

Our Ref: IS/LM

27 August 2004

The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Committee
15 Links Road
PRESTWICK
KA9 1QG

For the attention of Ian Johnson

Dear Sirs

GROWING AYRSHIRE – DRAFT AJSP 2025
GEORGE WIMPEY STRATEGIC LAND LIMITED

We are instructed by George Wimpey Strategic Land to make representations to the AJSP 2025 Consultation Draft.

Question 1 – Vision Statement

In general, our clients welcome the proposed change in direction for strategic policies in Ayrshire. It is noted that the region's employment levels are showing little sign of recovery which, allied to a declining and ageing population, will compromise the ability of Ayrshire to realise its full economic potential. In this respect, we support the fact that the new Structure Plan will have at its foundation, a strategy for population recovery and prosperity through new housing opportunities as well as through economic activity. The statements at Para. 2.7 are supported in terms of the "pressing need" to address falling population and revitalise communities within Ayrshire.

In addition to forecasting housing demand, an important element of the strategy will be a review of the effectiveness of the housing land supply. Marketability is a key aspect of defining effective housing land and a pragmatic view should be taken in respect of locations where potential purchasers are unlikely to choose to live. If the housing land supply is characterised by marketable sites, this will go a long way to ensuring that the house completion targets to be identified in the structure plan are met.

Question 2 – Future Population Strategy

In terms of the spatial development strategy therefore, George Wimpey supports the draft Plan's objective to minimise population loss in the first place and then to provide the basis for population growth, in doing so, contributing to national planning objectives. Referring to the population options at Table 1, our clients strongly advocate that the upper target of stabilising Ayrshire population by 2017 should be pursued. A less aspirational target runs the risk of failing to address declining population levels in the future if current trends become accelerated.

Questions 5 and 6 – Core Investment Area and Investment Corridors

The spatial development strategy is correct to direct future physical development to the core settlements of Ayr, Irvine and Kilmarnock, based on existing population, activity and services

in these towns. However, the need to distribute this in a balanced manner across Ayrshire's other communities within the Investment Corridors and main outlying centres is also supported. This spatial strategy is important to maximising opportunities for investment and development, thereby increasing choice and supporting existing communities.

For example, our clients have land interests in the Stewarton area which is recognised as part of the Glasgow Link Investment Corridor due to the strong road and rail connections to Glasgow. There is continuing development potential in this corridor due to its accessibility advantages and we support the view that additional housing provision should be identified and promoted within the existing communities. In addition, opportunities to integrate new development with landscape enhancement, greenspace renewal or habitat creation, as part of an overall investment package, is welcomed.

Question 13 Future Housing Provision

As stated, our clients support the view at Para. 3.11 of the draft Plan that a development strategy based on current GRO based population projections is not a viable option for Ayrshire. A strategy which seeks to stem out migration and offer improved housing choice in order to stabilise population levels is the only positive choice for the region.

As such, the scale of housing allocations, set out at Table 2 for East Ayrshire, on the basis of a stable population scenario, is supported. George Wimpey Strategic Land does not consider that an annual completion rate of 1,700 homes is over ambitious given the attractiveness of the Ayrshire region and, indeed, East Ayrshire has already experienced a significant uplift in the housing market in line with upgrading of the M77. It is recognised that a balanced approach to growth will be required but the sequential approach to housing, consistent with the settlement hierarchy, as outlined at Para. 3.15, is considered a sound approach.

We note at Schedule 3 that 1,200 units is the proposed housing allocation in the Glasgow Link Corridor to 2025. Our clients would be willing to discuss with the Structure Plan Team appropriate distribution of this allocation within the Glasgow Link Corridor in order that opportunities and constraints are identified in time to be taken into account in the Finalised Structure Plan.

In this regard, we trust you welcome our client's representation to the Draft Structure Plan and look forward to your acknowledgement and responses in due course. Should you require any further information in support of this submission, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Ian Stanger, MRTPI

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Enc (Respondee Form – by email)