

Mr R Yuille
C/o Intelligent Plans and
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Planning Policy

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Please ask for: Emma Jones

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Date: 28 August 2018

Dear Mr Yuille,

Cheshire West and Chester – Response to Examiners affordable housing letter Cuddington Neighbourhood Plan

Further to your letter dated 22 August 2018, please find below clarification from the Council in relation to affordable housing.

The Local Plan (Part One) was submitted for examination 23 December 2013 and adopted by the Council on 29 January 2015. Your understanding is correct in that when policy SOC 1 was found sound, the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) was not taken into account. The local plan examination was held during summer 2015 and the Inspector's report was published on 15th December 2015; the WMS did not have legal effect until 13 May 2016.

The Council acknowledges the changes to NPPF in light of the WMS. However given the significant affordable housing need across the borough and in the rural area particularly, including Cuddington and Sandiway, the Council is supportive of Cuddington Neighbourhood Plan policy 15. The neighbourhood plan has regard to the NPPF but is not required to follow it slavishly. It is considered that the plan accords with national policy by positively supporting and shaping development in the area, whilst meeting the needs of the local area.

The Cheshire West and Chester Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2013) provides evidence to support affordable housing policies in the local and neighbourhood plans. The SHMA identified a borough wide need (in terms of the imbalance between supply and demand) for 3,570 affordable homes which, if backlog was dealt with in the period 2013 – 2018, would equate to 714 homes per annum. The total number of affordable homes completed during the 2017-18 monitoring period was 630.

The SHMA ranks the borough as the 8th least affordable district in the North West region, with the highest house prices in the rural area. Median house prices in Cuddington &

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Sandiway area in 2012/13 were £230,000, which was at the upper end of prices across the borough. This compared with average earnings in the area of £32,500 in 2013, giving an affordability ratio of 7 (median household income to median dwelling price), rising to 8.4 for lower quartile household income to lower quartile dwelling price. This indicates a significant affordability issue in the Cuddington and Sandiway area.

The lack of opportunities for larger developments in Cuddington and Sandiway over the plan period means that it will be difficult to secure additional affordable housing to meet local needs if the NPPF threshold of over 10 is applied. The lower threshold of 3 units/over 0.1ha is considered to be justified and will enable more affordable housing to be delivered.

The thresholds and 30% target for affordable housing contained in policy SOC 1 take account of viability – the ‘Economic Viability of Affordable Housing Requirements Study’ was produced alongside the SHMA and the documents together provide the justification for the SOC 1 requirements.

To ensure that there is scope for provision of additional affordable housing in the Cuddington & Sandiway area to meet significant needs, the Council considers that the approach set out in the neighbourhood plan is justified and can be achieved without compromising the viability of new development.

I hope this is of assistance in your consideration of the plan,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Emma Jones
Planning Officer - Planning Policy team