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# Representations on the Coventry Local Plan Review

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Land at Rookery Farm, Coventry

Regulation 19 Consultation

March 2025

# Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Changes to National Policy	3
3.	Legal Compliance and Duty to Cooperate	5
4.	Comments on Draft Policies	7
5.	Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2024)	14
6.	Conclusion	16

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. These representations have been prepared by Savills on behalf of Bellway Homes and Merton College in response to the Coventry City Local Plan Review Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Consultation.
- 1.2. Our response identifies concerns regarding the soundness of the Local Plan Review, which are set out below.
- 1.3. Savills submitted representations concerning Land at Rookery Farm, Coventry, on behalf of the landowner Merton College, Oxford, in September 2023. That response related to the Issues and Options Consultation and Call for Sites, confirming that Land at Rookery Farm, Coventry would be appropriate for strategic-scale residential-led development. Since that time, Bellway Homes have secured an interest in this site, which remains readily available for development.

## **Previous Development Plan Promotion**

- 1.4. By way of background, Savills have previously submitted representations in response to a number of consultations for this site, including:
  - Coventry Proposed Core Strategy (October 2011);
  - Options for a New Housing Target for Coventry 2011-2028 (May 2012);
  - Coventry's Proposed Submission Core Strategy July 2012 (September 2012);
  - New Coventry Local Development Plan (2011-2031) – Delivering Sustainable Growth in October 2014;
  - New Coventry Local Plan Publication Draft (2011-2031) in February 2016; and
  - Issues and Options Consultation with Call for Sites Form in September 2023.

## **Report Structure and Updates to National Policy and Recent Government Announcements**

- 1.5. This report will consider the legal compliance of the plan and the duty to cooperate, followed by each element of the draft Local Plan Review, and the HELAA. Where issues are raised, the representation indicates which of the tests of soundness are failed, and also suggest how the policy should be amended to address the issues identified.
- 1.6. However, it is important to note that there are a number of recent changes and announcements by Government that are critical to the plan-making process and not currently taken into account in the current Local Plan Review. These are set out below in Section 2.

## 2. Changes to National Policy

2.1. On the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024, the Government published an update on national planning reform, following consultation held in 2024.

2.2. The changes which were announced, including publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), are part of the Government's aims to deliver a universal, ambitious local plan coverage, which is seen as being vital to deliver the Government's commitments to achieve economic growth and build 1.5 million new homes.

2.3. The changes include the following:

- Implementing a new standard method and calculation to ensure local plans are ambitious enough to support the Government's manifesto commitment of 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament.
- Making the standard method for assessing housing needs mandatory, requiring Local Planning Authorities to plan for the resulting housing need figure, planning for a lower figure only when they can demonstrate hard constraints and that they have exhausted all other options.
- Reversing other changes to the NPPF made in December 2023 which were detrimental to housing supply.
- Broaden the existing definition of brownfield land, set a strengthened expectation that applications on brownfield land will be approved and that plans should promote an uplift in density in urban areas.
- Identify grey belt land within the Green Belt, to be brought forward into the planning system through both plan and decision-making to meet development needs.
- Improve the operation of 'the presumption' in favour of sustainable development, to ensure it acts as an effective failsafe to support housing supply, by clarifying the circumstances in which it applies; and, introducing new safeguards, to make clear that its application cannot justify poor quality development.
- Deliver affordable, well-designed homes, with new "golden rules" for land released in the Green Belt to ensure it delivers in the public interest.
- Make wider changes to ensure that Local Planning Authorities are able to prioritise the types of affordable homes their communities need on all housing development and that the planning system supports a more diverse housebuilding sector.
- Support economic growth in key sectors, aligned with the Government's industrial strategy and future local growth plans, including laboratories, gigafactories, datacentres, digital economies and freight and logistics – given their importance to our economic future.
- Deliver community needs to support society and the creation of healthy places.
- Support clean energy and the environment, including through support for onshore wind and renewables.

