

**Wyre Forest District Council
Site Allocations and Policies DPD
Examination in Public**

Hearing Statement on behalf of the Homes and
Communities Agency, Department of Health, and
the Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership Trust
(Respondent Reference: SALPP 208/ 211)

Matter 10 – Green Belt

January 2013

AMEC Environment & Infrastructure UK Limited

Angus Martin (AMEC) on behalf of the landowners of the former Lea Castle Hospital site: Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Department of Health, and the Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership Trust

MATTER 10 – GREEN BELT

Respondent Reference: SALPP208/ 211

Question 1. Concerns are raised about the viability of development on the former Lea Castle Hospital site. Is the relevant section of Policy SAL.PDS1 sufficiently flexible to ensure that the re-development of the site is deliverable?

Subsequent to our representations on the Pre-Submission Publication version of the Wyre Forest District Council Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (SALDPD), and in the absence of any other evidence on the viability and deliverability of the proposed land use mix for the former Lea Castle Hospital site under Policy SAL.PDS1, the landowners commissioned Divers Jonas Deloitte (DJD) to prepare a viability report. The evidence in this report led the authors to conclude that without a residential element, the land uses proposed in the policy would be commercially unviable. The results of a market assessment, also presented in the report, suggest that this situation is likely to remain for the foreseeable future thereby limiting the ability to bring any development forward on the former Lea Castle site during the plan period.

A range of development scenarios were tested by DJD using Argus Developer software. By producing a highly negative result in viability terms for B1 employment development, the results demonstrate why there has been no developer interest in the site since it was closed as a hospital and why this land use is unlikely to be delivered on its own. Including the prospect of C2, D1 or D2 uses does not materially change this position. However, illustrated by the strong interest from housebuilders, DJD concluded that residential uses may be valuable enough to enable redevelopment of the site to potentially incorporate

an element of land reserved for alternative uses, as well as meet planning obligations.

The results of the viability work have been shared with Wyre Forest District Council with the aim of agreeing amendments to the wording of Policy SAL.PDS1. Having regard to this evidence, a Statement of Common Ground has been prepared and agreed between the landowners and Council. Under the SOCG we consider the proposed amended wording to Policy SAL.PDS1 to be sufficiently flexible to ensure that both the re-development of the site is deliverable and that the DPD will be consistent with the NPPF, which encourages local authorities to plan positively for the re-use of previously developed sites, including those in the Green Belt so long as redevelopment would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

END.