TwinWoods Garden Village
Representations to the
Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030

Bedfordia Developments Ltd / Marcol Industrial Investment LLP
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Introduction

1.1 Lichfields is instructed by Bedfordia Developments Ltd ("Bedfordia") and Marcol Industrial Investments LLP ("Marcol") to submit these representations in response to the consultation on Bedford Borough Council's ("the Council") Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 Draft Plan for Submission ("Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030" "the Plan") which opened for comment on 18 September and will close on 30 October 2018.

1.2 Bedfordia and Marcol previously submitted a response to the January 2018 consultation on the submission version of the plan in relation to their interest in land at TwinWoods ("TwinWoods"), which is promoted as a strategic development location for circa 6,000 homes to help meet the future housing need of the Borough and the Oxford Cambridge corridor. TwinWoods is currently referred to in supporting documents to the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 but is not allocated within it.

Relevant Policy and Guidance for assessing soundness

1.3 It is anticipated that the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 will be submitted before the 24th January 2019 and as such will be examined under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) and the relevant Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as published before the 24th July 2018. These representations reflect the requirements of this policy and guidance. Unless otherwise stated, all references to the NPPF and PPG in these representations are to those documents rather than to the Revised NPPF and PPG issued in the period since 24th July 2018.

Representation Format

1.4 We have completed the relevant proformas for registering our representations on specific policies and contents of the Plan. However, many of the representations are bound by five interlinked themes which this document seeks to bring together and then identify what in our view is necessary to make the Plan sound. These representations are structured in the following sections:

- Section 2.0 – The plan period and spatial strategy
- Section 3.0 – The housing requirement
- Section 4.0 – The housing trajectory
- Section 5.0 – The Garden Village option
- Section 6.0 - What is needed to make the Plan sound?

1.1 Bedfordia and Marcol welcome the opportunity to participate in this consultation. It is trusted that the enclosed is of assistance to the Council’s considerations. Both parties invite the Council to contact them should it require any further information in relation to the matters set out in these representations.
2.0 The plan period and spatial strategy

Relevant Policies in the Plan:
- Paras 1.1, 1.2 and 1.6b
- Policy 2S Spatial Strategy and accompanying text
- Section 3: Vision
- Para 7.56

Introduction

2.1 This section of our representations addresses the significant problems identified by Bedfordia and Marcol in respect of the plan period (which is now less than 15 years from the date of adoption following changes made by the Council to what it had proposed in January 2018) and the relationship this has to the way the Council has gone about determining how it translates its chosen spatial strategy into a range of developable housing sites and broad locations.

National Policy and Guidance

2.2 When it comes to what Plans are required to provide in respect of housing, para 47 of the NPPF states they should:

- identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land;

- identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15” (emphasis added)

2.3 A “deliverable” site is defined in footnote 11 as:

“To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years, for example they will not be viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans.”

2.4 A “developable” site is defined in footnote 12 as:

“To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.” (emphasis added)

2.5 Whilst the PPG (ID 3-027) acknowledges that plans can be found sound without allocating sites/broad locations for years 11-15, the policy context is clearly that they should do so “if possible” (para 47).
When it comes to the plan period, para 157 of the NPPF states, inter alia, that:

“crucially, Local Plans should:

- be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably a 15-year time horizon, take account of longer term requirements, and be kept up to date”.

In this regard - and for the avoidance of any doubt - it is important to point out that because para 47 expects Plans to have a five-year land supply at the point of adoption, there can be no doubt that years 6-10 and 11-15 respectively refer to 6-10 and 11-15 years after the date of adoption, not from the base date of the plan. In the case of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030, its adoption is likely to be 2019 at the absolute earliest (2020 is more likely). Given that it runs 15 years from 2015-2030, this conflicts with the preferred time horizon in the NPPF because, on adoption, it will cover a maximum of 11 years only.

The PPG (ID: 12-018) is also clear that later phases of the plan do not carry the same expectation over level of detail around infrastructure requirements as do the first five years:

“The Local Plan should make clear, for at least the first 5 years, what infrastructure is required, who is going to fund and provide it, and how it relates to the anticipated rate and phasing of development. This may help in reviewing the plan and in development management decisions. For the later stages of the plan period less detail may be provided as the position regarding the provision of infrastructure is likely to be less certain. If it is known that a development is unlikely to come forward until after the plan period due, for example, to uncertainty over deliverability of key infrastructure, then this should be clearly stated in the draft plan.” (our emphasis)

Based on the above, it is clear that:

- Plans should have a timeframe “preferably” of 15 years, and should identify “developable” sites where there is a reasonable prospect that they could be viably developed (it does not need to be now) for years 6-10 and, if possible, years 11-15.

- Less detail is expected on infrastructure delivery for later phases of the plan period given lower levels of certainty.

- It is possible to allocate sites for development that may not come forward until after the plan period.

**Summary of the objection**

The Local Plan has a plan period of 2015 to 2030. This is a shorter period than that which was previously consulted upon in January 2018 (when the plan extended to 2035) and the Council’s reasoning for this flows from its rejection of Colworth as a location for a Garden Village. Bedfordia and Marcol support the Council’s conclusion that Colworth should not be identified as a Garden Village in the submitted Plan; we agree with the Council that there are insuperable obstacles to the suitability and developability of the site; indeed at para 5.1-18 of these representations we identify barriers to the site that are more extensive than those relied upon by the Council.

But, rejection of Colworth does not lead inevitably to the Council’s proposed change. Bedfordia and Marcol object to the solution it has identified, because the Council has omitted to offer any credible explanation for why it has chosen for the plan to be not drawn up over an appropriate timeframe, which in this case should be a period of at least 15 years from the point of adoption. By failing to do so it is not consistent with the NPPF inpara 157, and is not positively prepared.
2.12 Our objection on this point is more fundamental than seeking a simple adherence to the 15 years referred to in the NPPF, and relates to the specific circumstances of Bedford. The only reason the Council shortened the timeframe to 2030 was because it wished to remove proposals for a Garden Village from the Local Plan. The Council had demonstrated through its January 2018 evidence base and Sustainability Appraisals that a Garden Village is the most appropriate strategy for meeting housing needs in the medium to long term. As of now, the Council still believes that to be the case and the principle of a Garden Village is still aspired to by the Council (as is made clear in its Sustainability Appraisal and Garden Village Topic Paper and in para 7.56 of the Plan itself). It is of note that para 7.56 of the Plan refers to TwinWoods after reference to the four new settlement proposals may “have potential for allocation in future plans”.

2.13 Its sole reason for shortening the plan period is that it now rightly accepts that its original preferred Garden Village option is not “deliverable”1. However, it has failed to have regard (either properly or at all) to whether it is “possible” to bring forward an alternative Garden Village option as a “developable” site for later in the plan period (e.g. years 11-15) or sooner. The Council has not asked if it is “possible” to plan for fifteen years from adoption, but has rather sought the certainty associated with deliverability for a Garden Village. This approach is misconceived and contrary to para 47 of the NPPF. Elsewhere in these representations we show that TwinWoods, in particular, is a possible alternative as a developable location for a Garden Village that the Council could (and should) have identified and retained the preferable 15-year plan period in accordance with paras 47 and 157.

**Key factors behind the objection**

2.14 It is clear that the Council’s case for reducing the plan period below fifteen years from the likely date of adoption is not sound and is not justified as an appropriate time horizon. This is for the following reasons:

1. As above, the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 fails to cover a ‘clear’ fifteen years from the point of adoption, contrary to the NPPF. However, good planning should include planning for the long term if possible and the Council’s reasons for rowing back from the plan period to 2035 are not justified and contrary to its own approach as recently as January 2018. The Council has failed to even consider whether it is “possible” to identify a developable garden village location for delivery in years 11-15 of the plan. This is despite the Council's own evidence base (up until September 2018) showing that it was possible, notably at TwinWoods. We explain the site-specific issues surrounding the flaws in the Council’s conclusions about TwinWoods – as one of the locations it has mistakenly rejected - in Section 5.0 of these representations.

2. Further, at its very simplest level, there is a clear and fundamental error in the Council’s approach: it has applied the wrong test in considering whether or not any of the garden village options can be included in the plan. Beginning at paragraph 1.11 (and repeated in paragraphs 7.8 and through section 9 of the Sustainability Appraisal), the Council’s Sustainable Appraisal tests new settlement options based on whether or not they are “deliverable” when the test should have been whether or not they were “developable” (see paras 2.3 and 2.4 for the respective definitions). ‘Deliverable’ is not the appropriate test for a site that might not deliver new homes until 2025 or later. This is a fundamental material error in the Council’s approach.

This is reflected in the Bedford Borough Council Executive report (3rd September 2018) which states that Colworth was rejected because it was not “deliverable” and that “further consideration has been given to the three alternative garden village proposals... to

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1 See Paragraphs 1.11, 7.8 and 9.13 of the Sustainability Appraisal.
determine whether or not they should replace the Colworth allocation in the plan” (page 6(7)). It went on to suggest that consideration was given to “new sites elsewhere. The problem with such an approach is that there are not sufficient suitable and deliverable sites available” (page 7(7)). It concludes that the plan period was reduced because “no garden village scheme is sufficiently advanced to justify allocation, and no other suitable development sites that fit with the plan strategy are available to allocate in place of a garden village” (page 7(7)). As above, the allocation for a Garden Village in the plan need only be as a developable site with a reasonable prospect of availability and viability, TwinWoods is clearly more than sufficiently advanced to adhere to this definition.

The Garden Village Topic Paper (September 2018) is critical of the potential efficacy of three additional aspects of a transport ‘package’ for TwinWoods – land for a train station, bus links and electric bike scheme – and uses this as the basis for its rejection of the proposal as a Garden Village option. There are significant flaws in these conclusions:

a Firstly, there is no meaningful technical evidence produced by the Council to substantiate these criticisms or to show that any concerns it has undermine the suitability of the location or of the developability of TwinWoods;

b Secondly, the Council have made no attempt to see if these criticisms can be resolved, thereby failing to follow the guidance in the PPG ID: 3-22 and 26, and ID: 12-018);

c Thirdly, even if these criticisms were justified (they are not), the test of a “developable” site does not require them to be resolved now, but simply to show a reasonable prospect of the scheme being delivered viably; and

d Finally, even if there was disagreement between the Council and the promoter over the efficacy of future transport infrastructure over the medium to long term (over which there will inevitably be some uncertainty as made clear in PPG ID: 12-018) in achieving modal shift, the Council has not explored the potential for a “monitor and manage” scheme to be employed which still adheres to the developable requirements and has been used on a number of proposals, including those granted permission at appeal2.

A 15-year time horizon is clearly appropriate for an area where the long term spatial strategy relies on bringing forward at least one large-scale new settlement proposal. The Council has been consistent that a Garden Village remains its preferred development strategy for meeting longer term needs.

The Council has not changed its position insofar as, even though it reached the conclusion it did not believe it could include a Garden Village in its plan, it did not consider it appropriate to take forward any other options (ie non Garden Village options) to meet needs beyond 2030.

Across the Cambridge- Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc (“the Growth Arc”) (of which Bedford is part) Garden Villages are clearly going to be a central part of planning for long term needs and need to be grappled with in current Local Plans. The National Infrastructure Commission’s (NIC) report on the Arc recommended that Government and local authorities should work together, through a robust and transparent process, to designate locations for new and expanded settlements by 20203. The Government’s response to that

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2 Arkall Farm, Lichfield (Ref. APP/K3415/V/17/3174379), where the Secretary of State “agrees with the Inspector that the proposed Monitor and Manage approach to highways impacts, secured by condition, would provide an appropriate level of mitigation to meet actual highway conditions at the relevant future time.” (para 13 of SoiS DL)

3 NIC Recommendation 2a [https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperity.pdf]
recommendation confirmed the Government’s support for Garden Villages as an essential component of the agreed vision to deliver 1m homes across the arc by 2050:

“The government supports the National Infrastructure Commission’s ambition to build up to one million high quality homes in the Arc by 2050 to maximise its economic potential. To achieve this ambition, a step change in housing delivery will be required, including engagement on how this can be accommodated through vibrant new and expanded settlements.

As recommended, the government has commissioned analysis to test and evidence the strategic case for significant housing growth and explore the potential for new and expanded settlements across the Arc. The government recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new and expanded settlements. When carefully designed, well located, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities, new and expanded settlements can create vibrant, mixed-use, communities where people can live and work for generations to come.”

It is well established that large-scale developments - including Garden Villages - have significant lead-in times reflecting the up-front planning required to address infrastructure and other requirements. Research has identified that, on average, schemes of in excess of 1,500 dwellings take 6-7 years to begin delivering new homes from its first identification in a local planning policy document. The Government’s current Garden Communities prospectus states at paragraph 14 that: “we recognise that delivery of a new garden community is a complex, long-term project, which will deliver homes over a number of decades”.

In this context, there is a significant risk that were the Plan to be adopted, at the very earliest, in 2019 with a curtailed plan period and absent a Garden Village proposal, and subject to an early review, it would likely be the mid-2020s before a new plan could be adopted, which properly facilitates delivery of a Garden Village for later phases of the Plan period. In addition, the next Local Plan for Bedford is likely to need to grapple with a host of broader issues – including the Government’s proposals for the Growth Arc – and its likely impacts on Bedford. This would result in five ‘lost’ years of forward planning and investment opportunities (such as Government funding pots, if so needed) to bring forward any Garden Village proposal.

The optimum (and sound) approach is for the Council to give certainty and confidence for investment in the proposal by allocating one or more preferred Garden Village options in the current plan, with a reasonable lead-in time for it to be brought forward with the required infrastructure. Insofar as there may be uncertainties over delivery of that proposal (and the PPG 12-018 expects there to be), that is a matter for the necessary flexibility within the Local Plan and/or for the review of the Plan.

**Modifications Necessary to find the Plan Sound**

The Plan should be modified to return the plan period to its original 2035 end date, thereby satisfying the preferred time scale of the NPPF, para 157. This has knock on effects throughout

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5 Lichfields (2016) Start to Finish: How Quickly do Large-Scale Housing Sites Deliver

6 MHCLG (2018) Garden Communities Prospectus, August 2018
the text of the Plan, and will increase the housing requirement figure. It will necessitate the Council to explore whether it is possible to identify “developable ... sites or broad locations”.

2.16 It is very important to note that the evidence base of the plan (such as the SHMA and the transport assessment work by Systra) was all prepared to the Plan’s original longer time frame or beyond (the work undertaken by Systra models beyond 2035) and was predicated upon the delivery of a new Garden Village. There is no need to update the evidence base to reflect a plan period to 2035 or to go out and identify new Garden Village options. Rather, it is simply a matter of taking that evidence base – notably on TwinWoods - and applying the appropriate test of “developability” to it.

2.17 There can be no doubt that, were an Inspector to conclude that the Plan should be extended to 2035, this would not delay adoption any more than would any Main Modifications stage which is an inevitable component of the plan-making process post-submission.

**An Early Review is not the answer**

2.18 An early review of the Local Plan is sometimes put forward as a solution to unresolved strategic planning issues. Here, the Council relies upon such a review (Para 1.6b of the Plan). However, Bedfordia and Marcol strongly consider that an early review is wholly unnecessary and would not be a satisfactory solution to the critical issue of planning for longer term housing growth in Bedford. This is because:

1. There is no need for an early review because it is possible to provide a 15-year time horizon with a developable Garden Village option (TwinWoods) in line with the Council’s own evidence base. The Council’s preferred means of delivering for this 15 year period is a Garden Village – an in-principle choice from which the Council even now does not demur – but whilst it was right to reject Colworth as its first option, it was manifestly wrong to conclude that there was no alternative; there is, and it is TwinWoods;

2. Policies requiring an early review are unenforceable: there is in practice no way of compelling a local planning authority to prepare an early review or to update their plan in the context of the policy requirement that exists for reviews every five years;

3. There is little practical consequence in planning terms for a local planning authority that does not progress an early review if they maintain a five-year land supply in the short term; and

4. Those promoting large-scale developments will usually rely on the local plan process as the vehicle for giving necessary planning certainty to invest in promoting their proposals, so the prospect of accessing the presumption in favour of sustainable development via an out-of-date plan is less relevant.

2.19 Research undertaken by Lichfields looked at all 32 Local Plans examined since the publication of the NPPF in March 2012 which were adopted with a requirement for an early review. Of these 32 Local Plans at that time, more than half had not even started work on an early review to date (mid-2017). Furthermore, some authorities never made an attempt to do an early review and simply moved on to a new Local Plan instead. For example:

- The Hertsmere early review was meant to be undertaken within three years, as set out in the Inspectors Report into the examination of Hertsmere’s Core Strategy (5th December 2012). Some six years later no early review has been undertaken.

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7 Planned and deliver – Local Plan-making under the NPPF: A five-year progress report (April 2017)
In Dacorum, the Core Strategy was adopted on 25 September 2013, and committed to a partial review to be adopted by 2017/18. To date there has only been an issues and options consultation which was held in November 2017.

2.20 Lichfields research found that there are no assurances that early reviews are an effective mechanism in addressing substantive planning issues in a timely manner.

2.21 This is pertinent to the situation in Bedford because - by their nature as large-scale proposals - Garden Villages require up-front planning and investment and the confidence and certainty that comes from their allocation in a plan. If such a proposal is to be identified, attract investment for infrastructure, and have momentum such that it is an established deliverer of housing in the years post 2025 and particularly post 2030, it needs to be allocated in this Plan. Deferring matters to a Plan review (however “immediate”) will delay the sensible identification of a location for a Garden Village by at least 3-5 years. Such a delay will make it less likely that a Garden Village is delivering effectively.

2.22 Of relevant to this topic are the interim findings of the Inspector examining the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-33 where the Council proposed an early review to address the implications of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. The Inspector commented:

“5) Firstly, I am severely troubled by an approach which envisages that the plan will need to be reviewed soon after adoption. Whilst Inspectors are generally willing to find a plan sound where one or two finite issues remain unresolved and are relatively peripheral to the main thrust of the plan, it appears that the consequences of an impending government decision on the route of the Oxford- Cambridge expressway are expected to lead to a fundamental review of the plan’s development strategy.

6) To be sound a plan must be positively prepared. A particularly encouraging element of the plan is the way it proposes to deal with the impending closure of RAF Halton. During the examination, the Council defended its approach by writing; “While there may be some uncertainty over the exact process for closure and all parties still await further detail, we cannot afford to ignore Government announcements and any development potential that results from them. It is after all better to plan positively for change rather than suffering the effects of an ad-hoc approach to the probable redevelopment of the camp.” The same sentiments apply with equal force to the announcements about the Cam-MK-Ox growth arc.

7) Predictable events should be planned for. Both Heathrow expansion and the Oxford-Cambridge expressway are predictable, known, events. Only the route of the latter is not yet fixed. To be sound, VALP should make contingency plans to accommodate them, not simply abandon its function to a future review of uncertain timescale.