- 2.4. The above list sets out a clear vision for more growth, in both housing and employment.
- 2.5. The Local Plan Review was presented to Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024, prior to the publication of changes to the NPPF on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024. However, the consultation on the Local Plan Review did not commence until the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025, following the announcements by Government on national planning reform. As such, Coventry City Council had the opportunity to make changes to the Local Plan Review in light of the Government's announcements but chose not to do so.
- 2.6. The draft Local Plan Review fails to have the ambition to meet the Government's objectives, in particular when it comes to planning for development including delivery of new homes. The Government's intentions to meet the housing needs of the nation is very clear in the new NPPF. Accordingly, it is requested that Coventry fully consider and review the implications of the new NPPF and the Standard Method on the Local Plan Review now, to ensure that any unmet and unplanned development needs are met.
- 2.7. Notably, both the current (2024) and previous NPPF (2023) emphasise that Local Plans should proactively plan for their area, including helping to address the housing crisis. In this case, it is not considered that the Local Plan Review appropriately contributes to this national objective, and is therefore unsound.
- 2.8. Paragraph 1.10 of the Local Plan Review explains that the review is being progressed under the transitional arrangements available in the NPPF 2024, and is therefore being progressed in line with the NPPF, 2023. As such, these Representations consider consistency with national policy being the December 2023 version of the NPPF. However, comments are also made with regards to the extent of changes to the December 2024 NPPF.

### 3. Legal Compliance and Duty to Cooperate

#### Legal Compliance

- 3.1. Bellway Homes and Merton College raise no issues with the legal compliance of the Local Plan Review.

#### Duty to Cooperate

- 3.2. Bellway Homes and Merton College are concerned that the Duty to Cooperate has not been duly met by the Local Plan Review.
- 3.3. Local Planning Authorities are bound by the statutory duty to co-operate within the Localism Act 2011 and also the national guidance set out in the NPPF December 2023. Plan making bodies are expected to co-operate with each other when preparing or supporting the preparation of policies which address strategic matters including those policies of Local Plans. The NPPF states that these authorities should produce, maintain and update one or more statements(s) of common ground throughout the plan-making process. The Statement of Common Ground will form part of the evidence required to demonstrate compliance with the duty to co-operate.
- 3.4. Paragraph 26 of the NPPF (2023) refers to such cooperation as being “*Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular, joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary, and whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere.*” (Our emphasis)
- 3.5. It is noted that Coventry City Council have published a Duty to Co-operate Statement to accompany the Regulation 19 consultation. This justifies that there has been a long history of engagement with Coventry, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford on Avon District Council, Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Planning Authorities.
- 3.6. With regards to housing growth, it is explained that “*Coventry has always been clear that it did not expect any partners to deliver the cities uplift either as it would be arguing against this through the Local Plan process*”. The Duty to Co-operate Statement then goes on to explain that Coventry commissioned a Review of Coventry’s Local Housing Need (June 2024), which concluded that the HEDNA remained valid – findings which were shared with partners and no disagreement raised regarding Coventry’s approach. However, the Duty to Co-operate Statement does not refer to any Statement’s of Common Ground with any Local Planning Authorities confirming agreement to Coventry’s approach, and as such it is not clear that there is compliance with the duty to co-operate on this matter.
- 3.7. Bellway Homes and Merton College are concerned that wider collaboration and cross-boundary strategic issues and plan making has yet to be successfully implemented across the West Midlands. It is concerning that there has been a failure to grasp matters such as the delivery of needed housing, resulting in a failure to demonstrate proactive plan making.
- 3.8. Additionally, the Duty to Co-operate Statement explains that Coventry only has a supply of 60 hectares of employment land against a need for 105 hectares of employment land. Apparently, Coventry informed

other Local Planning Authorities that a Green Belt site was promoted for such use but rejected through site assessment work.

- 3.9. However, this leads to the Duty to Co-operate Statement setting out the following: *“Discussions are ongoing through CSWAP0 and with the linked duty to Co-operate Group and associated Local Authorities in regard to this matter, **but this currently remains an outstanding issue that has not yet been resolved** In part this is because most partner authorities are at earlier stages of plan preparation. In Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council’s case, they are in examination and at the time hearings were underway the extent of any shortfall details from Coventry were unknown. The authority is continuing to work to develop an MoU with partners and working to establish Statements of Common Ground.”* (Our emphasis)
- 3.10. It is very concerning that no solution has yet been found at this Regulation 19 to resolve the deficit of 45 hectares of employment land required to meet Coventry’s own needs. It is considered that at this stage, the duty to co-operate would be failed given that this engagement has not effectively resulted in a solution to inform the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. This conflicts with Paragraph 26 of the NPPF (2023).
- 3.11. It is considered that this failure to demonstrate the duty to co-operate on this matter also results in failing the test of soundness, meaning that the plan is unsound.

