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Black Country Core Strategy Review
Council House
Priory Road
Dudley
DY1 1HL

Submission via Email

Dear Sirs

WYEVALE GARDEN CENTRES
ALDRIDGE WYEVALE GARDEN CENTRE, CHESTER ROAD, ALDRIDGE, WALSALL, WS9 0LS
BLACK COUNTRY CORE STRATEGY REVIEW CALL FOR SITES – SITE SUBMISSION

Introduction

Please find enclosed, on behalf of our client Wyevale Garden Centres, submission of Aldridge, Wyevale Garden Centre site as part of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) Review Call for Sites consultation.

The Site and Surroundings

The site comprises Aldridge Wyevale Garden Centre situated on Chester Road and extends to around 1.03ha. It is currently accessed from Chester Road and has strong boundaries, with the A452 Chester Road to the east, Back Lane to the north with residential uses beyond, residential and commercial uses to the south and the field adjoining Back Lane to the west. The site is located to the north east of Aldridge and is outside of the current settlement boundary.

It is located within the Green Belt but has no landscape designations or allocations within adopted or emerging policy. The site is located between Aldridge Town Centre to the south, approximately 1.8 miles away, and Brownhill Town Centre to the north, approximately 2.8miles away both containing key local services as well as schools.

The site is currently in active use under the operation of Wyevale Garden Centres. The primary activity of the garden centre is retail sales with ancillary café. The garden centre comprises retail

90 Victoria Street, Bristol, United Kingdom, BS1 6DP
Tel: +44 (0)117 925 4393 Fax: +44 (0)117 925 4239
Email: Bristol.planning@wyg.com Website: www.wyg.com

Registered Office: Arndale Court, Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 2UJ





buildings, glasshouses, canopy area, plant display, storage areas and hardstanding customer car parking. The footprint of the existing development on site totals 2,048sq m through 5 different buildings/structures. In addition, the hard landscaping currently comprises 0.97ha of the site with soft landscaped areas of approximately 0.06ha. As such, there is extensive development currently located on the site. A linear Site of Local Nature Importance runs to the north and south of the site and along Back Lane to the west. There are some trees located within the site along the boundaries, the majority of which would be retained as part of residential redevelopment on site and none of which we understand are protected.

Housing Requirement

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) published in March 2017 for the Black Country and South Staffordshire identified the housing requirement for the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) Review and individual local authority requirements for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC), Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), Walsall Council (WC) and City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) as well as South Staffordshire Council (SSC) (not included in BCCS). The total annual Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the Housing Market Area (HMA) is 84,123 dwellings over the period 2014 to 2036, of which Walsall Council has an annual requirement 842 dwellings. Over the 22-year period (2014 to 2036) this equates to a housing requirement of 18,519 dwellings for Walsall.

It is noted that the BCCS Review Issues and Options document (July 2017) makes reference to the lower housing requirement of 78,190 homes identified in the 2015 SHMA. Figure 6 calculates the current housing supply over the plan period against the (outdated) 2015 SHMA requirement. It shows that 48,185 homes can be delivered through completions and the current SHLAA housing supply, windfall and other identified sites could provide around 8,355 homes, resulting in a shortfall of 21,670 homes. In addition, the consultation document states that the Black Country are also required to test accommodation of around an extra 3,000 homes up to 2031 to address the shortfall in the wider HMA. The Issues and Options document therefore, states that "*a large number of new homes and supporting services will need to be accommodated outside the existing urban area of the Black Country.*" All such land is currently Green Belt, but the BCCS Review includes details of the proposed approach to reviewing the Green Belt boundary to meet the housing requirement.

The emerging BCCS Review is required to identify land to deliver at least 25,155 new homes. Whilst the subject site only comprises a small area and can make a minimal contribution to the overall large requirement, the monitoring summary of new homes delivered over the period 2006-2026 (BCCS Issues and Options document, Appendix C) identifies a shortfall of around 3,039 dwellings to date. As such, the site is available now and can be redeveloped for housing in the short term providing aspirational houses in an attractive location.

Site Assessment

In terms of availability, Wyevale Garden Centres owns the site in its entirety and therefore there are no ownership constraints. The existing use could be discontinued and the development of the site for residential uses could be achieved within the short term. Further information on the suitability and availability of the site is contained within the Call for Sites submission form. However, a brief overview of the sites credentials is detailed below.