2.23 The parallels between the Inspector’s findings in Vale of Aylesbury and the situation in Bedford are readily apparent:

1. The role of a Garden Village as the preferred option for meeting longer term needs is not peripheral to the main thrust of the Bedford Borough Local Plan – it goes to its heart;

2. The requirement for a plan to be positively prepared and deal with uncertainties is something that would not be satisfied if the Plan ducks the challenge of identifying the appropriate location and providing the positive framework for its delivery whilst acknowledging the detail that needs to be worked through on any large-scale development proposal; and

3. The need for a Garden Village in Bedford to meet needs up to 2035 and beyond is predictable – it was established as the preferred option and the Council has concluded it
has no other reasonable alternatives. The plan should be positively allocating a Garden Village and providing the appropriate contingency to deal with longer term change.

2.24 Finally, the Planning Advisory Service in their note on early reviews' comment:

“a commitment to review cannot be used to resolve matters critical to the plan’s strategy or legal compliance. It is not a panacea for addressing the difficult issues.”

2.25 For all of the above reasons, Bedfordia and Marcol strongly object to the concept of an immediate review as a solution to the integral problems of unsoundness flowing from the shortened plan period and failure to identify TwinWoods as a Garden Village, but if an early review was concluded to be required for whatever reason para 1.6b itself is wholly inadequate. Any requirement for an early review should be:

- Defining a review as the obligation to update the Local Plan;
- Linked to specific timed milestones for preparation (Regulation 18, Regulation 19, and adoption) which would define whether the Review process (and by definition the adopted Local Plan) was up to date; and
- Define the parameters for the review – ie what factors should it be addressing?

2.26 By way of example, the early review policies in the recently adopted Local Plans for Cambridge/South Cambridgeshire go some way to meeting these requirements; Para 1.6b of the Local Plan unfortunately does none of these things.

The Way forward

2.27 The plan period should be extended to 2035 and the references throughout the plan should be updated accordingly. The Plan should identify a developable option for a Garden Village to deliver homes in the period post 2025. We set out in Section 5.0 of these representations why TwinWoods is the most appropriate option for inclusion in the Plan.

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9 This reflects that under the terms of para 33 of the Revised NPPF and the PPG ID: 61-042 there is a distinction between ‘Reviews’ as required by regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) which determine whether or not a plan needs to be ‘Updated’ – ie a revised/amended/updated Local Plan prepared. On these definitions, theoretically a Review exercise might lead to a Council simply concluding the Plan does not need updating. This would not be acceptable in the circumstances of Bedford.
3.0 The Housing Requirement

Relevant Policies in the Plan:

- Policy 3S – Amount and distribution of housing development
- Paragraph 10.1
- SHMA and Addendum

National Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

3.1 The NPPF outlines that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area (paragraph 14) and that, in order to “boost significantly” the supply of housing, they should:

“use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this framework…” (Paragraph 47).

3.2 The NPPF outlines the evidence required to objectively define housing needs within an area, setting out that LPAs should (paragraph 159);

“Prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs...identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which;

- Meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;
- Addresses the needs for all types of housing, including affordable housing...; and
- Caters for the housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand.”

3.3 Furthermore, the core planning principles set out in the NPPF indicate that a planned level of housing to meet objectively assessed housing needs (OAHN) must respond positively to wider opportunities for growth and should take account of market signals, including housing affordability (paragraph 17).

Planning Practice Guidance

3.4 The PPG contains a section providing guidance on housing and economic development needs assessments. The PPG indicates that there is no one methodological approach or use of a particular dataset(s) that will provide a definitive assessment of development need (paragraph 005), but goes on to outline an overarching methodology for preparing need assessments in a transparent manner. The PPG identifies that an objective assessment of need should fulfil the following criteria:

- Be proportionate and not consider purely hypothetical scenarios, only future scenarios that could reasonably be expected to occur (paragraph 003);
- Be based on facts and unbiased evidence. Constraints should not be applied to the overall assessment of need (paragraph 004);
• Utilise household projections published by the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government as the starting point estimate of overall housing need (paragraph 015);

• Consider sensitivity testing, specific to local circumstances, based on alternative assumptions in relation to the underlying demographic projections and household formation rates (paragraph 017); and

• Take account of employment trends (paragraph 018), appropriate market signals including market indicators of the balance between the demand for and supply of dwellings (paragraph 019) and affordable housing needs (paragraph 029)

Summary of Approach to Objectively Assessing Needs

3.5 Drawing upon the above, in practice applying the NPPF and PPG to arrive at a robust and evidenced OAHN is a staged and logical process. An OAHN must be a level of housing delivery which meets the needs associated with population and household growth, addresses the need for all types of housing including affordable and caters for housing demand (NPPF paragraph 159). Furthermore, a planned level of housing to meet OAHN must respond positively to wider opportunities for growth and should take account of market signals, including affordability (NPPF paragraph 17). The evidence and strategies for housing must be integrated with those for employment (NPPF paragraph 158). The PPG fleshes out these policy requirements with guidance on how to carry out the assessment.

3.6 Based on this, Figure 3.1 summarises the overarching approach to OAHN set out in the PPG

Figure 3.1 NPPF and PPG Approach to Objectively Assessing Housing Needs

Starting point: government projections

Sensitivity test for:
  • Latest data
  • Local demographic factors

Demographic-based need

Uplift or adjustment required for:
  • Market signals?
  • Economic / employment growth?
  • Addressing affordable housing needs?

Concluded full objectively assessed needs

Source: Lichfields based on NPPF/PPG
Review of the Bedford SHMA

3.7 The objectively assessed housing need (OAHN) for Bedford is set out in the Bedford Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 (“the SHMA”) and the associated Addendum published in August 2018 (“the Addendum”). The Addendum sets out that over the revised (2015-30) plan period, the OAN for Bedford amounts to 14,550 dwellings, or 970 dwellings per annum (dpa). This is reflected in paragraph 6.5 of the emerging Plan.

3.8 A Technical Note is appended to these representations at Appendix 1 providing further detail on our critique of the OAHN in the SHMA/Addendum. However, a non-technical summary is set out below.

1. **Demographic-led needs** (see Technical Note Section 2.0) - The SHMA’s justification for adopting longer term migration trends cites a number of studies/publications which support the use of long term trends. However, most of these specifically refer to potential issues with using trends from a recessionary period i.e. 2008-12 and are not Bedford-specific. This is directly contrary to the PPG which requires any changes to be undertaken based on local circumstances. Our analysis shows that housebuilding during the SHMA’s base period is likely to be a significant underestimate of ‘normal’ level because it includes many years when housebuilding levels were at historic lows. Based on the latest household projections, the demographic-led need would be at least 913 dpa 2015-30 – slightly more than the SHMA’s concluded demographic-led need, but when taken cumulatively with other adjustments this affects the final OAN;

2. **Market Signals** (see Technical Note Section 3.0) – the principle of applying a market signals uplift in Bedford is not disputed, rather it is the scale of the uplift which is in dispute. The Council considers that a 5% uplift is applicable, and gives varying reasons why a greater uplift is not appropriate, one of which relates to demand from job growth. Firstly, on the basis of several comparators of uplifts applied elsewhere and the scale of affordability issues in Bedford, an uplift of around 15-20% is more appropriate for Bedford, being a scale which (on reasonable assumptions, based on comparators) could be expected to improve affordability. An uplift at the higher end of this range would be justified, given the suppression built into the latest household projections. Secondly, the assertion that there will be insufficient demand to support a greater uplift is simply unfounded – there is no recognition in the SHMA whatsoever of the Oxford-MK-Cambridge corridor, and the fact that Government specifically wants to stimulate economic growth in this region – despite this being a key factor in planning in Bedford in the foreseeable future. A 20% uplift applied to the starting point of 931 dpa 2015-30 would equate to c. 1,120 dpa;

3. **Employment-led needs** (see Technical Note Section 4.0) – the SHMA bases its need assessment on one forecast. This is short-sighted given Bedford’s position in the Oxford-MK-Cambridge corridor. Past trends in job growth in Bedford have almost always exceeded the forecast which underpins the SHMA, and given the growth forecasts for the corridor set out in the Government’s report (published by SQW/Cambridge Econometrics) the forecasts used in the SHMA are very pessimistic. In the context of the corridor’s growth potential the Council should base its OAN on a higher forecast of job growth so as to ensure the supply of homes does not threaten the economic potential of Bedford or the wider region. This also provides justification for applying a greater than 5% market signals uplift; and

4. **Affordable housing needs** (see Technical Note Section 5.0) - The way in which the SHMA has assessed need does not follow the PPG, and under-estimates affordable housing need by looking only at benefit claimants (instead of undertaking any analysis of incomes required to rent/buy in the local area). It fails to compare affordable housing need to the likely rate of delivery, and considering an increase to the housing numbers.
3.9 Overall, the OAHN for Bedford is at least **c.1,120 dpa to 2030**, taking into account household growth and an uplift for market signals, although there is clearly potential for this to be even greater based on economic growth. A higher figure would also help to meet more of the need for affordable housing.

**The Way forward**

3.10 The OAHN for Bedford needs to be updated to cover the twenty-year period 2015 to 2035. Furthermore, the OAHN figure should be a minimum of 1,120 dpa or 22,400 dwellings over the plan period.
4.0 The housing trajectory

Relevant Policies in the Plan:

- Policy 3S – Amount and distribution of housing development
- Individual site allocation policies where relevant, notably Policy 11
- Housing Trajectory

National Policy Context

4.1 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF (point 2) requires LPAs to identify and update a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirement. Paragraph 47 also states (point 3) that a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations for growth should be identified for years 6 to 10 of the plan and “where possible” years 11 to 15.

4.2 Point 4 of Paragraph 47 the NPPF requires LPAs to:

“for market and affordable housing illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery through a housing trajectory for the plan period and set out a housing implementation strategy for the full range of housing describing how they will maintain delivery of a five-year supply of housing land to meet their housing target.” (our emphasis)

4.3 The below sets out a review of the most up-to-date Housing Sites Trajectory, dated September 2018. This document details the expected delivery of housing in Bedford Borough from 2015 to 2030 with a base date of 1st April 2018. This is an update to the January 2018 version which set out a trajectory to 2035. The relevant five-year period for the purposes of demonstrating a ‘Five-Year Housing Land Supply’ (in accordance with Paragraph 47 of the NPPF) is 2018/19 to 2022/23.

4.4 The Council has also produced a document entitled ‘5 Year Supply of Deliverable Housing Sites 2018/19 to 2022/23’ (September 2018). However, this does not form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, presumably because it does not include emerging Local Plan allocations in its supply position (it is a live position outside of the Local Plan process). In this document the Council claims to be able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS), excluding the Local Plan 2030 sites in the trajectory, of 5.80 years.

4.5 Because Bedfordia and Marcol are focused on TwinWoods as a ‘developable’ site to come forward from 2025, the focus of our representations are more on the overall trajectory across the plan period rather than the 5YHLS specifically. There may well be factors in the 5YHLS that require modification but that has not been our focus in reviewing the Plan’s approach.

Bedford Housing Supply

Housing Sites Trajectory (September 2018)

4.6 Three sources of housing supply are identified in the Housing Sites Trajectory as set out below:

1. **Sites with Planning Permission** – The Council identify a total of 40 sites with Planning Permission [PP] expected to deliver in the trajectory period (i.e. 2015-2030), totalling 6,210 units.
2 Windfall Allowance – An allowance for windfall (i.e. not planned for) sites of 108 dpa in the five-year period (540 dwellings total), reducing to 85 dpa outside the five-year period. This totals 1,135 dwellings across the plan period.

3 Local Plan 2030 – Assumed supply coming forward from allocations and likely future development arising from the emerging Local Plan 2030 (Policies 3S, and Policies 7 to 28) totals 4,356 units. These sites are broken down in Table 2.

In total, the Housing Sites Trajectory identifies a supply of 15,270 units across the Plan Period (2015-2030), including completions to date, as detailed below:

Table 1 Total Identified Housing Supply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Period</th>
<th>2015/16 to 2017/18 (i.e. Actual delivery)</th>
<th>2018/19 to 2022/23 (5YHLS period)</th>
<th>2023/24 to 2029/30</th>
<th>Total Supply in Plan Period (2015 – 2030)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units</td>
<td>3,569</td>
<td>5,719</td>
<td>5,982</td>
<td>15,270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bedford Housing Sites Trajectory (September 2018)

4.7 The proposed housing target across the plan period is 14,550 dwellings (970 dpa). The trajectory therefore identifies an additional 720 dwellings equating to a marginal 5% uplift against the proposed requirement for flexibility.

**Review of Trajectory**

**Sources of supply**

The sites with PP identified appears to represent a reasonable source of supply. In addition, the Windfall sites calculation is conservative and is based upon previous trends. However, the allocations proposed in Key and Rural service centres are highly uncertain.

4.9 Table 4.2 provides a breakdown of the allocation sites expected to deliver with the plan period:

Table 2 Bedford Emerging Local Plan 2030 Sites Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sites within the urban area</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>1,785</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban extensions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownfield site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key service centres</td>
<td>Not Given</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1,870</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural service centres</td>
<td>Not Given</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>3,744</td>
<td>4,356</td>
<td>1,647</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bedford Housing Sites Trajectory (September 2018)

4.10 Specific sites are identified to deliver the units set out in the categories, ‘sites within the urban area’, ‘urban extensions’ and ‘brownfield site’. However, the 2,260 units identified for key service and rural service centres are not allocated and they are not accompanied by any evidence on specific sites. Instead, this exercise is deferred to possible future neighbourhood plans (see further below).
Key Service Centres

4.11 The Local Plan refers to delivery of 2,000 dwellings from four key service centres:
- Bromham (95 in the five year period);
- Clapham, (35 in the five year period);
- Great Barford; and
- Sharnbrook (which was not identified in the January 2018 Housing Sites Trajectory).

4.12 However, the Plan does not allocate any sites. Instead, it states that all sites would be allocated in possible, future Neighbourhood Plans. Having regard to the above, only 130 units are anticipated to be deliverable, with the remaining 1,870 anticipated to be units coming forward on developable sites. There are a number of sites which fall within these key service centres assessed in the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (September 2018), but which, if any, of these the Council expects to come forward and deliver the 2,000 units identified in the housing trajectory is unknown.

4.13 Therefore, it is not possible for any of the 130 units identified in the first five years to fulfil the definition of ‘deliverable’ in the NPPF without knowing what sites they relate to. It is not possible to determine if the sites are suitable now, available now or achievable without the site details. As such, no units should be included within the first five years.

4.14 With regards to developable sites or broad locations beyond year five, these need to adhere to the requirement at para 47(3) which seeks identification of a supply of specific developable sites or broad locations. It is not clear that the identification of the four key service centres amounts to a sufficiently clear broad location. The Key Diagram at page 40 of the Local Plan identifies “strategic allocation – key service centres”, but this does not make clear to what area the broad location for development in these locations relates: is it within the existing built up area of the settlement, development via urban extensions and if so in what direction? Without this information it is not possible to assess prospect or viability of development. It is not clear that this approach to distributing housing delivery without identifying sites is justified or effective.

4.15 Further adjustments to this component of supply are set out at paragraphs 4.30 to 4.32.

Rural Service Centres

4.16 In rural service centres, other than in Roxton, where one site (P28) is allocated to, all future development sites in these areas totalling c.180 dwellings, are proposed to be allocated in Neighbourhood Plans after the adoption of the emerging Local Plan. This is against NPPF paragraph 47 which requires LPAs to identify specific deliverable and developable sites. Even if it is assumed that the 50 units expected to be delivered in the five-year period comes from the Roxton site, this still means the 180 units for the remainder of the rural service centres needs to fulfil the test of a developable site. Developable sites by definition must have a realistic prospect of being available and viable at the point of development envisaged. It is not possible to fulfil this definition if the site itself is unknown and/or it is unclear whether a Neighbourhood Plan would even be progressed.

4.17 From Lichfields research, ‘Local Choices?’11 it is evident that Neighbourhood Plans are difficult to prepare and generally have little focus on housing growth. Firstly, the gap between the number of Neighbourhood Planning areas designated nationally and actual plans adopted has

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10 The Site Assessments report (September 2018) identifies that the site (ref 225) is proposed for 80 dwellings. Policy P28 does not set a housing figure for the allocation.

11 https://lichfields.uk/media/4128/local-choices_housing-delivery-through-neighbourhood-plans.pdf
been widening. At the time of publication of our report there were 542 plans made, but 1,969 areas designated. Of the 330 Neighbourhood Plans adopted that our research reviewed only 40% contained a housing target and again only 40% allocated housing sites. For Bedford therefore to rely upon Neighbourhood Planning areas to allocate and then deliver a significant proportion of development is unsound in this context.

4.18 With regards to Bedford specifically, the up-take of Neighbourhood Plans has been slow. There are currently 30 neighbourhood planning areas, of which only three have (or are currently undertaking) a pre-submission consultation of their Neighbourhood Plan with none submitted for examination. For example, Bromham was designated in August 2014 but does not even have a pre-submission draft prepared for consultation. The same can be said for Great Barford which was designated in January 2014. There are also unresolved objections to the allotted development capacity to Policy 3S in these Key Service Centres. This all points to likely delay in any sites even being allocated in the immediate future, less still the actual delivery of any housing.

4.19 Overall, the inclusion of this source of supply is not justified. No specific sites have been identified in the Local Plan and the Council’s reliance upon delivery through Neighbourhood Plans national and locally is unsound (within the meaning of the NPPF). In total, development from Key Service Centres and Rural Service Centres equate to 52% of completions expected from allocations or 21% of the total supply identified across the plan period. This is a significant proportion of the overall trajectory which is at best uncertain and is not therefore either justified or effective.

**Allocation Sites Assessment: build rates & lead-in times**

4.20 The below provides a targeted assessment of build rates and lead-in times of allocated sites included within the five year housing land supply period (2018/19 – 2019/20). We have also compared the January 2018 Housing Sites Trajectory with the updated September 2018 edition. It would appear that a number of allocation sites are expected to deliver more units over a shorter period of time.

**Ford End Road**

4.21 Ford End Road (ref. 11) in the latest edition is expected to deliver 630 units in the current plan period (2015 – 2030) with delivery starting in 2023/24. This is compared to 545 units in the same period in the January 2018 edition which expected delivery to start in 2020/21. This is set out below in Table 3.

<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Housing Sites Trajectory January 2018 & September 2018 Editions

4.22 There is no justification relied upon by the Council for doubling the build-out rates in some years and expecting the full site to deliver 85 more units across 8 years in the September 2018 Housing Sites Trajectory compared to 10 years in the January 2018 edition. We have therefore amended the trajectory to reflect the January 2018 original assumptions.

4.23 Furthermore, there is no evidence the site is able to deliver in the plan period at all, let alone the five-year period. A Masterplan Report was produced for the site in June 2018. The document
identifies that the site has six landowners, including the main owner-occupier which is Marston’s at Eagle Brewery. There is no evidence that all landowners are agreeable to the development. The site is a former gas works. From conducting an online search, BNP Paribas are listing the site and state that Phase 1 of the site is due to have remediation completed, with Phase 2 remediation due for completion in 2021. This suggests the site is not suitable now given the current land contamination and there are also flood risk issues (the site is in Flood Zones 2 and 3), necessitating a sequential assessment and leading to no clarity over what amount of development can be achieved (thereby leading to additional viability questions). Furthermore, a bridge over the railway line is required to unlock the scheme. It is clear that the site should therefore be pushed outside of the five-year period because it is not suitable now nor is there clear evidence it is available now as is required in the definition of a deliverable site.

Moreover, there are such significant unknowns and questions about the developability of the scheme (for example, the need for a sequential test in light of Flood Zone 2 and 3 and to quantify the area of development, the viability of the scheme in light of the contamination and need for infrastructure, or the ability to assemble the site across its six owners) that it should not be allocated in the Plan as there is no reasonable prospect that the site is suitable or that it will be available and could be viably delivered at the point envisaged.

Were the position to be taken that it be retained as an allocation to reflect the desire for its development, it should either:

- be excluded from the housing trajectory completely or identified for delivery beyond the plan period - i.e. it can be allocated but not relied upon by the Council to meet needs (i.e. an ‘empty’ allocation whereby if it comes forward it is a bonus to the Plan’s anticipated housing yield); or
- The site gets pushed further back to a latter part of trajectory to reflect the number of issues that will need to be addressed before it can deliver housing (e.g. at least ten years away), but in addition - because there are so many doubts over its developability - the trajectory should include an enlarged buffer for flexibility to ensure sufficient sites come forward to meet needs.

For the sake of our analysis, the site is excluded from the trajectory because its delivery is at best uncertain and its allocation cannot therefore be considered justified or effective.

**Borough Hall**

Borough Hall (P12) is another such example with unjustified inflated development yield. The below sets out a comparison of the delivery:

Table 4 Borough Hall Delivery Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>2024/25</th>
<th>2025/26</th>
<th>2026/27</th>
<th>2027/28</th>
<th>Total units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Housing Sites Trajectory January 2018 & September 2018 Editions

There appears to be no justification for the higher delivery rates expected in the September 2018 edition.

**Key service centres**

The delivery rates from the Key Service Centres have also been amended without clear justification when comparing both editions of the Housing Sites Trajectory. In the January 2018 edition each service centre was expected to deliver 500 units over an 8-year period ranging from
50 – 75 dpa. However, in the September 2018 edition, they are now expected to deliver 500 units over a 7-year period starting with 35 dpa in year 1 rising to 60 – 90 dpa in the remaining years. In both editions the same delivery is assumed for all four key service centres identified with Bromham expected to deliver first in 2021/22. Clapham is then expected to follow in 2022/23, with both Great Barford and Sharnbrook expected to start delivering in 2023/24.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Housing Sites Trajectory January 2018 and September 2018 editions

4.30 No justification is provided as to why these key service centres build out rates have been amended to deliver in a year less. Nor has any justification been provided to warrant a blanket approach to delivery rates across all years for all key service centres.

4.31 Overall, there is no justification for the amendments to the original delivery rates, in the January 2018 edition, when compared to the September 2018 edition. Especially so in relation to the delivery rates of the key service centres. We have therefore amended the delivery rates back to the January 18 build out rate assumptions. We have also moved the delivery outside the five-year period because there is no clear evidence that any sites, yet to be allocated, are deliverable. Indeed, there is real uncertainty as to whether any dwellings at all can be delivered at these key service centres.

**Trajectory amendments and impact**

4.32 Our focus has not been on the five year period, specifically, but our total changes in the five-year period, in relation to Key Service Centre, Rural Service Centres and Ford End Road, reduce the five-year supply of deliverable sites from 5,719 units to a maximum of 5,446 units, but also point to the need for a substantial buffer to address the risks of non-delivery at Ford End Road and in the Rural Service Centres via Neighbourhood Plans over the whole of the trajectory.

4.33 Overall, our amends to the build out rates and lead-in times amend the total supply identified in the plan period from 11,701 units to 10,911 units. The trajectory as a result actually plans for 14,135 dwellings against a need for 14,550 (970 dpa); equating to 97.1% of the need identified. As such, there is no flexibility at all in the trajectory should sites or Neighbourhood Plans not come forward as envisaged. This is in the context that – given the highly uncertain components within it – a very large allowance of extra supply for flexibility should be shown. A breakdown of the alterations is included at Appendix 2.

4.34 Having reviewed the Council’s housing trajectory, we make the observation that the Council appears content to include sites in the trajectory which have significant uncertainties surrounding suitability and availability (Ford End Road) and have included supply in key service centres and rural service centres which are not tied to any particular site and therefore cannot be considered deliverable or developable. However, by contrast the Council is applying undue pessimism to the inclusion of TwinWoods in the Local Plan, which by comparison is a suitable and developable site.

**Five Year Housing Land Supply**

4.35 Taking into account the adjustments to supply in the five-year period set out above (see Appendix 2), and applying Lichfields’ concluded OAN for Bedford - and based on only a very
high level critique of the five year land supply position - the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5YHLS.

Table 6 Bedford five year housing land supply position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Council position</th>
<th>Lichfields position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual requirement</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>1,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-year requirement</td>
<td>4,850</td>
<td>5,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completions in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18</td>
<td>3,569</td>
<td>3,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortfall in plan period</td>
<td>-659</td>
<td>-209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% Buffer</td>
<td>4,401</td>
<td>5,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 5-year dwelling forecast (excluding emerging allocations)</td>
<td>5,107 (ex)</td>
<td>5,496 (incl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years supply</td>
<td>5.80 years</td>
<td>4.83 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus/deficit</td>
<td>+706 units</td>
<td>-165 units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lichfields analysis and 5 Year Supply of Deliverable Housing Sites 2018/19 to 2022/23’ (September 2018)

**Conclusions**

4.36 Overall, the Housing Trajectory contains a significant proportion of uncertain supply with expected delivery rates from allocation sites in part unjustified. No specific sites expected to deliver have been identified in Key Service Centres, or from the majority of the Rural Service Centres. This is contrary to Paragraph 47 of the NPPF and this source is not justified nor effective.

4.37 The trajectory does not identify sufficient homes to meet the identified need based on our more accurate assessment of OAHN. The Local Plan should plan to meet need in full and provide for sufficient flexibility should sites not come forward as envisaged – which is a high risk for the current Plan. If the Plan is to maintain its approach to Rural Service Centres via Neighbourhood Plans or to include very high risk and uncertain sites such as Ford End Road, the Plan should contain a substantial buffer in the trajectory to address the potential lack of certainty in progression of the capacity identified therein.

**The Way Forward**

4.38 Additional supply needs to be identified in the trajectory to meet housing needs to 2035. This should include the delivery of the TwinWoods Garden Village to bolster delivery in the later phases of the Local Plan and beyond.
5.0 The Garden Village option

Relevant Policies in the Plan:

- Policy 2S
- Para 7.56
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Garden Village Topic Paper

Introduction

5.1 In its submission draft plan, the Council has elected (without proper justification) to delete the Garden Village policies that it had included in its January 2018 iteration and which it first identified off the back of the 2015 ‘call for sites’ exercise. There are thus no specific Garden Village policies in the Local Plan beyond a passing reference to the future opportunities for new settlements at para 7.56.

5.2 However, the Council’s decision not to have a 15-year timeframe for its plan, its decision not to allocate developable sites for years 11-15 of its plan period, and its purported justification for its spatial strategy is fundamentally related to its unsound decision not to allocate a Garden Village option in the Plan (having correctly ruled that Colworth – its initial preferred option – has insuperable problems) and its specific rejection of TwinWoods as a potential Garden Village allocation, having failed to properly consider i) alternative Garden Village options against the correct test, and ii) the “crucial” preferability in the NPPF of identifying land on a 15 year timeframe “if possible”.

5.3 The Council’s decision not to allocate TwinWoods as part of Policy 2S appears to be based on analysis presented in the Sustainability Appraisal and the Garden Village Topic Paper, and the conclusion that it is not deliverable due to concerns about its potential transport mitigation. However, this conclusion is not justified by the evidence: a separate Transportation Assessment report – prepared by Vectos – demonstrates that: (i) the Council’s analysis in the Systra reports and conclusions reached in the Garden Village Topic Paper (September 2018) are not sound (of note, the January 2018 iteration of the Topic Paper correctly did not reject TwinWoods as an option for a Garden Village); and (ii) TwinWoods remains a suitable and developable site in transport terms.

5.4 In addition, the Council’s already flawed approach is exacerbated by its approach in the Sustainability Appraisal pursuant to which it fails properly to assess reasonable alternatives, and thus is in breach of the Regulations.

National Policy and Guidance

5.5 Paragraph 182 of the NPPF requires a sound plan to be one that is, inter alia:

- Positively prepared – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- Justified: the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- Effective: deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working; and
5.6 What this means, in combination, is that when assessing options and sites and locations, the Council is not a passive participant in the plan making process. When barriers to development of specific sites or options are identified, it is required to take a proactive approach in order to ensure the most appropriate strategy is selected, consistent with national policy and delivering sustainable development. This is relevant because - as we have identified in Section 2.0 of these representations - the Council decided not to identify any Garden Village option and chose not to plan for 15 years from the date of plan adoption, despite the NPPF stating this is “preferable” (para 157) and that sites/broad locations should be identified for years 10-15 “if possible” (para 47). The Council’s rationale for not doing so is because it believed the Garden Village options it was considering were not “deliverable”. Its approach was, therefore, predicated upon the wrong policy test. Even leaving aside this fundamental error, the Council’s approach was also flawed because it omitted to consider proactively whether any issues identified could be reasonably overcome.

5.7 In this latter respect, the PPG (ID: 3-022) is clear that if constraints to development on sites are identified plan-makers need to look at how these can be overcome:

“What happens when constraints are identified that impact on the suitability, availability and achievability?

Where constraints have been identified, the assessment should consider what action would be needed to remove them (along with when and how this could be undertaken and the likelihood of sites/broad locations being delivered). Actions might include the need for investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement, or a need to review development plan policy, which is currently constraining development.”

5.8 The PPG (ID3: 026) goes to describe the kind of approach required if the identified land supply is not sufficient to meet needs (applicable in a situation when the Plan fails to identify sites or broad locations for years 11-15 of the plan period):

“What happens if the trajectory indicates that there are insufficient sites/broad locations to meet the objectively assessed need?

It may be concluded that insufficient sites/broad locations have been identified against objectively assessed needs. Plan makers will need to revisit the assessment, for example changing the assumptions on the development potential on particular sites (including physical and policy constraints) including sites for possible new settlements.

If, following this review there are still insufficient sites, then it will be necessary to investigate how this shortfall should best be planned for. If there is clear evidence that the needs cannot be met locally, it will be necessary to consider how needs might be met in adjoining areas in accordance with the duty to cooperate.” (emphasis added).

5.9 The PPG section entitled sustainability appraisal requirements for Local Plans deals with both how options should be refined and assessed through the SA and how should the SA assess alternatives, as highlighted below in ID: 11-017.

How should plan-makers develop and refine options and assess effects?
“Plan-makers should assess the policies in a draft Local Plan, and the reasonable alternatives, to identify the likely significant effects of the available options (Stage B). Forecasting and evaluation of the significant effects should help to develop and refine the proposals in each Local Plan document.

Reasonable alternatives should be identified and considered at an early stage in the plan making process, as the assessment of these should inform the local planning authority in choosing its preferred approach (when developing alternatives, paragraph 152 of the National Planning Policy Framework should be referred to).”

The PPG provides further guidance at ID: 11-018:

“How should the sustainability appraisal assess alternatives and identify likely significant effects?

The sustainability appraisal needs to compare all reasonable alternatives including the preferred approach and assess these against the baseline environmental, economic and social characteristics of the area and the likely situation if the Local Plan were not to be adopted.

The sustainability appraisal should predict and evaluate the effects of the preferred approach and reasonable alternatives and should clearly identify the significant positive and negative effects of each alternative.....

The sustainability appraisal should identify any likely significant adverse effects and measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset them. The sustainability appraisal must consider all reasonable alternatives and assess them in the same level of detail as the option the plan-maker proposes to take forward in the Local Plan (the preferred approach).

Reasonable alternatives are the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker in developing the policies in its plan. They must be sufficiently distinct to highlight the different sustainability implications of each so that meaningful comparisons can be made. The alternatives must be realistic and deliverable.

The sustainability appraisal should outline the reasons the alternatives were selected, the reasons the rejected options were not taken forward and the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives. It should provide conclusions on the overall sustainability of the different alternatives, including those selected as the preferred approach in the Local Plan. Any assumptions used in assessing the significance of effects of the Local Plan should be documented....” (emphasis added)

How did the Council reach its proposed strategy?

Sustainability Appraisal Issues and Options 2014

The Council has produced six iterations of the SA over the course of the production of the Local Plan. In the 2014 Issues and Options SA, an option for a new settlement was tested through option 4, however it was ruled undeliverable.

“The option of a new settlement had been previously proposed as part of the 2014 Issues and Options paper consultation. Nevertheless, this was not taken forward because the option was not deliverable; no credible potential new rural growth points were available at the time as none had been put forward for consideration.” (SA January 2018 para 6.18).
5.12 **Sustainability Appraisal January 2018**

The inclusion of a Garden Village as a reasonable alternative in the assessment next appeared in the January 2018 SA. This resulted from a further ‘call for sites’ in 2015 whereby eleven sites were put forward for stand-alone new settlements (more than 1,000 dwellings). Seven of these sites were excluded from consideration as they were either not stand-alone settlements or they did not have the potential to deliver a strategic level of growth (SA January 2018 para 6.18). The SA tested the delivery of smaller scale new settlements (1,000 – 2,000 dwellings) and larger scale new settlements (4,000 to 6,000 dwellings). The larger scale new settlements performed best. In assessing large scale new settlements through the January 2018 SA the below was assumed to inform the testing of options for the distribution of growth:

> "6.23 In order to generate realistic option scenarios the following assumptions have been made:

- New settlement(s) – the number of dwellings delivered by new settlements is limited to 2,500 dwellings in total within the plan period (with the remainder beyond the plan period)."

5.13 A total of 36 alternative potential option scenarios for the distribution of growth were undertaken and a new settlement featured in 22 of them. Eight of these were tested against the sustainability objectives, four of these contained a new settlement. The Council’s preferred strategy is option 1 which includes a new settlement, Stewartby brickworks, urban area, Group 1 villages (low), Group 2 villages (low). It is clear from the assessment of the option that this was not an assessment of any particular new settlement, but a new settlement in general as set out in the Council’s assessment of option 1 against the SA objectives at Appendix 8 (Appended to this report as Appendix 3).

5.14 **Garden Villages Topic Paper January 2018**

The next phase of work was to refine the preferred approach and test the location of a new settlement. The Council undertook a comparative test on the sustainability of the four alternative locations as set out below.

> “This compares their deliverability, physical limitations, physical impacts, adequacy of highway access and how they rated against 18 criteria for garden cities derived from those proposed by the Town and Country Planning Association and the Government’s ‘Locally Led Garden Towns and Villages’ prospectus, 2016. Appendix 10 shows how the new settlement assessment criteria relate to the sustainability appraisal objectives and demonstrates that the criteria represent an appropriate framework for the assessment of new settlement site options. The methodology and outputs are described further in the ‘Garden Village Topic Paper’.”

5.15 The Garden Village Topic Paper January 2018 concluded that the Colworth Garden Village site at Sharnbrook was the most sustainable location.

> “This was largely because this was the only site that could deliver a rail Parkway station which could not only serve the new residents but also divert existing car drivers from the nearby A6 onto public transport, to get to Bedford or beyond. The station would also be advantageous to the existing employment site adjoining the proposed new settlement, making the location highly accessible.” (January 2018 SA para 6.36)

5.16 It is clear from the Garden Village Topic Paper January 2018 that “the priority for the Council has been to assess the suitability and deliverability of the four new settlement proposals, consider the results of the sites assessment process and decide whether one (or more) should be
included in the development strategy” (para 9.1). The document ultimately concludes on Colworth as the Garden Village for allocation in the plan. However, it does not conclude that TwinWoods is excluded because it is not deliverable or because it is unsuitable in any way:

“9.6 The proposals at Twinwoods and Thurleigh also have merit and may be suitable for allocation future plans. In particular, an east west rail route through Bedford and out to the north may open up future opportunities for growth north of Bedford. At this time the proposal at Colworth Garden Village offers a more sustainable transport solution, with particular benefits in the short term once the railway station is open. Again, any future proposal at Twinwoods or Thurleigh would need to be considered alongside others that may come forward.”

5.17 As per the Transport Assessment prepared by Vectos that accompanies these representations, the Topic Paper provides no evidence that TwinWoods is not a developable scheme in transport terms.

**Colworth Garden Village**

5.18 In previous representations to the January 2018 Regulation 19 consultation, Bedfordia and Marcol set out a number of reasons why Colworth was not a suitable and therefore not deliverable or developable Garden Village proposition. At the time of that consultation the Council had wrongly identified Colworth as the preferred option for the reason set out below, but the Garden Village Topic Paper (January 2018) said nothing to indicate TwinWoods was not developable.

5.19 The allocation of Colworth was not ‘sound’ for the following reasons:

1. The impact of introducing such a significant amount of new residential properties in such close proximity to the Santa Pod Raceway could have potentially significant and harmful implications for both the successful ongoing operation and viability of the business and, as a result, the positive contribution it currently makes to the economy of the local area through employment, associated industry and tourism. It would also have represented an unacceptable environment for new residents of the development.

2. Abnormally high infrastructure costs were anticipated with the delivery of the necessary access road to/from the A6 and to deliver ‘up front’ delivery of a new railway station\(^\text{12}\) to serve the new settlement. In addition, this would require the acquisition of large areas of land currently outside the control of the promoters, this notwithstanding also meeting the costs of other necessary highway/movement improvements. This would need to be resolved at an early stage in the development timetable and up-front funding secured for the delivery of the access road, rail station and other likely improvements before significant development could take place. This casts serious doubt over the practical prospects of Colworth Garden Village as a developable and viable proposal.

3. Heritage interest of Colworth Garden Village – both designated and non-designated heritage assets – was also a significant constraint to this proposal. In particular, it is noted that there is a likely high potential for important archaeology to be present within the site area which could impose both physical and financial constraints on the development of a new settlement in this location.

4. Furthermore, it was noted that, whilst the potential provision of a railway station appeared to have been considered a positive factor in the assessment of Colworth Garden Village, this

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\(^{12}\) Based on an understanding that the Council required the rail station to be fully operational prior to occupation of any dwelling, and that two bridges would be required over the railway with landownerships issues to reflect Network Rail’s interests.
was not properly costed, nor any consideration given to the feasibility or deliverability of a new station in this location. There was no meaningful evidence of discussions with Network Rail or other statutory bodies over the feasibility of this element of the proposal either. It was therefore considered that this factor appeared to be an unrealistic aspiration at this stage and should therefore be afforded little weight at that stage given the significant question marks over the delivery of a new railway station and the significant implications for the overall viability of the proposal.

**Garden Villages Topic Paper September 2018**

Between the January 2018 Garden Village Topic Paper publication and the September 2018 version, the Council gathered further evidence from the sites. On the basis of this evidence gathering, the Council concluded that the Colworth Garden Village was no longer suitable (the CEO of Trakbak Racing notified the Council that it had not been possible to reach agreement on a noise mitigation scheme and it would not be possible to rely on mitigation on the Santa Pod land as envisaged) and therefore not deliverable. In this regard, Bedfordia and Marcol’s criticisms (as summarised above) were well founded.

