South Oxfordshire Core Strategy Examination

Statement by Providence Land Limited on the National Planning Policy Framework

14 May 2012

In terms of the overall housing numbers, the DPD is considered to be legally compliant and sound in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Meeting the overall total housing figure allocated to South Oxfordshire in the South East Plan (with minor adjustments) is considered to be an appropriate overall target. This amount of housing has been rigorously tested with consideration of a comprehensive evidence base. The DPD makes every effort to objectively identify and then meet the housing needs of South Oxfordshire by taking account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and sets out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities (core planning principle in paragraph 17 of the NPPF).

The proposed distribution of housing allocations is considered to be inconsistent with the NPPF as it is based on a notional top-down 60:40 split between market towns and larger villages resulting in clear risk of harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside around the market towns as indicated by the preliminary conclusion by the Inspector that it is unclear from the evidence presented whether the scale of new homes could be accommodated on Site F in Thame without harm to the local landscape. Site F is a sensitive site due to its visual sensitivity and the proximity of important landscapes, in particular a locally important river valley. It has not been demonstrated that the proposed scale of development accords with the core planning principles set out in paragraph 17 of the NPPF, including:

- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it; and
• contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework.