

Summary Affordable Housing Proof of Evidence of James Stacey BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

Land North of Browns Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire,
B79 8UT

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Outline application for up to 210 dwellings, public open space, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage, access, and associated infrastructure. (All matters reserved except access)

Land North of Browns Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 8UT

Summix BLT Developments Limited

June 2024

PINS REF: APP/K3415/W/24/3340089

LPA REF: 8/00840/OUTMEI (LDC), 0241/2018 (TBC)

OUR REF: M24/0205-02.RPT

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Introduction

Section 1

1.1 My name is **James Stacey BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI** of **Tetlow King Planning** and my credentials as an expert witness are summarised as follows:

- I hold a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree in Economics and Geography from the University of Portsmouth (1994) and a post-graduate diploma in Town Planning from the University of the West of England (“UWE”) (1997). I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (“RTPI”).
- I have over 28 years’ professional experience in the field of town planning and housing. I was first employed by two Local Authorities in the South West and have been in private practice since 2001.
- During my career, I have presented evidence at more than 140 Section 78 appeal inquiries and hearings. I act for a cross-section of clients and advise upon a diverse range of planning and housing related matters.
- In December 2022 I was appointed as Managing Director of Tetlow King Planning. Prior to this I held the position of Senior Director. I was first employed by Tetlow King Planning in 2009.
- Both Tetlow King generally and I have acted on a wide range of housing issues and projects for landowners, house builders and housing associations throughout the country. Tetlow King Planning has been actively engaged nationally and regionally to comment on emerging development plan documents and supplementary planning documents on affordable housing throughout the UK.

1.2 My Proof of Evidence examines the affordable housing need in Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough and considers the weight to be attributed to affordable housing in the overall planning balance.

- 1.3 Having a thriving active housing market that offers choice, flexibility and affordable housing is critical to our economic and social well-being. The consequences of failing to meet affordable housing needs in any local authority is well documented and acknowledged by the SOS and Inspectors alike. These consequences are important to understand. They are real consequences, afflicted upon many households who are in dire need of assistance with their housing. The consequences affect the ability of households, families, and individuals in leading the best lives that they can. I set out my summary of the consequences at **Appendix JS3** of my main Proof of Evidence.
- 1.4 In researching my evidence, I have sought data upon which I rely, through a Freedom of Information (“FOI”) request submitted to each Council. An FOI request was submitted to Lichfield District Council (“LDC”) on 27 February 2024 and a full response was received on 4 March 2024 which can be seen at Appendix 5 of the Affordable Housing Statement of Common Ground. An FOI request was submitted to Tamworth Borough Council (“TBC”) on 13 May 2024 and a full response was received on 4 June 2024 which can be seen at **Appendix JS1** of my main Proof of Evidence.
- 1.5 In accordance with the Inspectors instructions at the CMC a tri-party affordable housing Statement of Common Ground has been prepared. Matters on affordable housing need, past delivery, addressing the shortfall in delivery, future supply of affordable housing and affordability indicators are agreed between all parties in the Affordable Housing Statement of Common Ground (**CD5.7**).
- 1.6 The weight to affordable housing in the planning balance is not agreed.
- 1.7 There is an acute need for more affordable homes to be delivered in Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough which the appeal proposals would make a substantial contribution towards addressing.

Affordable Housing Evidence

Section 2

- 2.1 My Proof of Evidence deals specifically with affordable housing and the weight to be afforded to it in the planning decision in light of the evidence of need in the Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough area.
- 2.2 Outline planning permission is sought for up to 210 dwellings, of which 100% are proposed as affordable homes. This level of provision exceeds the requirements of Policy H2 (40%) of the adopted Lichfield Local Plan Strategy (2015) and Policy HG4 (20%) of the adopted Tamworth Local Plan (2016).
- 2.3 The proposed tenure split will be 45% Rented (55 social rented homes and 39 affordable rented homes) and 45% Shared Ownership (95 homes) and 10% Rent to Buy (21 Homes). This reflects discussions with Lichfield District Council. The proposed affordable housing will be secured by way of a Section 106 planning obligation.

Key Findings

Development Plans

- 2.4 The evidence set out in Sections 3 and 4 of my main Proof of Evidence clearly highlights that within adopted policy and a range of other plans and strategies in both Lichfield and Tamworth, providing affordable housing has long been established as, and remains, a key issue which urgently needs to be addressed in both authorities.

Corporate Documents

- 2.5 Corporate documents identify the delivery of affordable housing as a high corporate priority in both Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough. These include the LDC Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 (**CD6.2.3**), the Lichfield Draft 2050 Strategy (**CD6.2.6**), the TBC Housing Strategy 2020-2025 (**CD6.2.7**) and the TBC Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 (**CD6.2.8**).

Assessment of the Application

- 2.6 My main proof of evidence considers the Council's and relevant third party assessments of the appeal proposals during the course of the application and the appeal process in so far as they relate to affordable housing matters.
- 2.7 In reviewing these assessments, I do not consider that the Council or third parties have sufficiently assessed the substantial affordable housing benefits that the scheme would achieve.
- 2.8 In my opinion, the parties appear to have deliberately sought to downplay the provision of up to 210 affordable homes at the appeal site. It is my view that affordable housing is an individual benefit of the appeal proposals which should be afforded **very substantial weight** in the determination of this appeal..

The Weight to be Attributed to the Proposed Affordable Housing Provision

- 2.9 The appeal scheme will provide up to 210 affordable dwellings, equating to 100% on site affordable housing delivery. This is in excess of both policies contained within the respective Development Plans. The wider social and economic benefits of affordable housing per se are commonly recognised.
- 2.10 As set out in Section 2 of my main Proof of Evidence, the benefit of affordable housing is a strong material consideration in support of development proposals, a matter that is agreed in the Affordable Housing Statement of Common Ground.
- 2.11 The respective Local Plan affordable housing policies were specifically drafted to capture a benefit rather than to ward off harm or be needed in mitigation.
- 2.12 The affordable homes will be managed by Platform Housing, a national Registered Provider with a track record of delivering 100% affordable housing schemes.
- 2.13 The appellants suggest that the policy compliant level of affordable housing should be prescribed substantial weight and the enhanced offer at 100% should be prescribed very substantial weight.
- 2.14 I set out at Figure 1.1 below (Figure 6.1 of my main Proof of Evidence) the main differences between the parties in terms of the justification for the suggested weight to be given to affordable housing.

Figure 1.1: Justification for the suggested weight to affordable housing

	Council's position	Appellant's position
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing can be attributed weight as a material consideration • Robust housing supply • Delivery could occur on other sites (brownfield) • Insufficient local need • Potential for empty houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced level of affordable housing¹ • 72% (or 80%) more affordable housing elevates weight to very substantial from substantial if only policy compliant² • Poor levels of affordable housing delivery³ • Significant impact of Right to buy Losses^{4 5} • Significant ongoing net annual needs requirements⁶ • Shortfalls in delivery of affordable housing in Lichfield^{7 8} • Shortfalls in delivery of affordable housing in Tamworth^{9 10} • Enlarged requirement over next 5 years to make good the shortfall (Sedgefield approach)¹¹

¹ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 1.1

² CD 8.2.5

³ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 4.1 and 4.5

⁴ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 4.3 and 4.6

⁵ CS 8.2.1

⁶ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 3.2 and 3.4

⁷ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 5.1

⁸ CD 8.2.2 and CD 8.6.7

⁹ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 5.3

¹⁰ CD 8.2.2 and CD 8.6.7

¹¹ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 6.2 and 6.4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate future supply of affordable homes in Tamworth and Lichfield¹² • Managed by a Register Provider • Substantial benefits to real people in need¹³ • Worsening trends in affordable housing indicators • Council’s waiting list and broader spectrum of affordable housing needs¹⁴. • High levels of homelessness in Lichfield and Tamworth¹⁵ • Households houses in temporary accommodation in Lichfield and Tamworth¹⁶ • Rising median private sector rents in Lichfield, with sharpest increase compared to West midlands and England in last year¹⁷ • Rising median Lower quartile private sector rents in Lichfield, with sharpest increase compared to West
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¹² CD 5.7 – Paragraph 7.2 and 7.4

¹³ CD 8.2.6

¹⁴ CD 8.2.4 and 8.2.3

¹⁵ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 8.5 and 8.17

¹⁶ CD 5.7 – Paragraph 8.6 and 8.18

¹⁷ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.2

		<p>midlands and England in last year¹⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level of median workplace-based affordability ratio in Lichfield compared to West Midlands and England¹⁹ • Rising Median house prices in Lichfield²⁰ • Highest level of lower quartile workplace-based affordability ratio in Lichfield compared to West Midlands and England²¹ • Rising lower quartile house prices in Lichfield²² • Rising median private sector rents in Tamworth²³ • Rising lower quartile private sector rents in Tamworth²⁴ • Higher affordability ratio in Tamworth compared to region²⁵
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¹⁸ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.3

¹⁹ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.4

²⁰ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.5

²¹ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.6

²² CD 5.7 – Figure 8.7

²³ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.9

²⁴ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.10

²⁵ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.11

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising median house prices²⁶ • Rising lower quartile house prices²⁷
Weight in the planning balance	Limited weight	Very Substantial weight

Conclusion

2.15 In light of the key findings of my evidence and the acute need for affordable housing within Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough, I consider that **very substantial weight** should be attributed to the delivery of up to 210 affordable homes through the appeal scheme in the planning balance.

²⁶ CD 5.7 – Figure 8.12

²⁷ CD 5.7 – Figure 814