



North Somerset Consultation Draft Sites & Policies Plan
**Representations on behalf of Summerfield
Developments (SW) Ltd**

April 2013

WYG PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introductory Remarks

1.1.1 These representations are submitted on behalf of **Summerfield Developments (SW) Ltd.**

1.1.2 Summerfield Developments (SW) Ltd controls land at the following locations, which are identified on plans at **Appendix 1:**

- Weston Gateway Central, nr Junction 21, Weston-super-Mare
- Well Close, Winscombe

1.1.3 The Weston Gateway Central site is proposed in the consultation draft Plan to be allocated for employment by draft Policy DM50. The site at Well Close is not identified as an allocation in the draft Plan.

1.1.4 The Judgement (dated 14 February 2013) on the legal challenge to the Core Strategy has ruled Core Strategy Policy CS13 unlawful on the grounds that the Inspector was found to have "*failed to give adequate or intelligible reasons*" for his conclusion that the housing requirement made sufficient allowance for latent demand, i.e. demand unrelated to the creation of new jobs. Policy CS13 and a number of other policies which may require amendment as a consequence of that judgement have been remitted to the Planning Inspectorate for re-examination. The Judge indicated that if the housing requirement was amended then it could have a knock on effect on other policies, including CS6, CS13, CS14, CS19, CS28, CS30, CS31, CS32 and CS33. The consultation on the draft Sites & Policies Development Plan is now somewhat premature given that the scale of housing that it seeks to allocate sites to achieve is now undetermined. Furthermore, as Core Strategy Policy CS28 is also potentially affected by the re-examination the amount of both housing and employment land required to be allocated in Weston-super-Mare is also uncertain.

1.2 National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)

1.2.1 We have had regard to the appropriate tests of soundness when preparing these representations – namely that the Local Plan need to be:

- **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy



which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;

- **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

1.3 Evidence Base/Background Papers

1.3.1 The Framework makes clear the importance for Local Plans to be underpinned by adequate, up to date and relevant evidence. In preparing these representations we have therefore taken account of the background papers and evidence based documents which the Council will be relying upon to justify the proposed strategy.

2.0 Development Management Policies

Policy DM34

2.1 The consultation on the housing allocations is premature given that the scale of housing that it seeks to allocate sites to achieve is undetermined as a result of the recent High Court Judgement in respect of the Core Strategy. However, notwithstanding this, we believe that the sites identified in Appendix 1 are both suitable for residential development.

Weston Gateway Central

2.2 Land has to be identified in WsM to meet a significant housing requirement. We set out later in these representations why we believe it is not appropriate for the Weston Gateway Central site to be re-allocated for employment purposes. Given the circumstances that are described below we consider that site would be more appropriately allocated for housing.



2.3 The site is well related to existing and planned residential uses to the west. It could deliver much needed housing within a sustainable location for residential development with good transport connections for cars, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.

Well Close, Winscombe

2.4 The Core Strategy Policy CS32 sets the context for small scale residential or mixed use schemes which demonstrate clear local benefits and are supported by the local community to be brought forward through the Sites and Policies Plan.

2.5 The site identified in Appendix 2 at Well Close, Winscombe scored highly within a Site Search and Selection Report undertaken in May 2009 on behalf English Rural Housing Association and Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council. That report is attached as **Appendix 2** and included a comparative assessment of sites within and adjoining the existing developed areas of Winscombe and Sandford in terms of their availability and suitability for housing development.

2.6 The site is available and suitable for residential development. It could deliver much needed housing, including affordable housing, within the village. Its allocation for a small housing development would be complementary to, or offer an alternative to, the proposed allocation at Woodborough Farm identified at draft Policy W1.

Policy DM50

2.7 Land is proposed to be allocated for new business development broadly in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS20. The Proposals Map and Schedule 2, sites for employment development, sets out the sites to be allocated and specifically safeguarded for these uses which includes the residual allocation carried over from replacement Local Plan – E22.

2.8 The site is allocated for employment purposes within the Replacement Local Plan (adopted March 2007), the end date of which was 2011. Indeed it has been identified for employment development, and yet remained undeveloped, for at least 13 years. It had been allocated within the previous Local Plan which was finally adopted in 2000. The allocation was rolled forward to the Replacement Local Plan but during this time there has been no demand for, or serious interest in developing the site for the purposes for which it is allocated.

2.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms,



“planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Land allocations should be regularly reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”

- 2.10 Despite this advice, the draft Local Plan proposes to allocate the site for employment development once more under draft policy DM50. The report attached at **Appendix 3** details this marketing and the interest received since it was acquired in June 2004 by Summerfield. It explains that over and above the office sector for which the site has detailed consent, the site has also been proactively marketed to a wide range of potential alternative employment and other uses but take up of office accommodation in Weston-super-Mare remains at a consistently low level. It explains that there is a very high level of competing employment land at varying stages of the planning process, albeit much of it already consented, within the Weston-super-Mare area. In terms of major competing employment sites in Weston-super-Mare, it identifies potential for in excess of 2,955,000 sq.ft. of new office development in Weston-super-Mare. Against the context of take up within the town less than 100,000 sq.ft. per annum during each of the last ten years, the report advises that this represents a potential future supply of in excess of 29 years.
- 2.11 The fact that the site has not come forward for employment development is a clear market signal that there is no demand for the site in employment use, as is the attached report. The draft proposal to allocate the land for employment development is therefore unsound. It would be inconsistent with government policy in the NPPF given that there are clear market signals that there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for the proposed allocated employment use.



APPENDIX 1 :

Site Location Plans



APPENDIX 2:

Site Search and Selection Report on behalf English Rural Housing Association and Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council, 2009



APPENDIX 3:

Central Gate, Weston Gateway - Marketing Report July 2012