However, the Garden Village Topic Paper also introduced – for the first time – the concept that TwinWoods was undeliverable, linked to concerns over additional transport measures put forward by Bedfordia and Marcol.

The Transport Assessment Report prepared by Vectos – which accompanies these representations – demonstrates that the Council’s Topic Paper provided absolutely no technical evidence to demonstrate that TwinWoods is not a developable scheme in transport terms. There has been no change in circumstances since the Council considered TwinWoods in the January 2018 iteration of the report when it elected to pursue Colworth as its preferred option but in no way indicated that TwinWoods was not developable.

The Council failed to understand that additional transport measures (train station, bus links and electric bike scheme) suggested by Bedfordia and Marcol were tabled to assist in discussions with the Council and were not advanced as fundamental requirements necessary to make TwinWoods developable. It remains the case that the scheme has a viable transport solution without them, as the Council found in January 2018.

Even if there is disagreement between Bedfordia and Marcol and the Council on the forecasted transport impacts and efficacy of specific transport measures on modal shift (not unexpected when looking a long time into the future) this does not in of itself mean that TwinWoods is not developable. To the contrary, it is plainly developable (within the meaning of the NPPF and PPG) and - as set out by Vectos in its Transportation Assessment Report - there is an option to monitor and mitigate the position with regards to transport impact and related mitigation.

**Sustainability Appraisal September 2018**

As described above, as a result of information received during the consultation, the Council rightly concluded that it would not be possible to deliver the new garden village at Colworth due to insuperable concerns around noise mitigation measures (in fact, as set out above, this is only one reason why Colworth is not developable).

Paragraph 9.13 states that for all of the four new settlement options “insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the site is deliverable”. The Council states it had considered the alternatives and concluded that in the absence of evidence that any of the new settlement options were deliverable, decided that the only course of action was to remove a garden village allocation from the Plan and reduce the plan-period to 2030.
5.27 As identified above, the PPG on the SA requirements for Local Plans is clear that options should be refined and assessed through the SA and that “the sustainability appraisal should identify any likely significant adverse effects and measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset them”. The September 2018 SA has failed to do this, rather it has simply identified a perceived problem without seeking to refine the option, or to prevent, reduce or offset any impacts.

5.28 The residual component of the Plan’s reference to New Settlements - para 7.56 – interestingly refers to the four proposals the Council had considered and concludes they “may, together with other strategic scale proposals, have potential for allocation in future plan”. It goes on to refer to TwinWoods as involving the re-use of previously developed land – something encouraged by para 111 of the NPPF. The Plan’s response does not identify or justify why it was not possible to identify any of the sites with potential in the current plan.

Key grounds of objection

5.29 Based on the above, the following key flaws arise out of the Council’s approach:

1. A failure to grasp the important distinction between Deliverable and Developable sites
2. Failure to assess reasonable alternatives with regard to:
   a. Plan period
   b. Options for the amount of growth
   c. Options for the distribution of growth

1. A failure to grasp the important distinction between Deliverable and Developable

5.30 The Council has made a fundamental error in the assessment of a Garden Village as a reasonable alternative. The Council repeatedly assesses the prospect of a Garden Village being ‘deliverable’, but as per national policy, this is the wrong test. The Council’s assessment should be considering the developability of the site. The specific nuance of these two terms is critical and is set out at footnotes 11 and 12 of the NPPF.

5.31 The inclusion of a Garden Village in the Local Plan is not dependent on ‘deliverability’, but developability. Schemes of this size have significant lead in times and the Colworth proposal was not anticipated by the Council to come forward until 2025 onwards (in the January 2018 iteration of the Local Plan), and that was with an emerging allocation. This does not need to adhere to the tests of a deliverable site which require delivery on site within five years. Large-scale developments such as Garden Village will come forward over considerable periods of time and this demands an appropriate flexible approach to recognise that the position in year one of the Local Plan may well be different to that at years five, ten, fifteen or indeed beyond the plan period. This is why the test of ‘developable’ is deliberately different to ‘deliverable’.

5.32 This is not simply a point of timing. The delivery of housing schemes in a Local Plan beyond the five-year period has a much lower expectation over the level of detail required to be provided over how and when the site would be developed. The PPG (ID: 12-018) is clear that later phases of the plan do not carry the same expectation over level of detail around infrastructure requirements as do the first five years given lower levels of certainty. We agree with the Council that the Colworth proposal is not deliverable. Indeed, the fundamental suitability problems identified with it demonstrate that it is also not developable. In that respect, the Council is correct not to allocate Colworth as a Garden Village in its plan.
However, it is clear that there is sufficient evidence to include TwinWoods in the Local Plan as a developable Garden Village allocation. Whilst the Council is correct that the Colworth proposal has a clear suitability issue which cannot be resolved at this time, the same constraints do not apply to TwinWoods.

The TwinWoods scheme was not concluded to be undeliverable in the January 2018 Garden Village Topic Paper, indeed it was concluded to “have merit and may be suitable for allocation in future plans”. It was simply identified as being behind Colworth in the Council’s order of preference. However, in the September 2018 Garden Village Topic Paper the site was described as being ‘undeliverable’. Between the January 2018 Garden Village Topic Paper publication of the September 2018 version, the Council gathered further evidence from the sites. Vectos provides a summary of this updated information and explains why there is no basis on which to conclude the TwinWoods site is not developable (The differences between the assessment of the TwinWoods site in the two documents is as set out in Appendix 4 of this report alongside Vectos’ commentary).

In summary, the September 2018 iteration claims TwinWoods is not deliverable on the basis that the scheme relies on the delivery of mitigation measures to deal with traffic which is at an early stage of development and cannot demonstrate that traffic will be reduced to acceptable levels, a Heritage Impact Assessment is required and the impact of a new railway station have not been demonstrated. Leaving aside that the Council has applied the wrong test, this assessment on each item is flawed in any event:

1. Mitigation measures to deal with traffic: as set out by Vectos in the Transport Assessment and in its commentary at Appendix 4 of this report, there is no technical evidence to justify that TwinWoods is not a developable site in transport terms;

2. Heritage Impact Assessment: As per the commentary at Appendix 4, this was rightly not raised as an issue in the January 2018 Garden Village Topic Paper. Any need for more in-depth heritage work cannot in any way mean the site is not developable. Furthermore, any potential listing by Historic England of the Former High-Speed Laboratory complex does not impact on the developability of TwinWoods. There is an outstanding objection to the listing, but even if it were Listed, the building would be retained and thus the physical historic and architectural interest will not be altered. In a site of such scale, this could not conceivably represent a fundamental barrier to its developability. This is set out in more detail in the accompanying Development Statement.

3. New railway station - as set out in these representations and in the Vectos Transport Assessment, delivery of a train station is not necessary for the delivery of the scheme in transport terms and it was assessed as such in the January 2018 SA and Garden Village Topic Paper. We have simply demonstrated that a train station could be viably delivered linked to the site but it is not in any event necessary to make the site suitable.

The Council has systematically failed to correctly assess the TwinWoods site. The only material difference on the information provided between January and September 2018 by the promoter is further mitigation for highways and an indication that the site could accommodate a new railway station but strictly on the basis that such a facility is not necessary to its developability. The scheme’s suitability was not in question in January 2018 without either of these components and this remains the position. The Council’s Executive Report was in error when it concluded at page 6(7) - without any technical evidence - that a) these mitigation measures

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The promoters of TwinWoods have sufficient ownership/control of the relevant land at Milton Ernest necessary for the station, thereby enabling it to come forward if required by the rail network and the Council.
were necessary to reduce the traffic impact arising from Twinwoods Garden Village to an acceptable level; b) that is “no confidence at this stage that they could be implemented”.

In any event, the conclusion reached by the Council on TwinWoods in the September 2018 Garden Village Topic Paper is not compliant with policy and guidance as it assesses deliverability rather than developability and dismisses the site without the benefit of any technical evidence. Even if the site were deemed not deliverable, this would not render the site unsuitable for inclusion in the site as a developable site for delivery beyond the next five years.

2. Failure to assess reasonable alternatives

The Council’s SA conflicts with the PPG because it did not assess a reasonable alternative which achieved the objectives of the SA in the September 2018 iteration of the SA.

The High Court judgment ‘The Queen on the application of Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland Limited and The Welsh Ministers [2015] EWHC 776 (Admin)’ deals with propositions concerning “reasonable alternatives” for the purposes of article 5(1) of the SEA Directive stating the below at paragraph 88.v):

“Article 5(1) refers to “reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives... of the plan or programme...” (emphasis added).

“Reasonableness” in this context is informed by the objectives sought to be achieved. An option which does not achieve the objectives, even if it can properly be called an “alternative” to the preferred plan, is not a “reasonable alternative”. An option which will, or sensibly may, achieve the objectives is a “reasonable alternative”. The SEA Directive admits to the possibility of there being no such alternatives in a particular case: if only one option is assessed as meeting the objectives, there will be no “reasonable alternatives” to it.”

There are three dimensions to the failure of the SA to assess reasonable alternatives:

d The plan period

e The amount of growth

f The distribution of growth

A. Plan period

In the January 2018 SA it was considered that a plan period for twenty years to 2035 was a reasonable alternative and preferable because it extended for a minimum of fifteen years from the time of adoption, as is preferred and required “if possible” by the NPPF. In the September 2018 SA, this twenty-year plan period was rejected without good reason. Reducing the plan period because it was perceived that a Garden Village could not begin development within the plan period is not in accordance with policy. Para 47 of the NPPF is clear that plans should identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15. It is possible for the plan period to be extended to accommodate a Garden Village, but in its September 2018 the Council has failed even to acknowledge this as a reasonable alternative let alone to assess it.

B. Options for the amount of growth

The Council has assessed a number of scenarios for the amount of housing growth in Bedford as set out below:
• **940 to 1,680 dwellings** (2014 SA) - Option identified as a result of work by Edge Analytics demographic forecast 2014 initial estimates of growth to 2032; meets objective of planning for homes;

• **2,400 dwellings** (2014 SA) - Option identified as a result of work by Edge Analytics demographic forecast 2014 initial estimates of growth to 2032; meets objective of planning for homes;

• **3,140 to 3,860 dwellings** (2014 SA) - Option identified as a result of work by Edge Analytics demographic forecast 2014 initial estimates of growth to 2032; meets objective of planning for homes;

• **4,521 dwellings** (2015 SA) – Option identified as a result of a refined estimate of objectively assessed need by ORS 2015 for a plan period to 2032; meets objective of planning for homes;

• **8,103 dwellings** (2017 SA) – Option identified as a result of an updated estimate of objectively assessed need in SHMA 2016 for a plan period to 2035; meets objective of planning for homes;

• **7,820 dwellings** (Jan 2018 SA) – Option identified as a result of updating completion information based on the SHMA 2016 for a plan period to 2035; meets objective of planning for homes; and

• **3,636 dwellings** (Sept 2018 SA) - Option identified in revised SHMA 2018 for plan period to 2030; meets objective of planning for homes.

The highest growth options assessed correspond with the most recent ORS SHMA assessment at the time the SA was produced. However, this is not the correct figure to be using at the upper end of an assessment of reasonable alternatives for the amount of housing growth in Bedford.

As per our commentary in Section 3.0, there are a number of components of the OAHN calculation which do not adhere to national planning policy or guidance.

Most notably:

1. The SHMA has not tested the potential implications for housing need of higher rates of job growth to reflect the additional economic growth potential arising from the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Growth arc. Even if this were not to be included in the estimate of OAN, it would be a “policy-on” factor for consideration in setting the housing requirement. The Inspector to the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan identified the failure to recognise the implications of the Growth arc as a potential point of unsoundness in his recent interim findings.

2. The various iterations of the ORS SHMA for Bedford do not undertake the required exercise in the PPG (ID 2a-029) to increase housing supply to address affordable housing need, i.e. comparing need to the likely rate of delivery to determine whether an overall uplift to housing need would be justified (as per the King’s Lynn High Court judgment). Furthermore, not only is an affordable housing uplift not applied to the OAN, the need for affordable housing is not calculated in a manner which is compliant with the PPG (see section 3.0).

Specifically in respect of affordable housing need, the ORS SHMA is based on analysis of housing benefit claimants. It does not undertake analysis comparing local incomes to housing costs for newly forming households (as required by the PPG in ID 2a-015) and

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14 Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, ELM Park Holdings Ltd [2015] EWHC 2464 (Admin)
therefore does not take into account those who are in housing need who do not claim benefits including those renting in the private rented sector who have no guarantee of stability and/or security of tenure, and these households may still be in need of affordable housing, or fall into need in the future.

5.46 On this basis, to adhere to the requirements of the guidance in assessing reasonable alternatives, even if the Council’s SHMA were correct, a figure higher than concluded OAN should have been assessed as an amount of growth option to test the ability of the Council to meet the economic growth potential of the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Growth arc and to meet the needs of those who are in need of (or would benefit from) affordable housing (in light of para 9 of the Framework) but are not in receipt of housing benefit.

C. Options for the distribution of growth

5.47 It is clear from the January 2018 iteration of the SA that the delivery of a new settlement in combination with other developments in Stewartby brickworks, the urban area, Group 1 and Group 2 villages is a clear reasonable alternative because it was the preferred option in the January 2018 SA iteration. The Council assessed a ‘new settlement’ in the January 2018 SA (agnostic of its location), not the Colworth scheme specifically.

5.48 Therefore, even if the Colworth scheme turned out to be unsuitable for development, the approach of the SA had always been to assess a new settlement as a concept only, not a specific location. It is in the Garden Village Topic Paper that the new settlement preferred location is ultimately identified (or rejected).

5.49 A significant amount of work has gone into assessing and identifying Garden Villages in Bedford. Absent the ability to identify Colworth, introducing a new Garden Village at this stage would not require significant amounts of work on the Local Plan, as it means simply reverting to the position the Local Plan was in before September 2018. TwinWoods is plainly developable. Its inclusion in the Local Plan requires only a reasonable prospect that it is available and could viably be developed at the point envisaged: TwinWoods has this.

5.50 On the basis of the above (as the Council has failed to correctly assess TwinWoods by assessing its deliverability rather than developability, failed to demonstrate that it is not suitable, and placed the evidential burden too high in respect of the delivery of infrastructure for a developable site [as per the PPG]), the Council cannot legitimately claim that a Garden Village was not a reasonable option that should have been tested.
What is needed to make the Plan sound?

Policies

6.1 Modifications are required to the Plan to address a number of fundamental errors that have been made by the Council, as follows:

1. The need to extend the Local Plan period to 2035 because it is ‘possible’ to do so;
2. To increase the housing requirement both to reflect the extended plan period, but also to a higher rate to reflect full OAN, as amended to reflect concerns over the current SHMA;
3. To amend the housing allocations and trajectory to reflect concerns that the Plan over-estimates the housing yield from as yet unprepared Neighbourhood Plans and over-estimates of yield and build rates on key sites such as Ford End Road; and
4. To respond to the failure to justify the proposed strategy as the most appropriate option when considered against reasonable alternatives.

6.2 In addition, the Council must revisit its Sustainability Appraisal to address fundamental errors in its assessment and ensure compliance with the relevant Regulations.

Policies for a Garden Village

6.3 In addition to various changes to address specific policies (e.g. on the housing requirement and land supply) the Plan can be made sound by allocating TwinWoods as a Garden Village. It is common ground between Bedfordia and Marcol and the Council that a Garden Village is the preferred option for any Local Plan that looks beyond 2030. Our separate Transportation Assessment report—prepared by Vectos—demonstrates that the Council’s concerns over the transport aspects of the TwinWoods site are misconceived. The Development Statement and Transportation Assessment demonstrate that the site is suitable, and developable.

6.4 There is no fixed template for how large-scale housing proposals are allocated in Local Plans, and the approach to Main Modifications will depend on how the Council may wish to take forward proposals. Our preferred option would be Main Modifications that

- reintroduce a policy regarding Garden Village Principles (similar to deleted Policy 26)
- reintroduce a Garden Village policy similar to deleted Policy 27 but amended to reflect the chosen location of TwinWoods.

6.5 However, an alternative—which might be appropriate if the Council wanted to spend more time formulating more detailed proposals for its preferred Garden Village, including appropriate options for infrastructure and transport—would be to include a Main Modification policy that identified TwinWoods as a broad location for a Garden Village but defers more detailed matters for an Area Action Plan to be prepared pursuant to the Local Plan. This policy approach is being pursued through the Tandridge Local Plan (which proposes a Garden Village at South Godstone) and was adopted in Fareham (where the original Core Strategy identified a Strategic Development Area for a New Settlement with some high-level principles, followed by a Part 3 Area Action Plan for the Wellborne Garden Village).

6.6 If (contrary to our view) the Council does not believe it is possible to allocate the TwinWoods site for whatever reason, an extended plan period to 2035 and the identification of TwinWoods as a broad location in parallel with an Area Action Plan offers a sound alternative to an early review, which would be a mistake (and not effective) for reasons set out in Section 2.0 of these representations. All the work has been done to date by the Council on the delivery of a Garden
Village site and, an early review is not needed - there is significant evidence available on which there has already been significant public consultation.

**Justification**

6.7 The accompanying Development Statement and Transportation Assessment collate the available evidence and demonstrate that allocating TwinWoods as a developable Garden Village proposal would be justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Main modifications to include TwinWoods as a Garden Village is supported by substantial evidence and public consultation on the option has already taken place. There would be no onerous delay to the Local Plan as a result.

6.8 There is precedent for the identification of a large-scale allocation through Main Modifications to a Local Plan in order to address potential problems of unsoundness identified during the course of a Local Plan Examination: the Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan. In this plan, the Long Marston Airfield (LMA) site for a 3,500 home new settlement was not initially included within the submitted plan by the local planning authority. Through the examination it was established that the authority required more homes, and that there was a clear error within the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process which meant that the Council needed to look at the LMA site again. This led to the authority seeking to allocate the full new settlement through the Main Modifications process, in addition to the new settlement it had already identified in the Local Plan: Gaydon Lighthorne Heath). LMA was subsequently identified by Government as one of its Garden Villages and has benefitted from access to infrastructure funding for early phase remediation.
Appendix 1: Technical Note on Objectively Assessed Need
Technical Appendix – Bedford’s Objectively Assessed Housing need

Our ref 16677/01/MS/BHy
Date October 2018

Subject Review of Bedford SHMA and Addendum

This technical note forms an Appendix to representations made by Lichfields on behalf of Bedfordia and iSec to the Bedford Regulation 19 Local Plan 2030 Consultation. It sets out in further detail a review of the Council’s evidence base regarding objectively assessed housing needs (OAN), namely the 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (“the SHMA”) and associated 2018 SHMA Addendum (“the Addendum”).

1.0 Policy and Guidance

1.1 As Bedford Borough Council (“the Council”) plans to submit the Bedford Local Plan 2030 before 24th January 2019 it will be examined against the 2012 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF outlines that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area (paragraph 14) and that in order to ‘boost significantly’ the supply of housing that they should:

“use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this framework...” (Paragraph 47).

