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Date: 26 April 2019

My Ref:

Your Ref

Dear Ian

I write further to the letter received from ABCA of 8th February 2019 which confirmed that, even by increasing densities and looking to other sources of urban land supply there will remain a shortfall in the region of 22,000 dwellings and 300ha of employment land.

The letter also recognised the opportunity for further investment near RAF Cosford in Shropshire to strengthen the economic role of the M54 Corridor and support the nationally significant clusters of aerospace and high technology manufacturing activity in the Black Country around M54 Junction 2. ABCA noted that the area benefits from strong physical connections to the Black Country in the form of the M54 and rail line and could be well placed to directly meet a proportion of the unmet employment land and housing needs arising from the Black Country and wider HMA.

On 20th March 2019, Shropshire Council's Cabinet approved in principle to explore the benefits to Shropshire of accepting a proportion of unmet development needs from the Black Country Authorities, and to engage further with neighbouring authorities to develop positive proposals to meet these development needs and provide local employment opportunities. We anticipate that this will then be brought forward for Cabinet to consider as part of the Local Plan Review Preferred Strategic Sites consultation later in 2019.

Our earlier response recognised that there may be an opportunity for a proportion of the Local Plan housing allocations to be attributed to meeting needs arising in the Black Country whilst at the same time achieving Shropshire's strategic growth aspirations. However, in order to be able to make a positive recommendation to our members to allocate land at Junction 3, we are likely to require some publishable evidence if we are to be able to justify the release of such a large quantity of Green Belt land, including:

1. A review of the strategic Green Belt review including Landscape Sensitivity Assessment recently commissioned from LUC for the Black Country and South Staffordshire;
2. An outline of potential alternative opportunities (including those in the West Midlands Green Belt) which are available to meet unmet Black Country development needs;
3. A commitment to entering into a NPPF compliant statement of common ground with neighbouring authorities;
4. Support for engagement with key funding bodies including WMCA and relevant LEPs, infrastructure providers and Homes England;
5. Headline outcomes from the West Midlands Strategic Employment Study, 2019 which is currently being carried out by Arcadis and Avison Young.

Ideally a response on as many of these items as possible would be available to accompany our report to Cabinet on 12th June regarding the potential allocation of preferred strategic sites, although we accept that your current Local Plan timetable and local elections may frustrate the availability of some detailed evidence. Further detailed evidence could therefore be provided as part of any response from ABCA during the subsequent consultation which will take place over the coming summer.

I look forward to hearing from you and am very happy to discuss the details of this request by phone as required.

Yours sincerely

Gemma Davies

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