
| Leek                        | Town              | 22  | x               | ✓                    | ✓           | ✓                     | ✓           | ✓            | ✓       | ✓    |
| Biddulph                    | Town              | 26  | x               | ✓                    | ✓           | ✓                     | ✓           | ✓            | ✓       | ✓    |
| Cheadle                     | Town              | 36  | x               | ✓                    | ✓           | ✓                     | ✓           | ✓            | ✓       | ✓    |
| Blythe Bridge and Forsbrook | Larger village    | 11  | ✓               | ✓                    | ✓           | ✓                     | ✓           | ✓            | ✓       | ✓    |

***Should more growth be targeted to the rural areas, particularly the larger villages, to enhance and maintain their vitality and viability and increase their supply of affordable housing? and Does the housing allocation at Blythe Bridge (300 dwellings) distort the strategy and the approach to the rural area by proposing a large proportion of dwellings in one place which will primarily serve the needs of Stoke on Trent conurbation ((65%) of the dwellings allocated in the rural area)? Would an alternative approach of distributing allocation over a number of more villages be more sustainable?***

6. St Modwen Homes can confirm that the allocation of 300 homes (DSR1) can be accommodated on land within their control. St Modwen Developments also control some of the land to the south of the A50 within the employment allocation, and can confirm that this is available. Given the above table clearly demonstrates the sustainability of Blythe Bridge when compared to other towns within the Borough, it is evident that it would be inappropriate to divert any of the apportioned 300 homes and 48ha of employment land away from the settlement through a redistribution of growth.
7. Therefore, St Modwen does not seek to redistribute growth away from the three towns towards the Rural Area and similarly, do not support any redistribution of the current allocation of 300 homes at Blythe Bridge to other larger villages within the Rural Area.
8. Blythe Bridge is one of the Rural Area Larger Villages, which are defined within the policy as ‘the most sustainable settlements in the rural areas.’ A comparison of the sustainability of the larger villages is provided within Appendix J of the Policy and Strategy Topic Paper, ED 13.5. Compared to other villages, Blythe Bridge is significantly more sustainable in terms of the services and facilities offered e.g. secondary school, medical centre and diversity of shops and services, and in addition it has the Borough’s rail station located there – which places it above other settlements in terms of opportunities for sustainable modes of travel and connectivity.

9. Blythe Bridge also has regular bus services:
- Connecting the allocation site DSR1 with the Railway Station every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday during peak hours
  - Connecting the settlement of Blythe Bridge with Hanley every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday during peak hours
  - Connecting the settlement of Blythe Bridge with Cheadle three times a day Monday to Friday
10. The role of these Larger Villages extends to supporting the immediate surrounding areas and smaller villages too. It is preferable in terms of delivering a sustainable spatial strategy to allocate 300 dwellings in Blythe Bridge as opposed to allocating a series of smaller, less sustainable sites in other villages that do not offer the scale of services and facilities as Blythe Bridge.
11. Blythe Bridge also is a settlement where land is available for development, outside of the Green Belt and is deliverable and developable when measured against the NPPF 2018. It is noted in ED26.1, the 'SHLAA Summary' (July 2015) that the availability of deliverable land within the rural area is limited, with land for only 124 dwellings being identified (Table 4), and developable land equivalent to 352 dwellings. When analysed further it is evident that the size of sites that are available across the villages outside of Blythe Bridge are very small, often with a capacity of less than 10 dwellings. In such circumstances, this scale of development will not contribute towards significantly to the sustainability of a settlement which (based on Appendix J ED13.5) is not the most sustainable in the first instance. By comparison, 300 dwellings at Blythe Bridge will deliver improvements to local services/facilities and deliver affordable housing.
12. Earlier in 2018, planning permission was granted to St Modwen Homes (application reference 2017/0512) for 118 dwellings within the allocated site DSR1. This leaves a residual 182 dwellings to be permitted. As part of that proposal, 33% of the homes were affordable – agreed in terms of size and mix with the Council's housing strategy officer as being suitable to meet local affordable needs. Furthermore, a S106 agreement was completed and will deliver improvements to the local schools via education contributions; offsite sports pitch contributions, play provision and a financial contribution towards improvement at the rail station. The scale of development made the level of contributions viable and directly related to the improvements of existing facilities and services within Blythe Bridge. Improving these will be of wider benefit. St Modwen Homes have progressed with an infrastructure scheme at the site that will extend the access road into phase 2. This planning application is recommended for approval at planning committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018. A master planning exercise has commenced for phase 2, to deliver the residual residential element.

***Is the settlement hierarchy within policy SS2 and the position of the villages within the hierarchy (Policies SS8 and SS9) justified?***

13. It is appropriate to have a settlement hierarchy that distinguishes between large and smaller villages, based on their services and facilities, having regard to their infrastructure capacity and character. Given Blythe Bridge's infrastructure (Appendix J, ED13.5), it is clearly justified in having a role as a Larger Village within the hierarchy.

14. Blythe Bridge and Forsbrook benefit from a range of services and facilities including shops, primary and secondary schools, employment opportunities at Meyer Timber (south west of Blythe Bridge) for example, and excellent road and rail linkages, boasting the only railway station in the District. A comprehensive list of services and facilities available at Blythe Bridge and Forsbrook is provided below:

- Library
- High School – Blythe Bridge High School
- Primary Schools – William Amory, Springcroft and Forsbrook CE Primary Schools
- Youth and Community Centre
- Village Hall
- Shops – Post office, pharmacy, opticians, newsagent, hairdressers, Co-op supermarket, gift shop, shoe shop, fitted kitchens, DIY outlet
- Financial and professional services – Bank, Building Society, Estate Agents
- Doctors
- Public Houses
- Churches – Anglican Church of St. Peters and Methodist Church
- Hot food takeaways and café
- Railway station within 1.5km of the site
- Regular bus services:
  - Connecting the site with the Railway Station every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday during peak hours
  - Connecting Blythe Bridge with Hanley every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday during peak hours
  - Connecting Blythe Bridge with Cheadle three times a day Monday to Friday

***Is the approach to settlement boundaries for the larger and smaller village justified (Policy SS2) particularly the removal of boundaries for smaller villages?***

15. It is appropriate that in response to the allocation DSR1, that the village boundary includes the site, as detailed within Appendix 4 of the Submission Local Plan.

Contact

Jo Russell  
jo.russell@turley.co.uk

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