

Appendix 5: Notes of SHLAA Steering Group Meeting, 5th February 2009

SHLAA Steering Group Meeting

Thursday 5th February 2009

Town Hall, Darlington

NOTE OF MEETING

Present:

Valerie Adams, DBC Planning Policy (Chair), Derek Watkins (DBC Estates), Tony Cooper (Bussey & Armstrong), Rob McLackland (Taylor Wimpey), Simon Miller (Persimmon Homes)

Apologies: Della Adams (Prism Planning)

Absent: Dave Coates (DBC Development Control), Andrea Abbott (Railway Housing Association)

1. VA asked that as there was a lot to cover, that business move straight to Item 3 on the agenda (consideration of potential housing sites), and that comments provided by e-mail on Item 2. Group agreed. In response to a request from SM, it was agreed that Community Forests be removed from the 'showstopper' list in the methodology. *VA to action.* Items 4-7 on the agenda would be dealt with by e-mail exchange.

2. Group discussed how to consider current market circumstances in coming to a view about achievability.

It was agreed that a consistent approach was needed that reflected that the market is not expected to begin to recover for another 18 months- 2 years, and that the construction of flats for sale would be particularly unlikely in the short term. For this reason, no new sites were identified as deliverable in 2009/10 or 2010/11.

3. There was also a discussion about the suggested dwelling capacities provided by the Council's urban design officer. VA explained that these were as set out in the draft Design of New Development SPD, which is currently out for public and other consultations. Some members of the Group felt that the densities suggested for the zones identified in the SPD were too high for a provincial town like Darlington and would only be appropriate in larger cities. Also, some felt that high densities would not be deliverable in the short to medium term as it would require the construction of flats and town houses, the segments of the market that are currently weakest.

It was agreed that the Steering Group would come to its own conclusions about densities on a site by site basis, and that the Design SPD densities could be taken into account in an update of the SHLAA, after the Design SPD is adopted.

4. There was discussion about the availability of Council owned sites. SM argued that only sites for which there is a Council resolution to dispose in place should be identified as being available, and that this was the approach adopted in the recent Tyne and Wear SHLAA meeting. VA and DW pointed out that the Council only plans 3-5 years ahead in identifying sites that it may be able to or want to release, and it was unrealistic to take the view that only the sites identified now for disposal would be the only ones available throughout the 15 year plan period. It was also explained that a number of sites originally suggested internally for inclusion in the SHLAA had not been advanced for inclusion, because there was known political opposition to their loss for development.

It was agreed that Council sites could be identified as available, but that the timing of achievability should be set back compared to other sites, to reflect the time it would take to secure a resolution to dispose.

5. Regarding the availability of private sites, where this was not directly known by Group members, it was agreed that the assertions made by those submitting details of sites would be taken as read.

6. Potential housing sites were considered on a geographical area basis, and on the basis of the areas submitted. The exception was Site 49: Harrowgate Hill, where it was agreed that the number of dwellings be calculated for a smaller part of the site extending as far north as the drain indicated on the OS map. *VA to get this smaller area measured, apply the net: gross adjustment set out in the methodology and apply a 30 dwellings / hectare assumption to the net developable area.*

END