1.2 The NPPF outlines the evidence required to objectively define housing needs within an area, setting out that Local Planning Authorities should (paragraph 159);

“Prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs...identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which:

- Meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;
- Addresses the needs for all types of housing, including affordable housing...; and
- Caters for the housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand.”

1.3 Furthermore, the core planning principles set out in the NPPF indicate that a planned level of housing to meet OAN must respond positively to wider opportunities for growth and should take account of market signals, including housing affordability (paragraph 17).

Planning Practice Guidance

1.1 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG, 2014) contains a section providing guidance on housing and economic development needs assessments. The PPG indicates that there is no one methodological approach or use of a particular dataset(s) that will provide a definitive assessment of development need (paragraph 005), but goes on to outline an overarching
methodology for preparing need assessments in a transparent manner. The PPG identifies that an OAN should fulfil the following criteria:

- Be proportionate and not consider purely hypothetical scenarios, only future scenarios that could reasonably be expected to occur (paragraph 003);
- Be based on facts and unbiased evidence. Constraints should not be applied to the overall assessment of need (paragraph 004);
- Utilise household projections published by the Department for Communities and Local Government as the starting point estimate of overall housing need (paragraph 015);
- Consider sensitivity testing, specific to local circumstances, based on alternative assumptions in relation to the underlying demographic projections and household formation rates (paragraph 017); and
- Take account of employment trends (paragraph 018), appropriate market signals including market indicators of the balance between the demand for and supply of dwellings (paragraph 019) and affordable housing needs (paragraph 029).

1.4 It is against these criteria which the Bedford SHMA and Addendum have been reviewed, under the following four areas:

1. Demographic-led needs;
2. Market signals;
3. Employment-led needs; and
4. Affordable Housing Needs.

1.5 The OAN for Bedford concluded in the SHMA and Addendum are shown in Table 1. The figures are presented over a 20 year period in the SHMA (which also contains the detailed background analysis) and a 15 year period in the Addendum. The two approaches are ultimately based on the same figures/projections, however the shorter period used in the Addendum yields a slightly higher annual need because projected household growth tails off slightly from 2030 onwards.

1.6 The Addendum (upon which the Local Plan 2030 is based) purports that full OAN for Bedford amounts to 970 dwellings per annum (dpa) over the plan period (2015-3). The fact that this is lower than what the PPG defines as the ‘starting point’ at that time (i.e. the 2014-based projections) already brings into question whether it can represent full OAN, taking account of the necessary factors including market signals, employment and affordable housing needs.
Table 1 Concluded OAN for Bedford – SHMA and Addendum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dwellings per annum 2015-35 (SHMA)</th>
<th>Dwellings per annum 2015-30 (Addendum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting point (2014-based DCLG House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hold Projections)</td>
<td>1,013</td>
<td>1,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment for long-term migration trend</td>
<td>-123</td>
<td>-122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment for concealed/homeless</td>
<td>+17</td>
<td>+23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment for Extra Care Housing</td>
<td>+15</td>
<td>+17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic-led need</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further adjustments for...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing jobs and workers</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market signals</td>
<td>+27 (5%, less 17 already in</td>
<td>+22 (5%, less 23 already in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concealed/homeless)</td>
<td>concealed/homeless)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined impact of adjustments</td>
<td>+27</td>
<td>+22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full OAHN</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SHMA/Addendum. May not sum due to rounding.

2.0 Demographic-led needs

2.1 The PPG sets out that in assessing demographic-led housing need, DCLG (now MHCLG) household projections form the overall starting point for the estimate of housing need, but that these may require adjustments to reflect future changes and local demographic factors which are not captured within the projections (ID 2a-015). It also sets out that regard account should also be taken of the most recent demographic evidence, for example the ONS Population Estimates (2a-017).

2.2 With regard to the household projections, the PPG states:

“The household projections are trend based, i.e. they provide the household levels and structures that would result if the assumptions based on previous demographic trends in the population and rates of household formation were to be realised in practise...[the projections] may require adjustment to reflect factors affecting local demographic and household formation which are not captured in past trends...rates may have been supressed historically by under-supply and worsening affordability of housing...”

2.3 At the time the SHMA was prepared, the most recent projections were the 2014-based household projections which suggested a starting point for Bedford of 983 households per annum 2015-35, or 1,013 dpa once a vacancy/second home rate is applied (see SHMA Figure 47). Over the shorter (2015-30) period these projections projected growth of 998 households per annum, or 1,029 dpa (see Addendum Figure 58).

Use of longer term migration trends

2.4 The SHMA contends that a longer-term migration trend is more appropriate for Bedford (this is also carried forward in the Addendum, although the background information is contained in the SHMA). Using a 10 year trend (2005-15) rather than the official 2014-based projections results in a reduction in projected household growth from the starting point of 983 households per annum to 769 households per annum (see SHMA Figure 47). The SHMA cites a number of...
documents (paras 3.12 onwards) for justifying the use of a ten year trend, however these provide little justification for its approach for the reasons we set out below:

- The PAS Guidance (cited in para 3.12 of the SHMA) notes that five year trends can ‘lock in the recession’ – this likely refers to the 2012-based projections which drew upon trends from 2007/08 to 2011/12, rather than the most recent 2014-based projections draw trends from a five year period 2009/10 to 2013/14. In any event, this commentary is not specific to Bedford and the SHMA has not given consideration to whether these conclusions apply to Bedford;

- The second PAS OAN Technical Advice Note (July 2015) (cited in para 3.13 of the SHMA) notes that although 10/15 year periods might be favourable, shorter term trends may be preferable if untypical events affecting growth in more historic periods. Again, the SHMA does not provide any Bedford-specific analysis to show that the longer term period is appropriate in this case;

- The research cited by the SHMA in para 3.14 of the SHMA specifically references the potentially shortcomings of using the five year base period which informs the 2012-based SNPP (i.e. 2007/08 to 2011/12). It makes no reference to the more recent 2014-based SNPP and therefore does not provide justification from departing from the most recent set of projections, as implied in the SHMA;

- Similarly, the Cornwall Local Plan Inspector (cited in para 3.15 of the SHMA) specifically references the effect of migration within the recessionary period 2008-12 (which fed into the 2012-based SNPP, not the 2014-based SNPP, where the base period has now moved on). This conclusions was reached based on the circumstances in Cornwall – evidently the Inspector was not tasked with reaching a conclusion about appropriate base periods to be used in SHMAs across the country, and his conclusions cannot be interpreted as a direct endorsement of the use of 10 year trends outside Cornwall since such evidence was not before him.

2.5 The SHMA provides no analysis (for example, of past migration trends or past completions) to justify why a ten-year trend is more appropriate for assessing needs in Bedford, and equally nor does it provide any evidence as to why the latest official projections are inappropriate. It appears the long-term approach has been adopted simply on the generic assumption that longer term trends are more appropriate and from examples elsewhere, even though those circumstances may be different to those in Bedford. Overall the SHMA’s approach is contrary to the PPG which is clear that the official projections should be the starting point, noting that they are statistically robust and based on nationally consistent assumptions (ID 2a-017). Where plan-makers are seeking to depart from these official projections, the PPG is clear that:

“Local planning authorities may consider departing from the methodology, but they should explain why their particular local circumstances have led them to adopt a different approach where this is the case.” (ID 2a-005)

“...plan makers may consider sensitivity testing, specific to their local circumstances, .... Any local changes would need to be clearly explained and justified on the basis of established sources of robust evidence...” (ID 2a-017) (emphasis added)

1 Five year trend period relates to all components of change except international migration, which uses six year trends/national assumptions.
Demonstrating that local circumstances specifically justify the use of a trend from 2005-15 over the official projections is an exercise not undertaken in the SHMA.

In fact, looking at housing completions in the base period used in the SHMA shows that the use of 10-year trend scenario could be under-estimating future growth because it includes several years in which housebuilding was at historic lows (and well below target). Figure 1 below shows average annual net completions over the period since 2001/02, and also indicates the relevant base period for the three most recent SNPPs (albeit the 2016-based projections were not available when the SHMA was published). It also shows the RS target in place during this period.

It is evident that completions in Bedford fell in the lead up to the recession, with the period 2005/06 to 2009/10 seeing an average of 485 completions each year. Prior to this, completions hit up to 800 per annum (in 2003/04) and have since recovered to similar or higher levels.

The base period used in the SHMA incorporates four years (out of ten) during which net completions were at their lowest, below 470 per annum; this is well below the relevant RS target and projected household growth for this period (according to the 2008-based projections). Average completions over this ten year period were 646 dwellings per annum. Whilst the 2012-based base period incorporates some of these years of particularly low delivery (and therefore may be susceptible to the issues highlighted in the SHMA at paras 3.12 onwards), the 2014-based SNPP is based on a period during which completions began to recover. The 2016-based projections base period is also shown – whilst completions were increasing, there were years of both relatively high a low growth.

![Figure 1 Completions in Bedford over varying base periods](chart.png)
In light of these trends, it is perhaps unsurprising that the SHMA’s longer term scenarios result in such a significant reduction in projected household growth compared to the 2014-based projections. The SHMA’s approach risks ‘locking in’ the impact of recent low levels of housebuilding, such that future growth in the Borough is similarly suppressed because it draws on these trends. The use of the official projections (which is advocated in the PPG), either the 2014-based projections (which were available when the SHMA was published) or the most recent projections (which became available in September 2018) represent a more appropriate basis than the SHMA’s 2005-15 trend. However, for the reasons set out below, the 2016-based household projections should be treated with some caution when used as the starting point for an objective assessment of need.

2016-based Household Projections

In September 2018 ONS published the 2016-based household projections, having taken over responsibility from DCLG in 2017. Even before these projections were published, it was known that nationally projected household growth would be significantly lower than previous projections published by DCLG because the underlying population projections were significantly lower. This is because ONS has changed some of its underlying assumptions about population growth (e.g. assuming higher mortality rates, lower birth rates and lower international migration).

In addition, ONS has made changes to the methodology by which it projects household formation rates, which have also reduced projections of household growth compared to previous projections. It bases its approach on trends in household formation between 2001-11 (a period characterised by housing shortage and affordability problems) whereas previously DCLG (and its predecessor departments) used trends going back to 1971. At a national level, these 2016-based projections reduce projected household growth over a 25-year period from 210,000 per annum (in the 2014-based figures) to 159,000 per annum. As expected these have resulted in lower growth across most local authorities.

For Bedford, over the 2015-30 period, these new projections suggest a need for 931 dwellings per annum, around 100 dpa less than the previous 2014-based projections. As shown in Figure A of the Addendum, most of this is driven by a reduction in growth from natural change, with the new projections actually expecting slightly more migration to Bedford than the 2014-based projections (likely to be due to increases in completions in recent years). However, it is evident that the 2016-based projections still indicate a higher level of need compared to the scenario (2005-15 trends) which underpins the OAN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Change (Dwellings) 2015-30</th>
<th>Annual Change (Dwellings)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DCLG 2014-based projections</td>
<td>15,436</td>
<td>1,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHMA 2001-11 trend</td>
<td>12,735</td>
<td>849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHMA 2005-15 trend</td>
<td>13,613</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS 2016-based projections</td>
<td>13,972</td>
<td>931</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lichfields based on ONS/SHMA/Addendum Figure 58. 2016-based household projections translated into dwellings using SHMA vacancy rate.

The Addendum addresses the 2016-based population projections (which were available when it was produced in August 2018) but did not address the household projections as these were not
available. The Addendum estimates what the 2016-based household projections would show by applying the 2014-based household formation rates to the 2016-based population projections, and concludes that the new population/household projections are unlikely to represent a meaningful change in the OAN for Bedford.

2.15 An increase in 23 dpa in the new projections compared to the SHMA’s 2005-15 trend figure might alone appear to not be significant, however this encompasses around half of the 5% market signals uplift which is applied. When taken cumulatively with all of the other elements in the SHMA (and Addendum) which underestimate need (e.g. market signals uplift), the overall level of underestimation of the OAN in the SHMA is significant.

Suppressed household formation

2.16 Because household projections (both those published by DCLG and ONS) are based on a continuation of past trends in household formation, they inevitably reflect a scenario which shows what would happen if past trends continued; this is inevitably different to answering the questions of ‘how many homes should we build?’ or ‘how many homes would truly meet need and demand?’.

2.17 Projections produced by DCLG since the 2011 Census (2012-based and 2014-based) built in a level of suppression in household growth particularly for young people. This was because although DCLG used trends in formation back to 1971, they included a recency bias. As shown in Figure 2, whilst the 2008-based projections (which preceded the 2011 Census) expected the decline in formation to slow, the 2012-based and 2014-based projection expected this decline to continue, with rates falling to around 40% by the end of the plan period.

Figure 2 Household Formation Rates - 25-34 year olds, Bedford

Source: DCLG Projections
2.18 The SHMA acknowledges that the 2012-based household projections are lower than the 2008-based projections (para 5.93). It cites analysis in a previous version of the Bedford SHMA which showed that returning the 2012-based formation rates for those under age 40 to the 2008-based rates would yield a need for an additional 497 dwellings over the plan period (it makes no reference to the 2014-based household formation rates, presumably as they are similar to the 2012-based projections). The SHMA notes that to return rates to 2001 levels would generate an uplift of 779 dwellings, equivalent to 40 dpa – this is not accounted for in the final OAN. Whilst a relatively small impact, this should be seen in the context that the SHMA’s uplift for market signals (which it states incorporates an adjustment for household formation rates) is also of relatively small scale. A large number of seemingly small adjustments being omitted from the OAN will result in (overall) a significant under-estimate of the true scale of need.

2.19 The SHMA/Addendum appear to grapple with this issue by making an adjustment in the OAN for suppressed household formation rates (see Figure 2 of the Addendum, which adds 344 dwellings to the overall OAN). However, this adjustment is only dealing with existing suppression, as indicated by the existence of concealed/homeless families in Bedford. It is doing nothing to address suppressed household formation going forward, which is likely to be built in the official household projections. In any case, the SHMA’s adjustment is netted off against the adjustment for market signals (5% of 13,613 is taken, giving 681, but the 344 adjustment for concealed families is taken off this). In reality there is no adjustment for suppression in headship rates now or going forward (just the 5% applied for market signals). The SHMA’s position is somewhat confusing in this respect – it appears to accept that suppression does exist, but only goes as far as addressing suppression as it exists now, and not in the future.

2.20 The issue of building in suppression has not disappeared in the most recent projections, published by ONS. These 2016-based projections draw upon trends from 2001-11 only, a period in which housebuilding fell, affordability worsened and formation amongst young people deteriorated. In addition, ONS revised the historic data back to 2001, which (for Bedford, as shown Figure 3) suggests the situation at present is actually far worse than previous thought (in terms of low rates of formation amongst younger adults).

2.21 It is accepted by Government itself that the methodology employed by ONS in these new projections is likely to be building in suppression; an interview with Minister of State for Planning in Planning Magazine on 4th October quotes him as saying:

“"We are obviously digesting what the ONS has produced. Everyone was a bit taken by surprise by the numbers and want to understand what the implications are. There have been some really anomalous results from it - some very strong growth areas which have come out with a zero housing need. That’s just crazy." Malthouse says he has "concerns" about the new projections’ implications for housing need figures. He says: "A problem with these projections is they don’t recognise pent-up demand. As a country, we haven’t been building enough housing for decades." The ONS has based its projections on past trends from a "period of particularly low household growth", he says, which might put "an artificial constraint" on future expansion. He adds: "Household growth can only happen if accommodation is available, and during that period we are not convinced it was." “(emphasis added)

2.22 Figure 3 shows previous projections of household formation rates for 25-34 year olds along with ONS’s revised historic rates (back to 2001) and 2016-based projections. Evidently, the historic revisions suggest household formation in Bedford was lower than previously thought between 2001 and 2011. The projections now expect formation rates to fall to be below 40% by 2021 – previously this level was not expected until around 2035. The new projections do expect rates to
remain fairly stable post-2021, although this is at a historic low and does not include any expectation of an improvement in household formation rates. In addition, the fact that rates are (currently) lower than previous thought suggests there could be much more pent-up demand within the existing population than previously thought. This will need to be addressed through the assessment of housing need.

Figure 3 Household Formation Rates, including ONS Revised Rates (back to 2001) and 2016-based projections

On these bases, it would be necessary (in order to undertake an assessment which reflects the guidance in the PPG) either to:

1. Adjust the 2016-based household projections to, for example, allow for some improvement in household formation rates, particularly amongst young people. This would reflect the PPG requirement for plan-makers to make such adjustment, e.g. where “...formation rates may have been suppressed historically by under-supply and worsening affordability of housing. The assessment will therefore need to reflect the consequences of past under delivery of housing.” (ID 2a-015). As shown above, that suppression in Bedford is much worse than previously thought; and/or

2. Make a greater uplift for market signals (compared to that which one might apply to the 2014-based household projections, were they the starting point). For the reasons set out below we already consider the 5% uplift applied in the SHMA is far too low, and the changes to the projections provide yet another reason why a greater uplift is needed (albeit based on a new starting point, of 931 dpa).
Summary

2.24 The SHMA’s justification for adopting longer term migration trend cites a number of studies/publications/Inspector’s reports; however these refer to potential issues with using trends from a recessionary period i.e. 2008-12 (i.e. not the 2014-based projections) and/or are not Bedford-specific. This is directly contrary to the PPG which requires any changes to be undertaken based on local circumstances based on robust evidence (ID 2a-005/ID 2a-017) – no such analysis is given in the SHMA. Levels of housebuilding during the SHMA’s base period mean projections based on the 2005-15 period are likely to be an under-estimate of what is needed because it includes several years when housebuilding levels were at historic lows. Based on the latest household projections, the demographic-led need would be at least 913 dpa 2015-30 – slightly more than the SHMA’s concluded demographic-led need.

2.25 The SHMA accepts that suppression exists by making an adjustment for concealed households, however this does nothing to address suppression going forward. An adjustment for headship rates in the future is mentioned in the SHMA but does not feed into the final OAN. The SHMA encompasses its uplift for concealed families into its market signals uplift, which is just 5%. We set out below what an appropriate uplift is likely to be, to a revised starting point of 913 dpa.

3.0 Market Signals

3.1 The PPG sets out a clear two-staged process to addressing market signals within the calculation of OAN:

1. Firstly, to determine whether a market signals uplift is necessary. This is set out in PPG ID2a-019 within the first sub-paragraph as follows:

   “Appropriate comparisons of indicators should be made... A worsening trend in any of these indicators will require upward adjustment to planned housing numbers compared to ones based solely on household projections.”

2. Secondly, when a market signals uplift is required, to identify what scale that should be set at with guidance given that it should be set at a level that could be expected to improve affordability. This is set out in PPG ID2a-019 within the second and third sub-paragraphs as follows:

   “In areas where an upward adjustment is required, plan makers should set this adjustment at a level that is reasonable... they should increase planned supply by an amount that, on reasonable assumptions and consistent with principles of sustainable development, could be expected to improve affordability, and monitor the response of the market over the plan period.” (our emphasis).