## 4. Comments on Draft Policies

- 4.1. It is noted that as part of the Regulation 19 consultation, a table has been published presenting the proposed policy updates and explanations for each of the proposed changes.
- 4.2. As such, the following section solely comments upon the draft changes proposed to the policies, and not the existing adopted policy wording.
- 4.3. Please note that Bellway Homes and Merton College only wish to comment upon certain policies, as set out below.

### **Policy DS1 - Overall Development Needs**

- 4.4. The Growth Needs Background Paper was published in November 2024. This Paper concluded that 29,100 homes should be planned for 2021 – 2041 (for which the need can be met in full), plus a 105 ha employment land requirement, of which 60 ha could be met in full, whilst noting that discussions are taking place to allocate the remainder under the duty to co-operate. Bellway Homes and Merton College are concerned that the changes proposed to Policy DS1 are unsound. The reasons for this are set out below.

#### *Plan Period*

- 4.5. Bellway Homes and Merton College are concerned that the plan period of 2021 – 2041 is not sufficient in duration. Paragraph 22 of the NPPF (2023) confirms that strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum of 15 years from adoption. The latest Local Development Scheme (December 2024) suggests that the plan will progress through Examination to adoption at the end of 2025.
- 4.6. However, this seems overly ambitious and very unlikely to match the reality of delays in plan making, which may result in adoption being later than the end of 2025. Consequently, the plan risks not providing the required 15 year period post adoption. Accordingly, it is recommended that the plan period is amended now.
- 4.7. In addition, the decision to use a plan period that commences in 2021, and 4 years before plan submission, does not reflect the forward-looking principles that the Government seeks for plan-making.

#### *Minimum of 29,100 Dwellings*

- 4.8. It is noted that Coventry are seeking to progress the Local Plan Review under the previous NPPF (2023), which means that the applicable standard method standard at such time utilised the 2014 population projections, plus requiring 35% urban uplift. National policy at such time was clear that the 2014 population projects should be used as the basis for housing needs, unless exceptional circumstances applied which justified an alternative approach.



4.9. Table 1 in the Growth Background Paper summarises the housing needs for Coventry as follows:

**Table 1: approaches to calculating Coventry's housing need**

	<b>Government default Standard Method (using the 2014 Population Projections)</b>	<b>HEDNA method</b>	<b>HEDNA method with the 35% uplift removed</b>
<b>Dwellings Per Annum (averaged over the 20 year plan period)</b>	3,188	1,964	1,455
<b>Total need over the 20 year plan period</b>	63,760	39,280	29,100

- 4.10. Coventry are suggesting that there are exceptional circumstances to deviate from the standard method (using the 2014 projections) and instead proposed to proceed with housing needs based on the HEDNA with 35% uplift removed.
- 4.11. Bellway Homes and Merton College are deeply concerned with this approach. In selecting the HEDNA method with 35% uplift removed, this results in meeting only 74.1% of Coventry's housing need, as set out in the HEDNA method itself. Given that Coventry are proceeding on the basis of justifying that the HEDNA contains the applicable housing need as opposed to the standard method, this would result in meeting below the 80% of such local housing needs claimed by the HEDNA.
- 4.12. Paragraph 234(a) of the NPPF (2024) on transitional arrangements confirms that 2023 NPPF will only apply where the plan itself meets 80% of its draft housing requirements. Whilst footnote 83 refers to the updated standard method (2024), as Coventry are arguing a deviation from the standard method, it is considered that the 80% of housing needs must therefore be considered against the HEDNA. In this case, this would mean that the transitional arrangements are not met, and therefore the Local Plan Review would need to be assessed against the 2024 NPPF.
- 4.13. The approach taken appears selective in respect of which elements of national policy the Council wishes to apply or not, resulting in artificially reduced housing requirement. This goes against Paragraph 15 of the NPPF (2023) which is clear that plans should provide a positive vision for future of each area to meet housing and other needs.
- 4.14. Ultimately, this conflicts with the objectives of Government in that the Local Plan Review proposes for the draft local plan to be examined under the December 2023 NPPF which is detrimental to housing supply and the proposed housing requirements, not meeting the standard method for local housing need.
- 4.15. Additionally, this must also be seen in the context of the five year housing land supply position published by Coventry City Council in the 2024 Annual Monitoring Report (dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024), which is only 2.59 years. There is an urgent need to increase the supply of housing in the City to help meet the identified national housing crisis. Additional housing must be planned for.
- 4.16. In this context, Coventry City Council should prepare a new local plan which adheres to the new NPPF (December 2024) and plans for at least the minimum local housing needs identified using the standard

method. This draft Local Plan Review does not do this and instead proposes a housing requirement which will not contribute towards addressing the housing crisis and current under delivery of housing in the City. New site allocations proposed the Regulation 19 document amount to only 11% of the Housing Land Supply Components (Table 6.1) for the entire 20 year plan period.

4.17. To this effect, it is considered completely inappropriate that Coventry are not looking to proactively plan for housing. Coventry could have reviewed the Green Belt to address the housing and employment land shortfalls (as discussed below) but has chosen not to do so. As such, Coventry have not looked to meet the relevant standard method, nor the 35% urban uplift. This results in conclusion that the plan should be found unsound, as the future development of Coventry has not been planned for.

4.18. Savills previously submitted Land at Rookery Farm, Coventry through the Call for Sites (September 2023). Savills can confirm that Bellway now have an interest in this site, and the site is readily available for a residential led, mixed use development of circa 900 – 1,200 dwellings. This site could play a vital role in meeting the unmet needs of Coventry.

*60ha of employment land and delivery of remainder of employment land within the Functional Market Area*

4.19. Bellway Homes and Merton College object to the current approach adopted. The Growth Background Paper and the amendments to Policy DS1 set out that there is a need for 105 hectares of employment land, and only 60 hectares can be met within Coventry City's administrative boundary, leaving a shortfall of 45 hectares.

4.20. It is disappointing that Coventry City Council have not considered releasing land in the Green Belt. Land at Rookery Farm was promoted through the Call for Sites for a residential led, mixed use development. Through discussions, it could be that Land at Rookery Farm could meet some of the needs for Coventry. To do so, Coventry City Council need to conduct a thorough and comprehensive review of the Green Belt, instead of relying on outdated paragraph's of the NPPF to avoid Green Belt release. Any future Local Plans or Local Plan Reviews will have to conduct such review under the new NPPF (2024).

4.21. As explained above under the duty to co-operate section and in the Growth Background Paper, there is currently discussions progressing with partners under the duty to co-operate, but no solution has yet been found. It is considered that the current lack of an approach was simply to benefit from the transitional arrangements under the December 2024 NPPF, but ultimately would result in the test of soundness being failed, as set out below.

*Comprehensive review of the plan within 5 years to assess if a full or partial review is required.*

4.22. Given the issues raised above, it is considered that a comprehensive review of the plan must be conducted immediately.

#### ***Policy DS1: Test of Soundness***

4.23. Bellway and Merton College's concerns relate to whether an Inspector would determine that the Coventry Local Plan Review could be found sound in accordance with the NPPF. More specifically, Paragraph 35 of the NPPF confirms that plans can be found sound when:

*"a) **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities,*

*so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development<sup>1</sup>;*

*b) **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;*

*c) **Effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and*

*d) **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.”*

4.24. There are very specific concerns that Policy DS1 will not meet overall development needs, and will not be found sound in accordance with Paragraph 35 of the NPPF. In particular:

- **Positively prepared** – It is clear that the strategy under Policy DS1 does not meet the area’s objectively assessed needs for housing or employment land. The approach to meeting housing needs ultimately conflicts with the standard method based on the 2014 household projections with 35% uplift. If Coventry are arguing that housing needs should be applied in accordance with the HEDNA with 35% uplift removed, then 80% of the area’s housing needs would not be met. This would mean that the plan cannot proceed under the NPPF 2023, and instead needs to be examined under the NPPF 2024. Additionally, no agreement has been reached with other Authorities to accommodate unmet employment needs. It is considered that the Local Plan Review has not positively considered meeting housing or employment needs.
- **Justified** – Bellway Homes and Merton College do not consider that there has been consideration to an appropriate strategy. Insufficient consideration has been given to Green Belt release, with limited consideration of reasonable alternatives. The current strategy is not justified.
- **Effective** – The Local Plan Review does not effectively meet the standard method housing needs, based on the 2014 housing projects with 35% urban uplift, nor does it present any suitable strategy to accommodate the 45ha of unmet employment land. No statements of common ground have yet been prepared to demonstrate that cross-boundary strategic matters have been duly resolved. The Local Plan Review as currently drafted does not present an effective strategy to meet housing or employment needs.
- **Consistent with national policy** – As explained above, Coventry are arguing that the Local Plan Review should be assessed under the NPPF 2023, to which the housing needs should be based on the standard method with 2014 housing projections with 35% urban uplift. It is not considered that such deviation from these requirements is consistent with national policy.

