

PANEL NOTE 2 : PROGRAMMING OF DEVELOPMENT AREAS

RESPONSE OF THE BARTON WILLMORE PARTNERSHIP

1. The Panel is seeking information on the expected start date, broad programme for development and strategic infrastructure implications of the major search areas.
2. Barton Willmore has submitted evidence on likely completion rates on major development sites (Volume 2, page 3, section 1.3). This concluded, based on delivery rates at Bradley Stoke and North Swindon, that about 500 dwellings a year could be anticipated on the larger development areas. However, smaller developments such as Locking Castle and Emersons Green produced an average 200 and 300 completions a year respectively and this may be a more appropriate rate for the smaller development areas.
3. Development rates often exceeded the average by some margin but not over a sustained period.
4. Ultimately, the number of completions will depend on the rate at which the homes can be sold. This is influenced by the number of developers on a particular site. The requirement for affordable housing could help to increase output since a proportion of it does not have to be sold, and it will be provided in parallel with market housing.
5. Another key piece of information is the likely start date. This will depend on
 1. The time it takes to secure planning consent;
 2. In some cases land assembly will be an issue;
 3. In some cases provision of major infrastructure will be an issue.
6. Our submission is that the critical path will be the time taken to secure planning permission. This will require the following processes to be undergone and we have added what we consider to be minimum timescales to these processes:
 1. Preparation and approval of LDF Core Strategy (Year 3);
 2. Preparation and approval of LDF allocations document or Area Action Plan including review of Green Belt boundaries in some cases (Year 4);
 3. Submission of outline planning application and approval including Section 106 Agreement (Year 6);

4. Approval of first phases of reserved matters (Year 7);
 5. Site preparation, enabling infrastructure and initial house construction (Year 8);
 6. Meaningful level of house completions from Year 9.
7. This is a lengthy process which could easily take ten years or more. Moreover, although work on core strategies is already underway in many authorities the process cannot be pursued with certainty until at least the Panel Report has been received because of changes that could occur to the RSS. This could delay the start of meaningful work on core strategies until the start of 2008. This could delay meaningful completions until 2017.
8. This is clearly much too late to deliver the larger urban extensions in full by 2026.
9. It could be argued that these urban extensions do not have to be completed by 2026 just because it is the end date for the RSS. However, this misses the point that the RSS strategy is predicated upon it. If there is widespread failure to deliver on the urban extensions a big hole is created in the strategy. As such, the strategy would fail to focus on delivery mechanisms, thereby failing the second test of soundness.
10. We consider that this issue is particularly acute in the West of England and East Swindon, and to a lesser extent Cheltenham, which are the largest urban extensions. The situation at Exeter (Area J) and Plymouth (Area R) is much less acute since both projects are well advanced through the planning system.
11. We would wish the Panel to draw the following general conclusions from this situation.
12. First, if a step change in housing provision is to be achieved these urban extensions need to be brought forward as early as possible, and delivery within the period to 2026 maximised. This is necessary to deliver the RSS strategy. It becomes even more important in delivering the higher rate of development we consider is required. This means that work must start on their planning as soon as possible and no later than receipt of the Panel Report, and our suggested delivery timescale for planning permission has to be significantly reduced. We suggest that consideration needs to be given to appointing dedicated delivery teams for each of

the major urban extensions who can put in place the necessary policy context and delivery mechanisms.

13. Second, if it is apparent that an urban extension will not deliver all its dwellings by 2026, then alternative provision must be made to meet the shortfall. This should be done now as far as possible and the Panel's initiative in seeking further information on this issue is welcomed.
14. Third, urban extensions need to be planned comprehensively even if development is expected to extend beyond 2026. The full extent of the urban extension and, where necessary, the Green Belt release need to be identified now to guide the preparation of LDFs.
15. Finally, the Panel has asked for information on infrastructure requirements and their effect on the delivery of urban extensions. The only issue on which we have specific knowledge is the South Bristol Ring Road and its effect on the South East Bristol Urban Extension.
16. We submitted evidence to the effect that first house completions on this urban extension should take place in 2014 or 2015 for the site to deliver 6,000 dwellings by 2026 at 500 a year. We submitted that this would be a challenging target. We also submitted evidence that 800 dwellings could be provided without the need for additional public transport routes or major highways infrastructure. These dwellings would take until about 2016 to complete which coincides with the start of construction on the final phases of the Ring Road. This would meet Bath & North East Somerset's requirement for a commitment to supporting infrastructure (see Representations Vol 2 page 17).
17. We consider that the programming of the later phases of the Ring Road need to be advanced and we have proposed that the Road should be started from its eastern end, with a direct link to the M4 at Pucklechurch to give maximum regeneration benefit to the South of Bristol as early as possible (see Representations Vol 2 pages 21 and 22).