3.2 In the case of Bedford we do not dispute stage 1 of the process with the Council’s evidence – the SHMA states (para 5.86) that “the level of Objectively Assessed Need for Bedford should be higher than suggested by household projections”. It is the second stage that is in dispute, i.e. whether the SHMAs response to this can be viewed to be one that “on reasonable assumptions... could be expected to improve affordability”. The SHMA’s adjustment for market signals is 5% (it should be noted that this includes the adjustment made for concealed families, and is not ‘in addition’ to it). We set out below why this scale of adjustment is insufficient for Bedford.

Context

3.3 Figure 4 shows the ratio of affordability in Bedford (resident- and workplace-based) since 1997. Bedford broadly followed national trends until recently with a ratio of around 7 until 2012.
then the ratios in Bedford have departed significantly from the national trend. As of 2017, house prices in Bedford are 10.6 times workplace-based earnings and 10.2 times resident-based earnings. This compares to a ratio of 7.3 nationally, a figure which has been fairly steady since the recession.

Figure 4 Lower Quartile Affordability in Bedford 1997-2017

Source: Lichfields based on ONS

**What scale of uplift should be applied?**

**Comparisons with other areas**

3.4 The need to apply an uplift is accepted in the SHMA and the principle of applying a market signals uplift using a given percentage has been established at numerous examinations in recent years. Ultimately the scale of uplift applied is a judgment as to what scale could, on reasonable assumptions, be expected to improve affordability (as per PPG ID 2a-202).

3.5 In justifying its uplift for Bedford, the SHMA cites a Technical Advice Note published by PAS which states that:

> “Some Local Plan Inspectors have used a rule of thumb, suggesting that in places where the evidence suggests moderate under-provision, or the signals are mixed the projected housing need might be increased by 10%”. (SHMA para 5.88)

3.6 Although the SHMA in fact goes on to apply a lower uplift (of 5%) to Bedford, we note that this Guidance Note was published when only one Inspector had ‘pinned’ a market signals uplift to a given percentage – this was Eastleigh (Inspector’s Report published in 2015). In any case the PAS Guidance is not formal guidance or part of the PPG and does not form an appropriate justification for applying a given uplift (in this case, 10%) to a given area.
3.7 The SHMA goes on to compare the rate of housing growth (based on the 2005-15 migration scenario) to rates for surrounding areas, and the market signals uplift applied in those areas (see SHMA Figure 95). It notes that the rate of growth for Bedford already (i.e. based on the demographic-led needs) is already similar to surrounding areas, some of which include uplifts for market signals (other include uplifts for employment). It notes that pressures from market signals as not as acute as surrounding areas and that Bedford does not face similar pressure from jobs as other areas such as Greater London and Cambridge (SHMA para 5.91). It uses this to justify why an uplift of 10% is not justified and that a 5% uplift would be appropriate in Bedford.

3.8 However, we believe these examples are no longer up-to-date given the change of circumstances (it is curious that such updates were not included in the Addendum despite it being published very recently). For example:

1. The SHMA notes Milton Keynes as having no uplift for market signals (as shown in Figure 95). Firstly, the Milton Keynes SHMA has yet to be tested at examination and therefore its conclusions simply represent the views of the authors (the same authors as the Bedford SHMA). Secondly, an updated SHMA for Milton Keynes published in February 2017 by the same authors now puts forward a 10% uplift. Similar to Bedford, affordability has broadly followed national trends until recently, and the current (2017) lower quartile workplace-based affordability ratio in Milton Keynes is actually slightly better than Bedford, at 9.4. On this basis, an uplift in excess of 10% could be appropriate for Bedford;

2. It is unclear exactly what evidence the SHMA is referring to regarding ‘Greater London’. It cites (in Figure 95) the uplift for market signals for Greater London being 20%, but the housing need figure for London in the adopted London Plan is not based on an OAN which explicitly incorporates a market signals uplift (nor is the emerging London Plan);

3. The evidence for Huntingdonshire was published prior to the publication of the PPG which set out the relevant tests for determining and applying market signals uplifts; and

4. Some areas (e.g. Central Bedfordshire) are still in the process of preparing/examining their Local Plans; meaning the uplifts/figures shown in Figure 95 of the SHMA have not all been signed off by Inspectors.

3.9 In addition to the examples cited in the SHMA, there have been several further pieces of evidence which can provide an indication of an appropriate uplift for Bedford. Curiously, these are omitted from the Addendum. For example;

1. Mid Sussex; the Inspector’s interim findings were published in February 2017, citing data from 2015. In this instance, the Inspector concluded that a 20% uplift was appropriate (in part this was based on affordability modelling put to the examination by Lichfields). At 2015, the affordability ratio in Mid Sussex was 12.1 – slightly worse than Bedford’s current ratio, however this still indicates that up to a 20% uplift might be appropriate;

2. Canterbury – a 20% uplift was proposed in the Local Plan (where Lichfields prepared evidence on behalf of the Council), which was subsequently accepted by the Inspector. At the time, the affordability ratio in Canterbury was similar to the level in Bedford now (i.e. around 10), suggesting that on a comparative basis around a 20% uplift should be applied;
3 Aylesbury Vale – the Inspector’s interim findings into the Vale of Aylesbury Plan were published on 1st October 2018 and included findings regarding housing need, including the level of market signals uplift to be applied. In Aylesbury Vale, the SHMA was prepared by the same authors as the Bedford SHMA and proposed an uplift of 10%. The Inspector’s report notes Aylesbury Vale’s affordability ratio 10.4 (similar to Bedford) and concluded that:

“Even if the 20% uplift for the rest of the HMA is correct, the uplift for VALP should be 15% to be in proportion with that recommended for Eastleigh and that for the whole HMA should be about 17-18%. Moreover, more recent evidence shows the differences between Aylesbury Vale and the rest of the Housing Market Area decreasing which suggests that the uplift for VALP should more likely be 20% than 15%.” (IR para 19)

When taking into account all other factors (including employment and demographics) the Inspector recommended that the overall uplift for Aylesbury Vale be “… at least 20% and probably 25%...” (IR 26).

In short, in Aylesbury Vale – where affordability pressures are similar to in Bedford – where a 10% uplift was proposed, an Inspector has concluded that the uplift should 15-20%. Justifying a 5% uplift for Bedford in this context is difficult. Based on market signals alone, a comparison with Aylesbury Vale would suggest an uplift of around 15-20% is appropriate for Bedford.

3.10 The three examples cited above provide useful benchmarks for Bedford, and indicate that between a 15% and 20% is likely to be appropriate. However, it is important to note that the uplifts quoted above have been decided at a time when the household projections were published by DCLG. Given ONS’s methodological changes in the 2016-based projections, were these to be used as the starting point, a proportionately greater uplift is likely to be needed than those quoted above to achieve the same outcomes. By way of example, a 15% uplift applied to the 2014-based starting point (of 1,029 dpa) would give a figure of c.1,180 dpa, whilst a 20% uplift applied to the 2016-based starting point (of 931 dpa) would give c.1,120 dpa.

3.11 On the basis of the comparators, and taking into account the new projections as a starting point, we consider that an uplift towards the upper end of the 15-20% range, i.e. of around 20% is appropriate for Bedford if the latest projections are used as the starting point. This is likely to be a scale which (on reasonable assumptions, based on comparators) could be expected to improve affordability. A figure of 1,120 dpa would represent a growth rate of

**Demand from job growth**

3.12 Amongst the factors cited above, the SHMA also cites the lack of housing demand from job growth in justifying why an uplift of more than 5% should not be made (para 5.92). This does not contradict the PPG, which is clear that plan-makers should only consider “scenarios that could reasonably be expected to occur” (ID 2a-003). However, the SHMA’s assertion that there will be a lack of demand from jobs growth is simply unsubstantiated. Bedford sits within the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge arc (“the arc”) which is an area where the Government is specifically seeking stimulating economic growth through a range of housing, infrastructure and employment initiatives.

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* Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-33 Examination: Interim Findings 29 August 2018 (published 1 October 2018)
  https://www.aylesburyvale.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_downloads/ED166%20Interim%20findings%2029%20August%202018%20_0.pdf
3.13 The economic success of the arc has been described as ‘of national importance’ in the National Infrastructure Commission’s (NIC) Report ‘Partnering for Prosperity’. Amongst other things, the report was clear that the arc needed to see a substantial boost in housebuilding and that recent rates of housebuilding needed to double in order to support economic growth. It found that current assessments of need (i.e. SHMAs) identified a need for just over 20,000 homes per year across the arc (and that these can be ‘conservative’), compared to its estimate of 23,000-30,000 homes per year to meet local needs in full and pressures from constrained nearby markets. In this context, it is simply unjustified to conclude that Bedford can only deliver such a small uplift for market signals because of a lack of demand from economic growth. Curiously there is no mention of the arc, nor any of the NIC/Government reports/publications, in the SHMA nor the Addendum, despite investment in the arc being a significant driver of housing demand for Bedford.

**The national rate of growth**

3.14 When sense-checking its concluded OAN of 970 dpa, the Addendum notes that for Bedford a figure of 970 dpa would represent growth of 1.3% each year, which it believes is higher than the rate required nationally to deliver 239,500 dwellings (which equates to 1% - see Addendum para 43). The source of the purported national figure of 239,500 is set out in the SHMA (para 5.15), which (in simple terms) applies a vacancy rate to household growth). However, it has been abundantly clear for some time that Government wants to see housebuilding increase substantially from its current level to 300,000 per annum by the mid-2020s. This level was recognised in a House of Lords Select Committee Report from July 2016 as the level needed to address demand and affordability and would equate to a national growth rate of 1.3% per annum. Therefore, the OAN for Bedford set out in the Addendum of 970 dpa would (at best) equate to the national average needed to achieve the Government’s target of 300,000 homes per year. It does not – as purported in the SHMA/Addendum – represent a level of growth significantly above the national average.

3.15 In any case, it will be necessary that different parts of the country delivery above or below the national average (of 1.3%), depending on factors such as market signals and pressure from job growth. Given Bedford’s affordability pressures (with a worse-than-average affordability ratio) and its location (within the wider South East and within the arc, which are likely to mean housing demand from job growth as well as nearby constrained markets such as London) it would be entirely reasonably, indeed necessary, for Bedford to see a higher-than-average rate of housing growth. A rate of 1,120 dpa would represent an annual growth rate of 1.54% per annum; slightly above the national average but certainly not beyond what could ‘reasonably be expected to occur’, as per PPG ID 2a-003). Indeed other parts of the arc have adopted plans with much higher rates of growth. For example in Cherwell the OAN/adopted requirement of 1,140 dpa equates to an annual growth rate of 1.8% and this rate is set to increase further once Cherwell reviews its plan to incorporate Oxford’s unmet need. For comparison, a similar rate (1.8%) for Bedford would equate to just over 1,300 dpa.

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5 This target was first set out in the Autumn Budget 2017, but has since been reiterated several times, for example in the statement accompanying the publication of the revised NPPF in July 2018.
7 Based on a national dwelling stock of 23.95m in 2017 (Source: MHCLG Live Table 125)
8 Based on a stock in 2017 of 72,950 (Source: MHCLG Live Table 125)
9 Based on a stock in 2017 of 63,600 (Source: MHCLG Live Table 125)
Summary

3.16 The 5% uplift applied for market signals in the Bedford SHMA and Addendum is insufficient in an area where house prices are in excess of 10 time resident and workplace based earnings. The SHMA and Addendum omit several up-to-date comparators from across the wider South East (Mid Sussex, Canterbury, Aylesbury Vale), with all three of these suggesting that a 15-20% uplift based on how their ratios compare with Bedford. Given these were all prepared at a time when DCLG published the household projections, and ONS’s latest projections build in an extra degree of suppression in the household formation rates, it would be prudent to apply the upper end of the uplift (i.e. 20%) to the starting point based on the 2016-based projections. This would give a figure of c.1,120 dpa. This scale of growth is one which could reasonably be expected to occur given national growth (1.3%), Bedford’s characteristics/location and growth rates elsewhere in the sub-region.

3.17 The SHMA’s conclusions that there is insufficient demand for job growth is simply unfounded – there is no acknowledgement within the SHMA nor the Addendum of the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge arc and the Government’s ambition to maximise its economic potential. This provides a further justification for applying a market signals uplift at the top end of the range, because there will be demand from job growth to support such an uplift. We review the arc and economic aspects of Bedford’s OAN in more detail below.

4.0 Employment-led needs

4.1 With regards to employment-led needs, the PPG states (ID 2a-018):

“Plan makers should make an assessment of the likely change in job numbers based on past trends and/or economic forecasts as appropriate and also having regard to the growth of the working age population in the housing market area...” (emphasis added)

4.2 The SHMA presents employment forecasts from the East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM, produced by Cambridge Econometrics), which suggests that the number of jobs in Bedford will increase from 81,600 in 2015 to 88,300 in 2035 (SHMA para 5.40). This equates to a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.4% per annum. However, the SHMA notes that this incorporates changes to commuting, and that without these changes job growth would be slightly higher, increasing to 93,000 by 2035, a CAGR of 0.7% (see SHMA para 5.41, which states that if commuting did not change there would be enough workers to support 11,400 jobs). The Addendum notes the more recent 2017 EEFM forecast (Addendum para 33), which forecasts growth of 9,300 jobs over the 2015-30 period. Over the new shorter plan period of 2015-30, the 2017 EEFM forecasts growth of 6,900 jobs. Based on there being 81,600 jobs in 2015, this would equate to a CAGR of 0.6%.

4.3 Neither the SHMA nor the Addendum make uplifts to the OAN to support economic growth on the basis that the level of growth forecast in the respective EEFM forecasts (as set out above) would be supported by household growth.

Past trends in job growth in Bedford

4.4 Past trends in job growth in Bedford are shown in Figure 2.8, which shows the rolling average CAGR over varying 8-18 year periods since 1997. It shows that job growth over longer periods (15-18 years) has been higher than the level of job growth concluded in the SHMA/Addendum at around 0.8%-1.0% per annum. Whilst shorter term averages have fluctuated more, they have
only fallen to levels below the EEFM forecast in the periods up to 2011-15, reflecting the slowdown in job growth seen during the recession.

Figure 5 Rolling average CAGR - Bedford

Source: Experian

4.5 If past growth is an indicator of future growth, future job growth would be higher than that set out in the SHMA/Addendum and therefore the OAN would not represent true need. To support higher job growth the Borough would need to see additional housing provided, or be at risk of the impacts highlighted in the PPG (i.e. unsustainable commuting and/or reduced resilience of local businesses). This additional job growth would also provide justification for increasing the scale of market signals uplift; the absence of a need for an employment-led uplift is currently cited in the SHMA as one of the reasons for making a relatively small market signals uplift. However, as demonstrated, the scale of job growth in the SHMA could be being underestimated, meaning this argument is not valid.

The Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge arc (“the arc”)

1.2 The justification for a higher job growth figure in Bedford (than currently assumed in the SHMA) is also supported by the importance placed by Government on the economic potential of the arc. The National Infrastructure Commission’s (NIC) Report ‘Partnering for Prosperity’ on the arc published in November 2017 noted that⁸:

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“The Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford arc must be a national priority. Its world-class research, innovation and technology can help the UK prosper in a changing global economy. But success cannot be taken for granted. Without urgent action, a chronic undersupply of homes could jeopardise growth, limit access to labour and put prosperity at risk.

The Commission’s central finding is that rates of house building will need to double if the arc is to achieve its economic potential.”

4.6 It also found that the arc needed between 23,000 and 30,000 homes per year, but that SHMA’s currently assessed need as being just over 20,000 per year. The NIC believes that the methodology used in these SHMA is ‘conservative’ and ‘can mask high levels of unmet need’ (NIC Report, p. 26). The level of housing needed (23,000-30,000) was also found to be significantly higher than recent completions levels, with just over 12,000 homes per year built on average between 2012 and 2015, rising slightly to just over 14,000 in 2016/17.

4.7 The NIC’s report The report by SQW/Cambridge Econometrics produced on behalf of Government in November 2016 assessed a number of economic scenarios for the arc, including:

- An ‘incremental enhancement’ scenario which is based on;
  “...a situation in which the study area receives enough housing and transport infrastructure to relieve or reduce several of the key employment growth constraints in the individual sub-areas, but not significant enough to represent a major shift in the labour productivity of different industries or the economic geography of the corridor.” (p 5.4); and

- A ‘transformational’ scenario which is based on;
  “…the concept of “the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor as a globally competitive knowledge cluster”, and what such a corridor might look like in reality, aiming to reduce the gravitational pull of London so there is more cross-movement and strength in the middle of the area...

... This could, in theory, revolutionise the knowledge based employment potential of this corridor and create the kind of globally competitive cluster that was envisaged in the Chancellor’s statement.” (p. 5.5)

4.8 The forecast employment growth for Bedford under the incremental enhancement scenario is 0.7% per annum in the short term (to 2025) and 0.8% in the long term (2025-50) (Table 5.8 of the report). The transformational scenario forecasts growth of 1.1% per annum in the short term and 1.2% per annum in the long term. These forecasts further support the adoption of a higher job growth figure more in line with past trends, so that a lack of housing in Bedford does not impede the economic growth potential of the Borough or wider sub-region.

4.9 The interim findings of the Inspector into the Aylesbury Vale Plan are also relevant in this regard, i.e that the impacts of the arc cannot simply be disregarded for plan-making purposes. The Inspector noted (paras 21-26) that whilst there were a number of uncertain factors surrounding the arc:

“The government’s vision for the corridor is to stimulate economic growth in the national interest. It notes estimates by the NIC that, with the right interventions, annual output of the corridor in 2050 could be approximately double the growth expected without intervention. Although 2050 is well beyond the end date of VALP the effects of the growth corridor can be expected to start to be experienced before then... it is justified for VALP to take it into account.” (emphasis added)
4.10 Similar to Aylesbury Vale, the effects of the arc can be expected to begin within Bedford’s Local Plan period, and therefore should be taken into account, including when deriving the OAN. The NIC’s report is clear that the need for housing is significantly higher than current build rates and even higher than OANs in current SHMAs. The accompanying economic report also indicates that rates of job growth in Bedford are more likely to be in line with recent trends, and higher than those used in the SHMA.

**Summary**

4.11 Despite the arc being a significant driver of economic growth in Bedford in the future, no regard is had to the arc in the SHMA nor Addendum. This is of significant concern because the provision of sufficient housing within reach of employment opportunities represents a central facet of any efficiently functioning economy, and a lack of housing could reduce the resilience of local businesses and/or lead to unsustainable commuting patterns. Both past trends in job growth in Bedford and the forecasts set out in the report produced on behalf of Government suggests likely future job is higher than that set out in the SHMA, meaning the OAN (of 970 dpa) is an underestimate of the true scale of need, taking into account employment growth.

4.12 Given the emphasis placed upon planning to do ‘everything it can’ (NPPF para 19) to support economic growth as set out in the NPPF, and the recognised importance of the arc, it is imperative that housing provision in Bedford does not act as a barrier to supporting this wider aspirational economic strategy. At present it is likely that the current OAN will undermine this economic strategy by failing to provide sufficient housing.

