

**South Wiltshire Core Strategy Examination  
Hearing Statement  
Terence O'Rourke Ltd on behalf of JS Bloor (Newbury) Ltd**

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**Matter 2, Core Policy 1: The Distribution of Development – Settlement Hierarchy**

Terence O'Rourke Ltd acts on behalf of JS Bloor (Newbury) Ltd, who is currently bringing forward the Archers Gate housing development on land to the south of Boscombe Road at Amesbury in conjunction with Persimmon Homes (South Coast) Ltd.

In March 2005, Salisbury District Council granted outline planning permission (reference S/2002/1075) for the construction of 550 houses at the site, plus ancillary infrastructure including:

- the southern section of the Amesbury link road to connect the A345 with both the site and with the northern sections of the link road which had been constructed previously
- the 14 classroom Amesbury Archer primary school
- a new local centre
- a new community hall (the Bowman Centre)
- a new cemetery, and
- formal playing fields, a new changing facility, informal open space and children's play areas.

As at 5 February 2010:

- the first phase of the Amesbury Archer primary school comprising seven classrooms and core facilities has been operational for three and a half years
- the Bowman Centre has been operational for over three years
- the link road has been fully open for just over a year
- the formal playing fields and informal areas of open space have been laid out and are 18 months into their maintenance period
- reserved matters applications have been approved for each of the 550 houses, with construction having recently commenced on the final 44 units
- construction of the local centre has just commenced
- full planning permissions exist for the changing facility and cemetery, although construction of these has yet to start.

The site has been brought forward for development in accordance with Policy H9 of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan (2003). It is clear from the extent of the land allocation on the Local Plan Proposals Map and the supporting text that the comprehensive development of the site was envisaged, and that the allocation was strategic, with the 550 houses and ancillary infrastructure representing the first phase of a much larger development. Indeed, chapter 16 of the Environmental Statement

submitted with outline planning application S/2002/1075 in May 2002, demonstrated that the environmental impacts likely to arise from the development of up to 1200 houses at the site would be acceptable.

Since the 2002 Environmental Statement was produced, the capacity of the site has been revisited to take account of the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West, which includes a requirement for urban extensions to accommodate housing at a higher density than that previously required. The site's capacity has also been revisited following analysis of its landscape character (as required by PPS7) and with reference to the future education and recreational needs of the town. These studies have indicated that the site is capable of accommodating a further 1300 residential units over and above the 550 identified in the Local Plan.

In view of the Council's housing supply situation, planning applications (one full and one outline) have already been submitted to Wiltshire Council for the first 183 of these units, and determinations are currently awaited. Noise, air quality, transport, socio-economic, landscape and ecological impact assessments of the remaining 1117 units are all well underway, with the results hopefully being available by the commencement of the Core Strategy examination.

The strategic allocation in the South Wiltshire Core Strategy accords with the requirement in PPS3 to identify deliverable sites, because:

- the land is under the ownership of JS Bloor (Newbury) Ltd and is available now for further development
- the site is suitable for additional residential development and community infrastructure, as identified in the Local Plan and as identified in the Environmental Statement accompanying outline planning application S/2002/1075
- A significant proportion of the 1300 houses can be delivered within the first five years.

**The adopted local plan allocation and the outline planning permission have confirmed that this is a suitable location for new housing and historic building rates at Archers Gate of circa 100 units per year since construction commenced in February 2006 (despite the impacts of the recession), demonstrate that houses can be delivered at the rate required.**

The King's Gate strategic housing allocation therefore provides a significant opportunity to develop a further sustainable urban extension of Amesbury, which will be within easy walking and cycling distance of:

- the existing and future employment opportunities at Boscombe Down and Solstice Park
- the existing public transport network
- the Archers Gate primary school and the smaller primary school to be provided as part of the site's development
- the Stonehenge secondary school
- existing and new recreational facilities
- existing shops and services within Amesbury town centre, and

- new shops and services which will be provided within the local centre at the entrance to the site.

Its identification in the South Wiltshire Core Strategy is therefore considered to be compliant with national and emerging regional planning policies, and totally sound.

### **Question 2.3 – Why choose this distribution strategy?**

We agree with the distribution of development across the district set out in Policy CS1 and that the option of a new settlement should not be pursued. In the context of Planning Policy Statement 1 *Delivering Sustainable Development* (PPS1) and Planning Policy Statement 3 *Housing* (PPS3), the development of a new settlement at Porton Down is considered to be the least sustainable option available to the Council.

To be self-sustaining, a new settlement would need a range of community services and infrastructure. New infrastructure must be funded by new development and a critical mass of development will be required to provide the level of services and infrastructure necessary to make a new settlement self-sustaining. If adequate facilities and services are not provided, people will be forced to travel to the nearest major settlement to gain access to essential services. This constitutes unsustainable living and is contrary to the PPS3 objective of developing housing in “sustainable locations, which offer a range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure”.

An urban extension at Firsdawn would also be subject to a number of similar problems in sustainable development terms. Firsdawn has very limited existing services due to its rural location, and significant new infrastructure would also be needed to support future residential growth. The costs associated with delivering the necessary infrastructure and services in such a rural location would be high and would need to be borne by the housing developer(s). Firsdawn is also located some distance from employment opportunities. It is likely that residents would therefore seek work opportunities at Porton Down or the nearest major settlement. Without the necessary transport infrastructure in place they would choose to travel by private car, which is not a sustainable mode of travel.

The strategy of distributing growth to settlements across the district, such as Amesbury, was adopted because existing services and infrastructure would be capable of accommodating additional housing growth. Employment opportunities, community facilities, healthcare options and access to alternative means of transport than the private car are all available within close proximity to the Archers Gate development at Amesbury.

**Question 2.4 – Broadly speaking, have the right levels of growth been allocated to various settlements?**

We consider that the Core Strategy has allocated the right levels of growth to the settlements within the district.

Amesbury is the second largest settlement in the district and it is appropriate that it receives the second highest levels of housing growth within the plan period behind Salisbury City. In line with the objectives of the adopted Local Plan, the King's Gate allocation represents an excellent opportunity to promote an expansion of the most recent urban extension because there is an opportunity to develop a significant amount of new housing within easy walking and cycling distance of:

- the existing and future employment opportunities available at Boscombe Down and Solstice Park
- an existing secondary school
- an existing and proposed primary school
- the existing and proposed public transport network
- existing and proposed recreational facilities
- existing shops and services within Amesbury town centre, and
- new shops and services which will be provided within the local centre currently under construction.

The land is available for development, it is suitable for the level and mix of development proposed and it is achievable within the plan period. The allocation therefore meets the deliverability tests set out in PPS3.