4.25. On this basis, it is considered that the test of soundness would be failed as the strategy presented is not positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

- 4.26. It is recommended that Coventry pause progress with the Local Plan Review and commence the preparation of a new Local Plan under the NPPF 2024.

#### **Policy JE1: Overall Economy and Employment Strategy**

- 4.27. It is noted that the policy confirms that the Council will work positively and proactively with businesses in the city, inward investors, universities, public sector employments, partners and neighbouring local authorities to support sustainable economic growth and job creation.
- 4.28. However, it is concerning that Coventry City Council have not developed a suitable strategy to meet Coventry's own employment needs within the city's administrative boundary – which will not help to support sustainable economic growth and job creation.

#### **Policy JE2: Provision of Employment Land and Premises**

- 4.29. This policy refers to 52ha of land being allocated for employment development. Policy DS1 confirms that 60ha would be allocated, and as such the numbers in this draft policy should be updated.

#### **Policy H1: Housing Land Requirements**

- 4.30. Please refer to comments above under Policy DS1 with regards to overall housing numbers and the plan period.

#### **Policy H3: Provision of New Housing**

- 4.31. A number of draft changes are proposed to Policy H3. Bellway and Merton College's comments are set out as follows.

##### *Part 1*

- 4.32. Under part (1), part (a) requires compliance with NDSS, part (c) requires all dwellings to be M4(2) compliant and part (d) requires 10% of all new dwellings to meet M4(3) requirements. Within the explanation in the Guidance Note on Changes to the Policies, it is confirmed to be demonstrated to be viable. Appendix 1 of the Aspinall Verdi Viability Assessment (August 2024) confirms that NDSS has been applied to all appraisals, and the following costings for M4(2) and M4(3):

	1-Bed Apartment	2-Bed Apartment	2-Bed Terrace	3-Bed Semi Detached	4-Bed Semi- Detached
M4(2)	£940	£907	£523	£521	£520
M4(3)(A) – Adaptable	£7,607	£7,891	£9,754	£10,307	£10,568
M4(3)(B) – Accessible	£7,764	£8,048	£22,238	£22,791	£23,052

*Source: EC Harris, 2014*

- 4.33. Bellway object to the requirements set out, introducing the requirement for all new residential dwellings to comply with Nationally Described Space Standards. The PPG (Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 56-003-20150327) states *'that Local Authorities should consider the impact of using these standards as part of*

*their Local Plan viability assessment.* Whilst the Aspinall Verdi Viability Assessment suggests that this is considered to be viable, the source for this cost data appears to be out of date and not representative of current build costs.

- 4.34. Additionally, there appears to be no justification within the evidence base for all dwellings to be M4(2) or 10% of dwellings to be M4(3) compliant. The PPG is clear that Local Planning Authorities should take into account the overall impact of such requirements on overall viability. The Aspinall Verdi Viability Assessment appears to utilise out of date information, and is not representative of current build costs.
- 4.35. The NPPF is clear that an efficient use of land should be made. In requiring all dwellings to be M4(2) compliant and 10% as M4(3) a greater land take is required, ultimately resulting in a lower density of development being achieved.
- 4.36. It is also requested that clarification is made within the draft policy that these requirements should be met, unless it has been proven to be viably or technically unable to do so. Notably, from our experience, it can be difficult to ensure that a scheme is fully M4(2) compliant, especially where a provision of apartments are proposed.

#### **Policy H6: Affordable Housing**

- 4.37. Policy H6 has been amended to reflect that positive weight will be given to schemes which contribute to the delivery of house types which address the Council's long-standing need for larger house types on the affordable waiting list. It must be acknowledged that Coventry are not positively planning to meet housing needs (as set out under Policy DS1 above), which ultimately is hindering the quantum of affordable housing delivered. It is necessary to allocate more sites to meet such affordable housing needs.

