

REP/222/007

**BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET
CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION**

**COMMENTS IN RESPECT OF
BNES26 -
HOUSING TECHNICAL REQUIREMENT,
PLAN PROVISION AND FLEXIBILITY**

**Prepared by:
Woolf Bond Planning**

**On behalf of:
The Duchy of Cornwall**

February 2012

1. This note has been prepared to point out certain issues which arise with respect to the above Paper recently issued by the Council. We have some concern at the late submission of documents such as this which attempt to adduce new evidence which not only post-dates the preparation and submission of written material but also the Examination discussions. For this reason, together with the points made below the Inspector is asked to disregard the suggestions made by the Council in BNES26.

2. Para 2.1 relates to a proposal by the Council to alter the proposed level of housing provision in the Core Strategy to 11,500 as opposed to 11,000. This is explained by the Council on the basis that the SHLAA identifies some 11,200 dwellings as being available as opposed to the 11,000 figure relied upon in the submitted Core Strategy, together with an allowance being made for the extra 300 student houses referred to in BNES31. We have prepared and submitted a separate paper dealing with the latter issue.

3. In our view the Council in BNES26 is confusing the establishment of a planned housing requirement with establishing and identifying the availability of a housing supply. In particular, although it is apparently accepted by the Council that, using their approach, the requirement figure should be 12,100 they are adducing a “capacity-led” requirement figure of 11,500 dwellings based on assumptions about additional supply which are untested. For the reasons set out in our comments on BNES31 and in respect of the student accommodation the 300 “student” housing cannot be counted. Similarly the true availability of the 11,200 SHLAA units has not been adequately demonstrated as being either deliverable or developable within the terms set out in PPS3 and PPS12. In short the supply of housing is a matter which must be tested going forward through conventional monitoring techniques, such as the Annual Monitoring Report, and also possibly at appeal where 5 year land supply matters are often considered in respect of housing schemes.

4. In short the suggested 11,500 figure is a form of a hybrid calculation representing suggested housing capacity only which is somewhere between a proper requirement or supply figure. For the reasons discussed at the Examination it sets much too low a requirement figure when considered against all the available evidence for future housing need in BANES
5. As regards to the remainder of BNES26 we do not wish to comment on all of the points raised, a number of which have been discussed and reviewed at the Examination. In particular though and with regard to para 2.7 onwards and the approach of the Council of establishing a future housing requirement based on their estimate of future job supply, it was the position of a number of parties at the Examination including ourselves that this is an incorrect approach and ignores population growth and change which occurs regardless of the levels of employment available. For this reason the Council's approach is fundamentally flawed.
6. As to para 2.10 onwards and the issue of "headroom" on particular sites to comment on this matter in detail would require lengthy analysis which is not possible within the time available. Suffice to say that the Council took a view in preparing its SHLAAs as regards the availability of potential units on various town centre sites and came up with a figure in respect of the potential capacity or yield on each site. The yield anticipated by the Council has not properly been tested, let alone the significant additional extra over-capacity which is now suggested on these various sites, not least for the reasons stated by the Council as regards the impact of high density development on the character of the World Heritage Site. No weight can be given to this approach in all of the circumstances. It can only be tested through time.
7. At para 2.17 there is suggestion that there is additional potential capacity on windfall sites. The Council's approach appears fundamentally to misunderstand

the approach in PPS3. In particular, para 59 indicates that windfalls should not be included in the first 10 years of land supply unless there is robust evidence of genuine local circumstances that prevents specific sites being identified. In the present case the Council have produced a SHLAA which identifies the available sites, so there is no sound argument that windfall sites should be counted in those circumstances.

8. For all these reasons the Inspector is asked to discount the further evidence in BNES26. In light of the restricted supply of land and the requirement for housing which is much higher than the level of provision planned for, he should recommend a review and the provision of additional housing within the plan area.