- Suitability for housing – this brownfield site clearly comprises previously developed land given its current active use as a garden centre with associated retail sales and ancillary cafe facility. The site, whilst currently located within the Green Belt, is immediately adjacent to existing residential and commercial uses on three sides. It is considered a sustainable location for housing given there are existing small scale local facilities, including Co-op and Post Office, approximately 2 miles to the east of the site at Lazy Hill District Centre.

Furthermore, the BCCS Review Issues and Options document identifies the need to remove land from the Green Belt to meet the housing requirement and includes two options, one of which is to round of the green belt and meet housing needs through a large number of small sites. We understand that the Council are in the process of scoping out the Green Belt Boundary Review which is anticipated to be completed by mid-2018.

However, it worthwhile noting that given the previously developed status of the site, residential redevelopment could be achieved on the site without formal removal from the Green Belt. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF establishes the following as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt:

"the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development."

As such, the proposed redevelopment of the site could be achieved in line with NPPF requirements whilst the site is still included within the Green Belt, providing that it could be demonstrated through sensitive design and a landscaping scheme that there would be no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Notwithstanding the above, given the significant amount of housing required within the Black Country it seems unavoidable for some land to not be inset from the Green Belt. As such, the brownfield garden centre site should be removed to allow it to be redeveloped for housing without undue restrictions.

- Access and Travel – the site is currently accessed off the A452 Chester Road providing direct and convenient access to the A5 and M6 Toll to the north. Bus stops are located to the north of the site on Chester Road and also to the south at the Little Aston crossroads with services to Walsall, Rugeley, Erdington and Ashton University. In addition, Blake Street train station is located 2.4 miles to the south east of the site and Walsall train station is located some 6 miles to the south west of the site providing regular and direct services to Birmingham New Street, Wolverhampton and Rugeley Trent Valley as well as Lichfield City, Longbridge and Redditch. West Midlands cycle route 5 also runs to the north from Brownhills connecting Oxford and Burntwood. The site is therefore well placed to take advantage of existing sustainable modes of transport.
- Key services and facilities – the site is located close to existing amenities and services, with local health facilities located at Westfield Drive and Walsall Wood within 2 miles of the site and a number of Primary and Secondary schools are within 5 miles of the site. Small scale local facilities are available at Lazy Hill District Centre, with additional facilities located within Brownhills Town Centre where future development is planned and Aldridge Town Centre to the north and south west of the site respectively. A further range of shopping and other key services are available in Walsall Town Centre approximately 6 miles to the south west of the site which includes a number of national multiple retailers, banks, other shops, Walsall Library and Museum, as well as a larger Asda and Tesco supermarkets and leisure facilities including The Light Cinema Experience.



- Landscape, Heritage and Biodiversity – the site is not located within any special landscape or heritage designations, although a linear Site of Local Nature Importance runs to the north and south of the site and along Back Lane to the west. As a brownfield, currently developed site, the garden centre is not providing a benefit to the surrounding landscape environment. The site also benefits from strong boundaries through existing vegetation and mature trees which would be retained where possible to ensure views of the development were limited.

The site does not contain any listed buildings and is not located within a Conversation Area. We are not aware of any archaeology present on site and a full ecological appraisal would be prepared supporting any future planning application.

Summary

The above analysis demonstrates that the site is suitable for residential purposes and could provide an important and quick contribution of around 6 aspirational dwellings in a sustainable and sought after location. The site, whilst currently located within the Green Belt, given its brownfield status can be developed for housing in line with the NPPF. Nevertheless, it should be removed from the Green Belt through the forthcoming review to allow it to be sustainably redeveloped for housing in the short term.

The above contains an initial review of the site's credentials to inform the assessment and demonstrated its suitability for residential redevelopment in the short term.

Call for Sites Submission

Please find enclosed the following to support submission of the site:

- Black Country Core Strategy Review Call for Sites Form
- Site Location Plan

Conclusions

We trust you will find the enclosed information helpful to assess the site as part of the Black Country Core Strategy Review Call for Sites process and find the submitted site suitable for residential redevelopment in the short term.

We look forward to receiving confirmation of receipt of this site submission in due course. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any queries or require any further information.

Yours faithfully



Director – Planning