#### **Policy H9: Residential Density**

- 4.38. It is noted that Policy H9 has been amended to confirm that density should be informed by a site's local character and context. However, it is noted that part (3) suggests that new developments should seek to deliver certain densities, including 35dph for greenfield sites and 45dph for brownfield sites.
- 4.39. Part (3) should be amended to confirm that these densities are either an approximate or a minimum, and not a maximum, as it is unclear from the current wording.

#### **Policy GB1: Green Belt and Local Green Space**

- 4.40. It is noted that the updates to Policy GB1 have been supported by the Green Belt and Environment Background Paper (2024) and the Green Belt Technical Update (July 2024). Comments are set out below on these documents, followed by the draft changes to Policy GB1.
- 4.41. The Background Paper explains that whilst there was no requirement to review the Green Belt, the Green Belt Technical Update had been prepared to understand whether there had been any changes in terms of Coventry's remaining Green Belt since the original evidence base was produced.
- 4.42. As explained above, Bellway and Merton College object to the approach to meeting housing and employment needs under Policy DS1. As set out, it is considered that the overall strategy is unsound, particularly as Coventry are seeking to proceed under the NPPF 2023, as opposed to the NPPF 2024. To positively plan and create an effective and justified strategy, Coventry should review the Green Belt. NPPF

Paragraph 146 identifies that exceptional circumstance to undertake Green Belt review includes where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means. Some parts of the Green Belt must be released to meet Coventry's needs in full. Until this review is completed, it is considered that Coventry's strategy in the Local Plan Review is unsound.

- 4.43. Whilst it is noted that matters of Green Belt are dealt with by national policy, it is considered that Policy GBE1 should be updated to reflect changes in national policy and the introduction of the Grey Belt, regardless of the fact that Coventry are seeking for the Local Plan Review to be assessed against the NPPF 2023.

#### **New Policy DE2: Delivering High Quality Places**

- 4.44. It is noted that Part (5) to new Policy DE2 relates to meanwhile uses. Whilst the principle of considering meanwhile uses is positive, it is noted that the policy requires "Vacant plots/sites planned for redevelopment must investigate provision of meanwhile/temporary uses prior to commencement of any redevelopment work.". It is therefore not clear as to how such uses must be investigated and whether this needs to be formally demonstrated in any manner. This requirement would benefit from clarification.

#### **Policies EM1, EM11, EM12 and EM14**

*The Written Ministerial Statement for Local Energy Efficiency Standards (December 2023)*

- 4.45. It is important to ensure that all of the below policies are implemented in accordance with the Written Ministerial Statement (2023) which states:

*"The improvement in standards already in force, alongside the ones which are due in 2025, demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring new properties have a much lower impact on the environment in the future. In this context, the Government does not expect plan-makers to set local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned buildings regulations."*

#### **Policy EM1: Planning for Climate Change Adaptation**

- 4.46. Part (h) of the policy requires developments to meet net zero (regulated operational carbon) for residential and non-residential development, including the need to address embodied carbon and waste. Firstly, it is requested that this policy is updated to provide further detail on the net zero definition for regulated operational carbon.
- 4.47. Additionally, is requested that this policy wording is updated to provide more detail on how to address embodied carbon and waste.

#### **Policy EM11: Energy Infrastructure**

- 4.48. Part 4 requires that where viable, all major development should seek to deliver on site renewable energy generation standards. Part 4(a) requires on site annual renewable energy generation at least equal to the predicted annual total regulated and unregulated energy use. However, the requirement to generate regulated and unregulated energy use conflicts with Policy EM1's definition of regulated embodied carbon.
- 4.49. Part 6 relates to the reduced performance gap, but there are concerns that Part 6(a) to provide an assured performance method through all phases of construction to ensure operational energy in practice which



performs to predicted levels at the design stage. Bellway and Merton College are concerned that this is overly onerous.

- 4.50. Part 8 relates to post occupancy evaluation. There is a concern that 8(a) in monitoring and reporting total energy use and generation values on an annual basis, post 5 years of occupation may conflict with GDPR.

