Wealden Local Plan EIP: Matter 4: Supply of housing
Land north of Polegate

May 2019
1. **Introduction**

1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Turley on behalf of our client, Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land in relation to Matter 4 – Supply of housing of the Wealden Local Plan Examination.

1.2 Our clients have important land interests in the Local Plan area, including at Polegate.

1.3 We set out our response to the questions posed by the Inspector, where relevant to our client’s previous submissions, in Section Two of this Statement. Our comments have regard to national planning policy guidance and other material considerations.
2. Matters to be Examined

Issue 1: Is the Council’s approach to its housing supply, justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

58. Is reliance on the scale of windfall housing predicated within the LP being delivered, realistic, justified and consistent with national policy? In particular, how have the Core Areas been determined? How does the projected contribution from windfall housing compare with recent housing delivery? Is it appropriate to rely to such an extent on windfall housing rather than the allocation of housing sites within a plan led system?

2.1 A total of 2516 of the homes to be provided over the Plan period are proposed to come forwards from windfalls (equivalent to 18% of the overall housing requirement identified in the Plan, or circa 40% of the requirement for the period 2017-2028). This level of delivery is based partly on adjustments to the settlement development boundaries within which Policy WLP3 establishes that the principle of development is acceptable, subject to other policies contained within the Plan. It is notable that the proposed amendments to some development boundaries would seemingly establish the acceptability in principle of developing areas capable of delivering far in excess of the windfall allowance provided for that settlement. In light of our comments in relation to other Matters in respect of the housing requirement for the District it is considered that further assessment should be undertaken of the ability of some settlements to accommodate additional development beyond that currently proposed.

2.2 It is noted that a proportion of the windfall capacity identified in the Plan has already been taken up by planning permissions or sites benefiting from a resolution to grant permission. There is also seemingly no restriction on the proposed site allocations utilising this windfall capacity to increase the quantum of development achievable on their own site. The Plan as currently drafted therefore both fails to make adequate provision for its full OAN but is also ineffective in providing flexibility to allow further growth to come forward.

2.3 Notwithstanding our comments in respect of Matter2 and the need to increase the housing requirement in order to reflect the full objectively assessed need, should the Plan continue under the current strategy we continue to have significant concerns regarding the effectiveness of relying on such a high level of windfall development.

2.4 Given the work that has been undertaken in amending the development boundaries within which the principle of development is considered acceptable it is unclear why the Council has not provided greater certainty and allocated sites to meet the level of development proposed. As currently proposed with the revised development boundaries allowing for development significantly in excess of the quantum allowed for under windfalls, it will seemingly be a case of the location for development being determined by which planning application is considered first, rather than the relative merits of alternative sites round the settlement which should be appropriately assessed through the Plan making process.

2.5 Notably the Development Boundary Background Paper (August 2018) concludes in relation to Polegate that:
“The hard northern edge of Polegate is further defined by the line of protected trees between Sayerland Road and Levett Road. Whilst the A27 Polegate Bypass cuts through the open countryside to the north, the intervening land between this and the existing built edge of Polegate is included in an expanded development boundary in order to reflect recent growth and the physical boundary of the A27.”

2.6 It is clear therefore that capacity does exist around the settlement. It is noted that our client’s site was assessed under site reference 193/1510 of the SHELAA (2018) but incorrectly assessed as not being suitable for housing. This conclusion was reached on the incorrect assessment that the site was isolated from existing residential development as a result of the OS base not having been updated to reflect the Taylor Wimpey scheme under construction at that time. As such the site was not subject to appropriate further technical assessment and Sustainability Appraisal through the Local Plan process as it was discounted at an early stage due to this flawed assessment.

2.7 The restrictive nature of the Plan’s approach to the delivery of housing could also potentially result in the capacity of site’s being artificially reduced to accord with the windfall allowance and thereby not making efficient use of land, contrary to national policy requirements.

2.8 The delivery of windfall development is by its very nature uncertain. The reliance on such a significant proportion of windfall development to meet the proposed housing requirement reduces the ability of the Council to effectively plan for the necessary supporting infrastructure to be brought forward alongside development. Given the infrastructure constraints within the District, which are themselves a potential trigger for an early review of the Local Plan, this exacerbates our concerns regarding the approach to windfalls.

2.9 As such it is considered that the Local Plan is overly reliant on delivery from windfalls and further allocations should be made to provide greater certainty as part of a Plan led system and to ensure that appropriate infrastructure can be brought forward in parallel. Opportunities exist within the development boundaries proposed for some settlements which have already been assessed as being appropriate to accommodate development needs through the current Plan process.