



HEARING STATEMENT

in respect of
South Staffordshire Local Plan Examination Matter 17
on behalf of
UKLD Ltd

10 April 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This hearing statement is made by RCA Regeneration Ltd on behalf of UKLD Ltd to the South Staffordshire Local Plan (SSLP) EIP.
- 1.2. This statement relates to Matter 17 – Delivery and Monitoring.
- 1.3. We have not provided answers to all questions under this heading and have only offered answers where we consider it to be necessary.

2. Matter 17: Delivery and Monitoring

Issue: Whether the effectiveness of the Plan, in terms of delivery of its proposals and any consequences of that, can be measured.

Question 1 How has viability been considered in plan preparation? Is there a proportionate assessment of plan viability? Is it sufficiently flexible to respond to relevant changes which may occur during the plan period?

- 2.1. We have already (in previous matters statements) highlighted the concern we have over the mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) now required on all sites including previously developed land. It is a significant cost to development, either through the loss of development 'coverage' or as a development cost in addition to build and site abnormalities.
- 2.2. Whilst this has been considered in some scenarios in the viability assessment that accompanies the local plan, it is not clear how (in particular) previously developed sites have been treated in the modelling work. In practice we have found that the BNG requirement has resulted in already difficult sites (in terms of abnormal costs) becoming completely unviable for housing delivery, particularly if they have a 'valuable' baseline position (for example an 'open mosaic' typology). It can be impossible to justify expensive offsite credit purchase in addition to factoring in site abnormalities (such as demolition and site clearance, ground remediation, retaining structures and so on) as well as BNG and planning gain. Clearly, s106 contributions can be negotiable, but we have found that even without such contributions schemes struggle to be financially viable.
- 2.3. We are not convinced that in all scenarios the viability testing has taken account of the significant effect that the 10% BNG requirement is now having on the delivery of housing on previously developed sites – and it is likely to be even worse on previously developed employment sites.
- 2.4. We do not consider there is flexibility within the assessments to allow for such costs to be taken into consideration and this is likely to result in a number of previously developed sites never being viable to deliver housing.

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