**5.0 Affordable Housing Needs**

5.1 The PPG sets out an approach to identifying affordable housing needs (ID 2a-022 to ID 2a-029), and states that total affordable housing need should be;

“...*considered in the context of its likely delivery as a proportion of mixed market and affordable housing developments...an increase in the total housing figures included in the plan should be considered where it could help deliver the required number of affordable homes.*”

5.2 Two High Court judgments go to the heart of addressing affordable housing within the identification of OAHN. ‘*Satnam*’ establishes that affordable housing needs are a component part of OAN, indicating that the “*proper exercise*” is to identify the full affordable housing needs and then ensure this is considered in the context of its likely delivery as a proportion of mixed market/affordable housing development. ‘*Kings Lynn*’ builds on ‘*Satnam*’ identifying that identified affordable housing needs (para 36) “*should have an important influence increasing the derived FOAN since they are significant factors in providing for housing needs within an area.*” It is clear that affordable housing needs are a substantive and highly material driver of any conclusion on full OAN.

5.3 The PPG sets out a structured methodology for the calculation of affordable housing needs with clear stages, not least because any deviation from this methodology can start to incorporate double-counting into the calculation. The SHMA has failed to follow the prescribed methodology of calculating the affordable housing needs of Bedford as set out in the PPG, utilising its own ‘housing mix model’ to determine the level of affordable housing need in Bedford. It provides little information about the sources of data which feed into the model,

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9 Satnam Millennium Limited and Warrington Borough Council [2015] EWHC 370
10 Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2015] EWHC 1958
utilising a ‘black-box’ approach where it is not possible to assess any inputs or assumptions to test if they are suitable and reasonable. Lichfields note a number of flaws in the SHMA’s approach to affordable housing needs, including:

1. The model is based on analysis of housing benefit claimants. It does not undertake analysis comparing local incomes to housing costs for newly forming households (as required by the PPG in ID 2a-015); It is not just those claiming housing benefits that are in housing need, for example those renting in the private rented sector have no guarantee of stability and/or security of tenure, and these households may still be in need of affordable housing, or fall into need in the future. PRS with the help of housing benefit may (arguably) be meeting their immediate requirements for shelter, but where a newly forming household has to use housing benefit to access market housing, they are in need because when the household forms it is unable to access market housing;

Further, there is no basis for assuming the rate of those claiming housing benefit in the PRS remains constant because this means that every time someone moves from PRS when claiming housing benefit, they are replaced by a newly forming household in the same position. This may or may not occur in reality (particularly if insufficient affordable housing is provided), but for the purpose of assessing need, a newly forming household who cannot afford market housing without housing benefit is in housing need;

2. The SHMA’s analysis of household growth is derived from its assessment of demographic-led needs, which as established above is flawed and likely to under estimate the true level of population and growth;

3. The SHMA/Addendum identify that more households each year will see an improvement in circumstances and effectively ‘climb out of need’ than the number of existing households assumed to fall into need. This results in a net reduction on overall need. Within the PPG methodology, there is an allowance for households falling into need each year, but there is no place for households ‘climbing out of need’; this introduces an element of double counting into the calculation as those pulling themselves out of affordable housing need should be counted as re-lets, as per the methodology set out in the PPG.

The SHMA concludes that the need for affordable housing amount to 4,349 households over the plan period, or 217 per year. When backlog is taken into account, affordable housing need over the initial five year period amounts to 265 households per year. However, as we have highlighted, the SHMA’s affordable housing needs assessment is inherently flawed because it is underpinned by flawed assessments of demographic change.

Notwithstanding, the SHMA does demonstrate that reducing housing benefit support would lead to a need for up to 8,500 affordable dwellings over the plan period (425 pa) (SHMA Figure 78), and as there is no basis for assuming the continued role of housing benefit/the PRS in meeting the affordable housing need, on the SHMA’s calculations this should form the [minimum] affordable housing figure for Bedford. An updated figure (based on the shorter 15 year plan period) is not presented in the Addendum, but taking the annual average from the SHMA (8,500 over 20 years) this would suggest a need for around 425 dpa. However, because of the other flaws in the SHMA’s approach, the true level of need is likely to be higher still.

Following its assessment of affordable housing need, the SHMA does not undertake the required exercise in the PPG (ID 2a-029), i.e. comparing need to the likely rate of delivery to determine...
whether an overall uplift to housing need would be justified (as per King’s Lynn). Affordable housing completions in the last 4 years (to 2017/18) have amounted to 16%, 18%, 18% and 18% of overall completions respectively. Clearly based on recent rates of affordable housing completions there is a basis for increasing the overall OAN in order to help increase affordable housing delivery. To meet, for example, a need of 425 affordable homes per annum at 20%, the overall OAN would need to be over 2,000 dpa. Whilst such a level might not be reasonable, some degree of uplift to the OAN should be considered in Bedford.

Summary

5.7

The SHMA’s assessment of affordable housing need is flawed in two ways. Firstly the way in which it has assessed need does not follow the PPG guidance, instead utilising the authors own ‘black-box’ model. The approach in the SHMA also under-estimates affordable housing need by looking only at benefit claimants (instead of undertaking any analysis of incomes required to rent/buy in the local area), and assumes that more households will ‘pull themselves out of need’ over the plan period than will fall into need – this effectively implies that simply through waiting (e.g. for single person households to become a couple, which could then afford), affordable housing needs diminish. This clearly does nothing to address the current and ongoing need for affordable housing.

5.8

Secondly, having undertaken its assessment of affordable housing needs, the SHMA fails to undertake the final exercise in the PPG (and as clarified in the Satnam as the ‘proper exercise’) of comparing affordable housing need to the likely rate of delivery, and considering an increase to the housing numbers. In the case of Bedford, a total of over 2,000 dwellings per annum might be needed. A further High Court Judgment, Kings Lynn, has emphasised the importance that affordable housing needs should have on the overall OAN, but this is absent in the SHMA’s conclusions for Bedford. Whilst an OAN of over 2,000 dpa might be beyond ‘reasonable’, it is evident that affordable housing needs should have an important influence on the OAN, as per King’s Lynn.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1

The Bedford SHMA/Addendum are not robust bases for determining the Borough’s OAN and under-estimate housing need for Bedford. Looking more specifically at the stages set out in the PPG, the SHMA/Addendum are flawed for the following reasons:

1. They provide a flawed justification for using a longer term trend, citing publications which support the use of a long term trend over recessionary trends (2008-12) which are not the base period in the most recent projections. The SHMA provides no analysis of migration trends, housebuilding trends or other evidence to justify why a long term trend is more robust specifically in the case of Bedford. Our analysis shows the mid 2000s are characterised by very low levels of housebuilding and low levels of net in-migration to Bedford. There is no reason to depart from the latest projections as the starting point estimate of need, using a figure which is at the very least in line with the most recent projections, if not higher;

2. The SHMA does not demonstrate how a 5% uplift could be expected to improve (or even maintain affordability). The SHMA’s comparators do not withstand basic scrutiny (including the national benchmark it uses), and several more recent comparators have been omitted completely from the Addendum. Looking at these comparators would support an

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*a Source: Various Bedford Borough Council Housing Monitoring Reports 2014-15 to 2017-18*
uplift of between 15-20% in Bedford, however given the changes in the household projections methodology we consider it would be prudent to apply an uplift at the top of the of this range, giving 931 dpa + 10% = c.1,120 dpa. The SHMA’s assertion that an uplift of more than 5% would not be supported by job demand is also a flawed justification because it fails to recognise in any way the economic potential of the arc;

3 The estimate of future job growth in the SHMA is likely to be an under-estimate in light of past job growth and the economic growth potential associated with the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge arc. Past job trends in Bedford are higher than the forecasts underpinning the OAN, as are the forecasts for Bedford set out in the economic report on the arc published on behalf of Government. Higher job growth would yield a need for more homes in the Borough, or otherwise lead to unsustainable commuting and/or reduction in the resilience of local businesses, as set out in the PPG. At present the Council’s OAN is not doing ‘everything it can’ to support economic growth (as required in the NPPF) because the housing need evidence base does not address the economic potential of the arc; and

4 The affordable housing needs assessment is flawed and is likely to significantly under-estimate the true scale of affordable housing need in Bedford, not least because it limits its assessment to those in the most acute need (a method not advocated in the PPG). Further, the SHMA has failed to undertake the ‘proper exercise’ of comparing need to likely delivery, and for the affordable housing need to have a ‘strong influence on OAN’. In the case of Bedford, the scale of need combined with recent levels of delivery clearly support increasing the OAN to help deliver more affordable homes, but such an adjustment is absent from the SHMA/Addendum.

6.2 Taking the latest household projections as the starting point and applying a 20% uplift for market signals suggests that the objectively assessed need for Bedford can be no less than around 1,120 dwellings per annum 2015-30. However the OAN is likely to be higher taking into account higher job forecasts, and a higher figure would also provide a greater contribution to meeting affordable housing needs.
Appendix 2: Trajectory Analysis
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- Great Denham: 1710
- West of Kempston: 1064
- Earcotts, RAF Cardington, Shortstown Phase 3: 250
- Earcotts, RAD Cardington, Shortstown Phase 2: 392
- Stewartsby, Land east and west of Broadmead Road: 610
- Wixams Village 1: 990
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5,496 delivered
5107 old
389 new
5496 total
Appendix 3: January 2018 SA – Appendix 8 assessment of option 1 including new settlement
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| 1. Ensure resilience to and reduce the effects of climate change through effective adaptation and mitigation | MAJOR NEGATIVE EFFECT (LT,P,ST,T)  
This option is likely to have a major negative impact on the achievement of this objective as a result of increasing emissions from transport and construction (temporary effect) in existing settlements and in particular in new settlements which increase journeys and require new infrastructure. The extent of the impact depends on the type and build-standard of development. |
| 2. Promote sustainable lifestyles, use resources efficiently, maximise recycling and re-use | NEGATIVE EFFECT (LT,P)  
This option is likely to increase resource consumption (energy, water, land) and waste production. Much new development (apart from the brickworks and urban area sites) will be on greenfield land. New settlements will use substantial land resource. However, improved infrastructure could encourage walking and cycling within settlements. |
| 3. Conserve and enhance the built and historic environment, heritage assets and their settings | UNCERTAIN EFFECT - The impact on heritage depends on the exact location of development sites although a seriously harmful impact would make a site unsuitable. Minor adverse impacts should be mitigated. The impact on existing townscapes largely depends on the quality of design. |
| 4. Create, conserve, protect and enhance the borough’s natural features, distinctive local environments, habitats and species | NEGATIVE EFFECT (ST,MT,LT,P) - Much new development (apart from the brickworks and urban area sites) will be on greenfield land. New settlements are also likely to use large areas, but have potential to significantly enhance green infrastructure. Any use of greenfield land can potentially affect habitats, species and natural features depending on the exact location of development sites although a seriously harmful impact could make a site unsuitable. Minor adverse impacts should be mitigated. |
| 5. Promote strong, sustained and balanced economic growth, stimulating job creation across a range of sectors | POSITIVE EFFECT (LT,P,ST,T)  
This option is likely to make a positive contribution to economic growth and job creation because it is likely to strengthen existing rural economies, services and increase employment opportunities. It will also benefit construction jobs (temporary effect). |
| 6. Improve the skills of the labour force, matching skill outcome with market needs | NEUTRAL EFFECT - There is no direct relationship between the options for the spatial distribution of growth and skills development and employability. |
| 7. Create a distinctive, attractive and multi-functional town centre | POSITIVE EFFECT (LT,P) - This option is likely to have a positive effect on Bedford town centre as growth will increase its viability and support regeneration. |
| 8. Meet the needs of a changing population | MAJOR POSITIVE EFFECT (ST,MT,LT,P) - This option is likely to have a positive effect and is likely to help meet the needs of a growing population through providing housing, employment and associated infrastructure. There is no direct relationship between this spatial option and the provision of Traveller accommodation. |
| 9. Reduce levels of deprivation, inequalities and exclusion | MAJOR POSITIVE EFFECT (MT,LT,P)  
This option is likely to help reduce deprivation in terms of health, income, skills and unemployment in the urban area as well as increase access to essential services in the rural area. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability appraisal objective</th>
<th>Option 1: New settlement, brickworks, urban area, Group 1 (low), Group 2 (low)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Promote community involvement in place-shaping, promote healthy and safe communities</td>
<td>POSITIVE EFFECT (ST, MT, LT, T, P) - The option consultation itself represents an opportunity for community involvement in place-shaping (temporary effect). If development needs are met through neighbourhood planning, this is likely to build community cohesion and capacity. There is potential for new development to provide associated health and leisure facilities, and design-out crime particularly when it is on sites of a significant size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Promote a strong local identity and sense of place</td>
<td>POSITIVE EFFECT (MT, LT, P) - This option is likely to have a positive effect because new settlements make up a substantial proportion of growth. New settlements are likely to provide the opportunity to incorporate garden city principles which should promote strong local identity and sense of place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Minimise growth in car usage, reduce the need to travel and promote the shift to more sustainable modes of transport</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN EFFECT - This option may contribute to reducing the need to travel by increasing the overall provision of services, facilities and employment across the borough and making rural public transport and other Sustainable modes increasingly viable and therefore reliable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: TwinWoods assessment between January and September 2018 Garden Village Topic Papers
### Physical Impacts

#### Designated Heritage Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Garden Village Topic Paper January 2018</th>
<th>Garden Village Topic Paper September 2018</th>
<th>Comments on text changes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The promoters have submitted a Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment. The assessment provides a description of all the designated heritage assets within the site and provides an indication of how the masterplan incorporates these elements. The Council's Heritage Team advised that if allocated, potential access to the Yarl's Wood hermitage site as a community/amenity asset should be considered, potentially relocating the proposed sports pitches to improve the setting. There are other scheduled monuments in the vicinity, and a Heritage Assessment will need to be carried out of all heritage assets on or off site but in close proximity. The heritage impacts of the development can be mitigated through appropriate measures that would need to be agreed upon as part of a detailed master plan. As part of the Local Plan Consultation 2017, Heritage England has advised for all four new settlement options, that detailed site specific evidence would have to be submitted through a Heritage Impact Assessment. This should assess the impact of development on heritage assets and their settings to the assets' significance and what, if any, mitigation or enhancement opportunities there are within the proposal. The Council concluded that the impacts of the development on the historic environment should be further demonstrated through a Heritage Impact Assessment.</td>
<td>The promoters have submitted a Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment. The assessment provides a description of all the designated heritage assets within the site and provides an indication of how the masterplan incorporates these elements. The Council's Heritage Team advised that if allocated, potential access to the Yarl's Wood hermitage site as a community/amenity asset should be considered, potentially relocating the proposed sports pitches to improve the setting. There are other scheduled monuments in the vicinity, and a Heritage Assessment will need to be carried out of all heritage assets on or off site but in close proximity. The heritage impacts of the development can be mitigated through appropriate measures that would need to be agreed upon as part of a detailed master plan. As part of the Local Plan Consultation 2017, Heritage England has advised for all four new settlement options, that detailed site specific evidence would have to be submitted through a Heritage Impact Assessment. This should assess the impact of development on heritage assets and their settings to the assets' significance and what, if any, mitigation or enhancement opportunities there are within the proposal. The Council concluded that the impacts of the development on the historic environment should be further demonstrated through a Heritage Impact Assessment. The absence of a full Heritage Impact Assessment does not mean the site is not developable.</td>
<td>The absence of a full Heritage Impact Assessment does not mean the site is not developable. A desk-based assessment has been undertaken and the Topic Paper acknowledges that impacts of the development can be mitigated as part of a detailed master plan. Again, it is not necessary for this to be set out for a developable site at this stage. The position regarding the potential listing of the Former High-Speed Laboratory complex does not impact on the developability of TwinWoods. There is an outstanding objection to the listing, but even if it were listed, the building would be retained and thus the physical historic and architectural interest will not be altered. This is set out in more detail in the accompanying Development Statement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Non designated Heritage Assets

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The promoters have submitted a Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment. The assessment provides a description of all the non-designated heritage sites within the site and provides an indication of how the masterplan incorporates these elements. Whilst there are a number of non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest within the proposed development site (30 recorded on the Bedford Borough Historic Environment</td>
<td>The promoters have submitted a Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment. The assessment provides a description of all the non-designated heritage sites within the site and provides an indication of how the masterplan incorporates these elements. Whilst there are a number of non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest within the proposed development site (30 recorded on the Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record in total), none are considered complex and requiring preservation in situ or significant amendments to the masterplan, although many of these are cropmark sites and will required archaeological evaluation, and potentially mitigation, prior to development.</td>
<td>The Council no longer states that it considers the heritage impacts of the development can be mitigated through appropriate measures as part of a detailed master plan. As above, the promoters have produced a desk-based assessment and it is acknowledges that impacts of the development can be mitigated as part of a detailed master plan. There is no evidence to suggest that the site is not developable on the basis of heritage impacts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TwinWoods Garden Village

**Representations to the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030**

**Garden Village Topic Paper January 2018**

**Garden Village Topic Paper September 2018**

#### Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adequacy of highway proposals</th>
<th>Improvements / mitigation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record of a detailed master plan. Details are included as complex information is received and reviewed in respect of the requirement to take into account and promote sustainable travel.</td>
<td>Record of a detailed master plan. Details are included as complex information is received and reviewed in respect of the requirement to take into account and promote sustainable travel.</td>
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</table>

The additional mitigation measures are considered to be in addition to those previously proposed. A Monitor & Management initiative is proposed to be agreed with the Bedford Borough Council during the implementation stage. Other details are as explained in the Proposals Update 2018 which improves the initial scheme. Other details are as explained in the Proposals Update 2018 which improves the initial scheme.

---

The access and highway mitigation forms part of the 'Mobility Strategy' for Twinwoods which includes the options for accessing the development and the measures to support sustainable travel.
### Criteria

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>mitigate the impact arising from the Twinwoods proposal. Additional works may be required.</strong> The SYSTRA impact assessment predicts around 60% impact on 2035 baseline traffic levels on the A6. The Council consider that the mitigation measures put forward in respect of highway impact on the A6 would need to be improved.</td>
<td><strong>mitigation proposals put forward in the Update require further work and evidence before their impact can be evaluated, their costs determined and impact on the viability of the scheme considered.</strong></td>
<td>No apparent objections to the proposal. It is noted that additional mitigation, if required, would be factored into the costs as and when required. Whilst this would perhaps render estimates for the final cost not fully known, the cost of the proposed additional mitigation – if fully employed – would not be likely to render the scheme non-viable.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Costs

- The dual carriageway, taking into consideration the new road intersections is estimated by the site promoter to cost between £9million and £11million. The Council’s Highway consultants’ estimated cost is around £15million, including bypass and associated junctions and upgrades to Thurleigh Road but excluding land, utilities, professional fees and contingency.
- Having considered all development costs as part of the viability assessment of the new settlement, the Council do not believe that the costs associated with the provision of this highway infrastructure would undermine the viability of this scheme.

Within the submission are details relating to phasing. Of note is the provision of the Milton Ernest Bypass at the delivery of 750 homes. Details have been provided on the phasing in terms of access and highway improvements, which are appropriate for the level of development with the exception of the completion of the Milton Ernest bypass which should ideally be completed earlier to avoid increases in traffic travelling through Milton Ernest.