#### **Policy EM12: Reducing Operational Carbon in New Build Non-Residential Development**

- 4.51. It is requested that the policy is amended to provide more detail on the methodology.
- 4.52. Part 2(a) sets out targets for energy metrics, such as total energy use (65 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year) and space heating demands (15 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year). The targets here are very generic, especially for any non-residential uses.
- 4.53. Part 6 relates to the reduced performance gap, but there are concerns that Part 6(a) to provide an assured performance method through all phases of construction to ensure operational energy in practice which performs to predicted levels at the design stage. Bellway and Merton College are concerned that this is overly onerous.

#### **Policy EM14: Embodied Carbon and Waste**

- 4.54. Part 2 sets out the requirements for limiting embodied carbon. It is considered Part 2(a) is too generic to reflect a range of domestic and non-domestic uses.
- 4.55. Regarding Part 3(a) for planning for a building's end of life, it is considered that this will not be possible to demonstrate this. Clarification is required as to how to demonstrate compliance with this requirement.

## 5. Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2024)

- 5.1. As Coventry will be aware, Land at Rookery Farm was submitted through the Call for Sites for a residential led, mixed use development of circa 1,200 dwellings. Located between the Coundon Wedge Country Park and the Coundon Hall Park and play area, the opportunity exists to connect and enhance the local green network.
- 5.2. There are no major constraints within the site. There are small areas of woodland within the site but there are no TPOs or other protected trees or hedgerows. There are a small number of listed buildings and features at Coundon Lodge and Alveston Cottage on the eastern boundary of the site.
- 5.3. The site is in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore there at lowest risk of fluvial flooding. There are no Public Rights of Way within the site.
- 5.4. On this basis, the location of the site is continued to be considered appropriate for further strategic-scale, residential-led development, through forming a logical addition to Coventry. This location can provide access to the strategic and local road network, including public transport provision, such that the development would be well connected to Coventry City Centre, and the wider West Midlands.
- 5.5. An updated HELAA was published in November 2024. Land at Rookery Farm, Coventry was assessed under site reference BAB-011-24. As explained in the assessment, the site could have a capacity of 1,200 but in applying certain densities, between 1,530 – 1,785 dwellings.
- 5.6. Ultimately, the assessment of the site in the HELAA dismisses the site because the claim that the housing need can be delivered on brownfield sites, thus suggesting that the site can be considered to be unsuitable and not contribute to the housing land supply. Please refer to our concerns above under Policy DS1 around how Coventry proposed to meet its housing needs.
- 5.7. As explained within these Representations, Bellway and Merton College consider that the strategy applied by Coventry in the Local Plan Review to be unsound. This site remains to be readily available, and could substantially help meet Coventry's housing and potentially some of the unmet employment needs.
- 5.8. It is duly requested that Coventry re-consider the strategy to meet the needs of development, and reconsider this site. This site would make a significant and meaningful contribution to meeting Coventry's housing needs, and especially affordable housing needs – particularly in light of the significant failure of Coventry to meet the five year housing land supply requirements.



## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1. In conclusion, these representations have been prepared by Savills on behalf of Bellway Homes and Merton College in response to the Coventry City Local Plan Review Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Consultation.
- 6.2. As set out above, Bellway Homes and Merton College are significantly concerned by the approach to meeting the needs of development, for both housing and employment land. There are very specific concerns that Policy DS1 will not meet overall development needs, and will not be found sound in accordance with Paragraph 35 of the NPPF. In summary
- **Positively prepared** – It is clear that the strategy under Policy DS1 does not meet the area’s objectively assessed needs for housing or employment land, through not meeting the needs of the standard method with 2014 projects and 35% urban uplift, nor meeting Coventry’s employment needs.
  - **Justified** – Insufficient consideration has been given to Green Belt release, with limited consideration of reasonable alternatives.
  - **Effective** – The Local Plan Review does not effectively meet housing or employment needs.
  - **Consistent with national policy** – Inconsistent with the transitional arrangements, which suggest that the Local Plan Review should be assessed against the NPPF 2024, which requires the Green Belt to be reviewed to meet the areas full development needs.
- 6.3. Accordingly, it is considered that the Local Plan Review is **unsound**. For these reasons, Bellway Homes and Merton College object to the Local Plan Review as drafted.
- 6.4. It is requested that the strategy is reviewed and full Local Plan update is commenced. It is suggested that land should be released from the Green Belt, such as Land at Rookery Farm, Coventry. This site remains readily available for development, and could significantly help to meet Coventry’s housing needs.