Employment, education and leisure facilities are provided and show a good level of consideration for instilling internal trips and securing self containment from the outset. Development of these land uses alongside residential development is recognised. The Council concludes that with the exception of the timing of the delivery of the full Milton Ernest

Within the original submission are details relating to phasing. Details have been provided on the phasing in terms of access and highway improvements, which are appropriate for the level of development but initially with the exception of the completion of the Milton Ernest bypass at the delivery of 750 homes which in the Council’s view should be completed earlier to avoid increases in traffic travelling through Milton Ernest.

Employment, education and leisure facilities are provided and show a good level of consideration for instilling internal trips and securing self containment from the outset. Development of these land uses alongside residential development is recognised. **Proposals Update June 2018**

**Provides new information in relation to phasing, including earlier delivery of the Milton Ernest bypass alongside quicker delivery of the new settlement as a whole.**

The Council concluded that with the change to the timing of the delivery of the proposed Milton Ernest bypass the phasing of the development is appropriate.

*No apparent objections to the proposal. No additional comments required at this time. Phasing would likely be confirmed at the point of planning submission as well as forming part of the Monitor & Manage scheme.*
### TwinWoods Garden Village

**Junction Capacity**

- **Criteria:** Assessments of 11 other junctions have been included in the submission:
  - From this development.
  - Assessments from other site promoters. Twinwoods is the largest of the new settlements proposed. Furthermore, this is only a starting point based on current and short-term future trends, and therefore could change as transport policy and travel habits shift.

- **Comments on text changes:** Updated trip generation can be developed to consider modern day travel habits, and opportunities to change driver behaviour as part of a planning application.

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<tr>
<td>Traffic generation</td>
<td>Information on Trip Generation and Traffic Distribution has been provided in Design Note 1. This includes consideration of the trip rates for each land use for each phase of the development. Internalisation and linked trips have been calculated. The Council considers that the submitted information reflects good mode share consideration. As part of their response to the 2017 Local Plan consultation, Highways England have advised that Twinwoods is located a significant distance from the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and that trips generated from these sites are likely to be dispersed over the network rather than be focused at any particular junction.</td>
<td>Information on Trip Generation and Traffic Distribution has been provided in Design Note 1. This includes consideration of the trip rates for each land use for each phase of the development. Internalisation and linked trips have been calculated. Approximately 2,500 trips would be made to/from Bedford in each peak period. Systra assess this as a 60% increase on A6 traffic compared to the 2035 base year scenario and comment that this is high compared to the assessments from other site promoters. Twinwoods is the largest of the new settlement proposals and will therefore potentially generate the most traffic, having the greatest impact on main and rural roads. The Council considered that the submitted information reflects good mode share consideration. As part of its response to the 2017 Local Plan consultation, Highways England have advised that Twinwoods is located a significant distance from the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and that trips generated from these sites are likely to be dispersed over the network rather than be focused at any particular junction.</td>
<td>Instead of 2,500 two-way trips on the A6 our updated assessment concludes that 1,755 car trips will be made to/from Bedford on the A6 (complete development). On the same basis this equates to a 42% impact on this part of the A6. The trip generation is higher than the other assessed sites because there is a higher quantum of development proposed. Furthermore, this is only a starting point based on current and short-term future trends, and therefore could change as transport policy and travel habits shift. The Mobility Strategy compliments the measures previously put forward and places weight on high-capacity travel modes (i.e. walking, cycling and public transport). These measures can be developed and tested at the appropriate stage.</td>
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</table>
### TwinWoods Garden Village: Representations to the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>included in the submission:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A6 / Clapham Road / The Great Ouse Way roundabout – unacceptable at this stage, will be considered following A56 / Manton Lane roundabout improvements.</td>
<td>• Thurligh Road / Milton Road priority junction – assessment acceptable for level of impact.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Thurligh Road / Milton Road priority junction – assessment acceptable for level of impact.</td>
<td>• Milton Lane / Mill Hill priority junction – will need further detailed assessment will be required at later stages of the planning process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Milton Lane / Mill Hill priority junction – will need further detailed assessment will be required at later stages of the planning process.</td>
<td>• Shakespeare Road / Ashburnham Road / Bromham Road roundabout – unacceptable assessment at this stage.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Shakespeare Road / Ashburnham Road / Bromham Road roundabout – unacceptable assessment at this stage.</td>
<td>• A6 / Mill Road / Thurligh Road roundabout – good level of capacity assessment provided. Acceptable levels of residual capacity.</td>
<td>additional growth areas, increase in sustainable travel modes, as well as technological improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A6 / Mill Road / Thurligh Road roundabout – good level of capacity assessment provided. Acceptable levels of residual capacity.</td>
<td>• B660 / Thurligh Road / Oldways Road junction – more details required</td>
<td>The above can be managed via said Monitor &amp; Manage scheme, and implemented as deemed required. As a result, the developability of the scheme should not be considered to be non-viable at this stage solely due to methodology concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• B660 / Thurligh Road / Oldways Road junction – more details required</td>
<td>• A428 / A4280 roundabout - more details required</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A428 / A4280 roundabout - more details required</td>
<td>• A422 / A428 roundabout – more details required</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A422 / A428 roundabout – more details required</td>
<td>• B660 / Avon Drive / Wentworth Drive junction – more details required</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• B660 / Avon Drive / Wentworth Drive junction – more details required</td>
<td>• B660 / Thurligh Road junction – more details required.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• B660 / Avon Drive / Wentworth Drive junction – more details required</td>
<td>Other mitigation schemes include</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• B660 / Thurligh Road junction – more details required.</td>
<td>• Traffic calming in some local villages (e.g. Thurligh and Ravensden)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Council concludes that assessment needs to provide more evidence to demonstrate junction capacity, ideally using industry standard modelling software for all junctions. There should also be more consideration for strategic highway movements on the A6 corridor (e.g. A6 / Great Ouse Way roundabout and other minor A6 junctions).</td>
<td>• Severance mitigation proposed for Thurligh and Ravensden</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The previous submissions reviewed historical accident data and identified trends and clusters of historical data. Proposed mitigation measures have been incorporated (including the offer of a potential footbridge to segregate foot traffic).</td>
<td>• Rat running mitigation between Oakley and Bromham</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Further discussion on the issue of highway safety between the</td>
<td>• Minor pinch point improvements.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accident analysis information has been included for the following locations:</td>
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<td>• Milton Ernest – reduced highway impact</td>
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<td>• Sharnbrook Turn – improvements to northern arm would offset development impact.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Unnamed Road (to Riseley)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A6 Paula Radcliffe Way</td>
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</table>

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Criteria | Garden Village Topic Paper January 2018 | Garden Village Topic Paper September 2018 | Comments on text changes
--- | --- | --- | ---
• A6 Paula Radcliffe Way  | • Clapham – minimal development impact.  |  | scheme promoter and BBC as part of the planning process.
• Clapham – minimal development impact.  | • A6 / GOW roundabout  |  |  
• Manton Lane roundabout  | • A6 Clapham Road  |  |  
• A6 Clapham Road  | • BS141 Shakespeare Road / Warwick Avenue / Cowper Road  |  |  
• A4280 / Shakespeare Road / Ashburnham Road  | • A428 (Fatal)  |  |  
• A428 (Fatal)  | • Ravenden Road / Church End  |  |  
• By-pass proposals  | • Thurleigh Village  |  |  

The data analysed is from January 2013 to December 2015.

Highway safety issues could be considered further. The Council considered that the installation of bypass will reduce the risk of conflicts within Milton Ernest. There are a number of other locations where mitigation may be required later in the planning process.

Integrated and accessible transport systems

Public transport external

According to the submitted information:  
• Development of a new bus service Extension of 51 bus service; and  
• Extension of the 28 bus service.

The Council consider that there has been no indication of how congestion on the A6 approaching Bedford has been considered in terms of public transport delay. The promoters have also indicated that a railway station associated with the site could be brought forward as part of the long-term public transport strategy for this site. This could potentially connect to East-West Rail. However no engineering, rail demand or financial feasibility has been included in the submission.

According to the initial submitted information improvements to bus services include:  
• Development of a new bus service Extension of 51 bus service; and  
• Extension of the 28 bus service.

The Council considered that there has been no indication of how congestion on the A6 approaching Bedford has been considered in terms of public transport delay. In the initial submission the promoters also indicated that a railway station associated with the site could be brought forward as part of the long-term public transport strategy for this site. This could potentially connect to East-West Rail. However no engineering, rail demand or financial feasibility was included in the submission. An east west rail route has yet to be announced so it is not known if a connection to it in this location will be possible in future years.

Proposals Update June 2018

Identifies an opportunity for a new railway station west of Milton Ernest with access to it from Twinwoods Garden Village and with funding towards its delivery which would be within the first 10 years of the scheme. Information explains that the Guide to Rail Investment Process (GRIP) has commenced. A dedicated bus route from the garden village to the north side of Bedford near Woodlands Park is also proposed, along
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<td>with the possibility of a Park and Ride feeding into the bus lane. This may be located adjacent to the proposed train station and in the promoters’ view could be beneficial in the early years of the development. The intention is that together these initiatives would create a sustainable transport interchange. The Council noted that the proposed new railway station would be external to the settlement and would therefore have an impact on existing and development traffic movements. The scale of this impact has yet to be determined. The land proposed as a suitable location for the station is surrounded on three sides by the River Great Ouse and much of the land is liable to flood. The Council would need assurances from the appropriate authorities that the proposed location is developable for a station. The justification for siting the station needs to be based on operational requirements rather than ownership of the proposed land. The station is located away from the proposed new settlement and therefore cannot be assumed to attract the same proportion of residents than a station within the new settlement would. Residents would have to travel to the station by car / bike or other means. There is a risk that residents from the new settlement will choose to stay in their cars unless they are commuting beyond Bedford, and even then they may continue on to Bedford depending on other factors such as frequency of trains. Further work on induced trips is required which should also address diverted trips from the A6 north. New junctions on the A6 would be required to access the new station and new east / west movement demands across the A6 will be created from either end of the new link road. The impact of the additional delay needs to be assessed for north / south traffic and an indicative junction layout proposed and tested. The business case for the railway station is not yet in place. There is no evidence of contact with Network Rail and Train Operating Companies (TOCs). The impact for Bedford of recent developments and proposals in the rail industry has been significant. The Council would need to be convinced that any discussions on a new station have taken place with the industry within the national and local context. Whilst there is mention in para 3.10 of the Proposals Update 2018 that the GRIP process has started there is no evidence of discussions with the TOCs. The new station, although located on the Midland Main Line is not likely to attract East Midlands Trains services (or a future franchise holder) as the recent DfT franchise consultation proposes to reduce the intercity services between the north and Bedford. This suggests that a 4-platform station is not required. At best, the station could be served by the Corby – St Pancras service, and an assessment based on serving the station as part of this service, and as an extension to Thameslink should be presented. Evidence of engagement with the TOCs is essential if the Council is to be convinced that a station is deliverable Using the suggested cost of a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walking and cycling (external)</td>
<td>The promoter intend to:  - selectively enhance existing walking and cycling routes associated with the development; and  - provide a hard surfaced pedestrian/cycle route to Bedford. The Council’s view is that the dedicated route will be of limited use to pedestrians wishing to reach Bedford Town Centre though it may provide limited pedestrian access to activities on the northern edge of the town. The route would be viable route to Bedford Town Centre by bicycle. There is limited pedestrian access to the major roads connecting to the development but good access to wider cycle network.</td>
<td>The promoter intend to:  - selectively enhance existing walking and cycling routes associated with the development; and  - provide a hard surfaced pedestrian/cycle route to Bedford. The Council’s view was that the dedicated route will be of limited use to pedestrians wishing to reach Bedford Town Centre though it may provide pedestrian access to activities on the northern edge of the town. The route would be a viable route to Bedford Town Centre by bicycle. There is limited pedestrian access to the major roads connecting to the development but good access to wider cycle network.</td>
<td>Discussions with Stagecoach East are contained within the Matrix report ‘Extended Transport Strategy’ dated Mar-2017. The discussions with the bus operators would continue at the planning stage. The £200,000 outlined to provide an e-bike/bike sharing scheme is not a cap but simply a suggestion for this stage of the process. A high-level capacity analysis of the forecast demand per mode has been undertaken, and the site is therefore designed to provide for this demand, rather than restricting potential active travel movements by not providing what could be key infrastructure. The level of detail on the walking and cycling off-site provision requested is not appropriate at this stage, and the specifics will be dealt with at the planning stage.</td>
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</table>

railway station at Colworth Garden Village provides a benchmark however some evidence of its suitability as a comparator should be presented to justify why the same costs have been used. The updated strategy suggests an interim interchange facility adjacent to the bypass which would be relocated and upgraded when the station opens. The impact of this on existing and future traffic patterns needs to be fully considered. In addition, there is additional cost in developing two separate sites which needs to be factored into the viability schedule. The claim is made that the proposed measures do not adversely impact the local and wider highway network. However, a new railway station, new junctions and dedicated busway will have an impact on the network, either adverse or not, but this impact has not been demonstrated. The likelihood of diverting trips either to a station off the A6 or to a park and ride within the village needs to be quantified, and the assumptions set out. A contribution towards the cost of the railway station is proposed but there is no indication of where the remaining funding would come from.

Proposals Update June 2018 Adds a bus/cycle corridor to connect to the north of Bedford through Woodlands Park. Alongside this further consideration has been given to electric bikes and cycle share schemes. These ideas are detailed in a new Mobility Strategy. With a cap of £200,000 for the electric bike scheme and a cost of £4,000 per electric bike this equates to 50 electric bikes for the 6,000 dwelling scheme. In the Council’s view the impact this would make to modal shift would be limited. A larger scale scheme is likely to be required. The update suggests that the electric bike scheme will focus on external trips, primarily along the busway. This will work best if the busway is delivered at the start of the development. It is unclear how interdependent the bike and bus elements are and what impact an electric bike scheme can be expected to have if the dedicated busway cannot

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### TwinWoods Garden Village: Representations to the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030

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<tr>
<td>Walking and cycling (internal)</td>
<td>The Council conclude that the site masterplan provides a well-connected and integrated pedestrian and cycling network, including a 10km leisure route and segregated cycle route around the internal loop road.</td>
<td>The Council concluded that the site masterplan provides a well-connected and integrated pedestrian and cycling network, including a 10km leisure route and segregated cycle route around the internal loop road.</td>
<td>The update comment is irrelevant as a key design criteria of the masterplan will be to promote and encourage walking and cycling in a 24-hour liveable community.</td>
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<td>Opportunities for modal shift</td>
<td>The Council conclude that the internal loop road provides good access to the various land-uses and provisions at the site by non-car modes. However, some of the key employment will not be constructed until further into the development phasing, which does limit mode-shift potential for up to seven years – well after the site is first occupied. Those travelling from the village to other work destinations are unlikely to see any benefit from using public transport unless dedicated bus lanes are provided.</td>
<td>The Council concluded that the internal loop road provides good access to the various land-uses and provisions at the site by non-car modes. However, some of the key employment will not be constructed until further into the development phasing, which does limit mode-shift potential for up to seven years – well after the site is first occupied. Those travelling from the village to other work destinations are unlikely to see any benefit from using public transport unless dedicated bus lanes are provided.</td>
<td>The concept of a garden village is that it provides a new centre for day-to-day living, that travel habits can be influenced from the outset, and that the development will be designed to a pedestrian level. As such, the opportunity for mode shift/excellent mode split are far better than in the case of an urban extension where travel habits are already somewhat fixed. Hence, Twinwoods is not and never will be categorised a ‘rural area’. As such we suggest deleting the two paragraphs beginning ‘The figures in Table 1...’ as this is simply irrelevant at this stage.</td>
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<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Garden Village Topic Paper January 2018</td>
<td>Garden Village Topic Paper September 2018</td>
<td>Comments on text changes</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Strong prospect of quantified early housing delivery</td>
<td>The delivery information as set out in the Vision document indicates that development on site would commence in 2021 with 950 houses constructed within the first 6 years. Between 2028 and 2033 an incremental build out is proposed. The Council consider that the delivery programme is consistent with the viability information that supports a reasonable prospect of delivery. If the site is to be allocated, the delivery of the Milton Ernest Bypass should be considered further as part of the phasing of a detailed masterplan SPD. This is due to the potential housing delivery numbers that would use Thurleigh Road through Milton Ernest to access the A6 between year 3 and year 6.</td>
<td>The delivery information as set out in the Vision document indicates that development on site would commence in 2021 with 950 houses constructed within the first 6 years. Between 2028 and 2033 an incremental build out is proposed. In the Proposals Update 2018 the delivery profile of housing is amended to match earlier delivery of infrastructure including the Milton Ernest bypass. The Council agrees that the delivery of the Milton Ernest Bypass improves the delivery profile of the proposal. However, this scheme relies on the delivery of mitigation measures to deal with increased traffic on the A6. The scheme as originally proposed did not demonstrate how traffic arising from the development could be satisfactorily accommodated on local and rural roads and junctions. A Heritage Impact Assessment is also required to inform the new settlement proposal. The Council concluded that the scheme is currently not deliverable.</td>
<td>The TwinWoods site is concluded to not be developable based on “The scheme as originally proposed did not demonstrate how traffic arising from the development could be satisfactorily accommodated on local and rural roads and junctions” – but this was not identified in January 2018. Mitigation measures to deal with traffic: as set out by Vectos in the Transport Assessment and in its commentary at Appendix 3 of this report, there is no technical evidence to justify that TwinWoods is not a developable site in transport terms. Heritage Impact Assessment: As per the commentary at Appendix 3, this was not raised as an issue in the January 2018 TwinWoods Garden Village Topic Paper. The need for more in-depth heritage work cannot in anyway mean the site is not developable. New railway station - as set out in these representations and in the Vectos Transport Assessment, the delivery of a train station is not necessary for the delivery of the scheme in transport terms and it was assessed as such in the January 2018 SA and Garden Village Topic Paper. The train station would be a ‘nice to have’ – and the opportunity for its provision is facilitated by the site’s development - and, as per the contents of the Development Statement, would not render the scheme unviable, but it is not in any event necessary to make the site suitable.</td>
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<td>Detailed Costs</td>
<td>The submitted viability report sets out a broad range of costs that have been considered as part of the viability analysis. The Council’s consultants have reviewed the original proposed development’s costs and confirmed that the development would be viable.</td>
<td>The submitted viability report sets out a broad range of costs that have been considered as part of the viability analysis. The Council’s consultants have reviewed the original proposed development’s costs and confirmed that the development would be viable. Proposals Update June 2018 Brings into play many new measures to improve the acceptability of this scheme. In the Council’s view the costs of the proposed new strategy are not set out in a considered way. Acknowledging that the development of the updated strategy is in its infancy, the information on costs is dispersed through the</td>
<td>The additional mitigation measures are considered to support the delivery of the site, as opposed to the provision of a ‘new strategy’ upon which the site becomes dependent. The high-level approach is therefore to encourage discussion with BBC, and likely to form part of the managed mitigation strategy referred above. This is planned to be concluded at the planning stages within the</td>
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The viability of the scheme is not dependent on the costs of the proposed additional mitigation measures, see the viability section of the Development Statement.
Project team:
Bedfordia
Marcol
Lichfields
Vectos

Contact details:
Matthew Spry
Senior Director, Lichfields
matthew.spry@lichfields.uk
020 7837 4477