

From: Iain Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 May 2025 12:45
To: Plan Policy
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Homes, Spaces, Places – Shaping Tameside for Tomorrow - Options and Preferences Consultation

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Dear Sir or Madam

Please find below the comments of the Watkin Jones Group PLC (WJG) in relation to the 'Homes, Spaces, and Places - Shaping Tameside for Tomorrow - Options and Preferences Consultation'.

About The Watkin Jones Group

With a focus on delivering for our customers since 1791, WJG is the UK's leading developer and manager of residential for rent homes. By spearheading this sector, WJG is creating the future of living for a diverse and growing group of people who want flexibility, convenience, and a strong sense of community alongside the best location and value. Its purpose-built build to rent (BTR, multifamily), co-living and student homes are designed and built sustainably, and welcome people from all backgrounds to enjoy a great way of life, generating a positive impact for wider communities. Beyond residential for rent, its successful and well-established house building division has an increasing focus on the delivery of affordable and BTR single family homes.

With increasing pressure on many areas to speedily deliver new housing, WJG has an excellent track record of creating homes expediently without compromising on quality. Its in-house construction capacity means that it can rapidly boost housing supply. Over the last 25 years WJG has delivered approximately 60,000 homes and has a significant pipeline. This includes a significant number of homes at Droylsden Marina.

Today, WJG successfully works across every part of the UK focusing on centrally located, previously developed sites. WJG's end-to-end delivery model means that it acquires, designs, and builds places, and typically remain within communities as on-site building managers. Fresh is its multi award-winning operator-arm, who are currently managing approximately 20,000 rental homes across the UK and Ireland.

Scope of Representations

These representations focus on:

- Policy approach HSP-H1 'Homes'
- The Council's call for sites.

Policy Approach HSP-H1 'Homes'

Paragraph 63 of the NPPF states (my emphasis in bold):

*"Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; **people who rent their homes** and people wishing to commission or build their own homes".*

Despite policy approach HSP-H1 and paragraph 5.21 of the consultation document referring to the need to assess the need for specific groups of people, and develop policies supporting these, there is no reference of the requirement to assess the need of those who wish to rent their homes and develop policies to reflect this need. To ensure that the new Local Plan is effective in delivering the homes needed by Tameside's residents, it is important that the Council undertakes this given a significant and continuing shift across the UK to people renting their homes instead of buying.

There are several forms of rental homes typically owned by institutional investors and managed by specialist operators, who offer a comprehensive suite of events and support residents' every need. Given the way in which they are funded, they can deliver a large quantum of homes quickly and to a high quality, as they are not dependent on individual unit sales like within 'for sale' housing developments. The Council should consider the need for these within the borough and develop positive planning policies within the emerging Local Plan to support their delivery.

They include:

- *BTR multifamily apartments* - these are apartment focused developments which offer a variety of communal facilities (e.g. lounges, workspaces, gym) for their residents. Not only have they been popular within large city centres (e.g. Manchester and London) but are also now increasingly popular within smaller city and town centres, particularly those which are accessible to the larger city centres by public transport. For examples, BTR has been extensively delivered within the towns surrounding central London over the last decade and is now being delivered more widely across Greater Manchester (e.g. Grainger's 'The Rock' in Bury). They are typically popular within 25- to 35-year-olds who want flexibility before purchasing a home, but have also proven popular with others (e.g. retirees who sell the family home and want a high quality, managed home close to leisure and cultural amenities).
- *BTR single family homes* - these are housing focused developments where estates are built for rent from new. They are typically owned by institutional investors or developers (e.g. Legal and General, Sigma) and are now being delivered extensively across Greater Manchester. They appeal to all ages.
- *Co-living* - these are an offshoot of BTR multifamily apartments. Individual room sizes are smaller and are typically provided as studios but are offset by large communal facilities (larger than BTR multifamily) where residents can interact with likeminded individuals. Such communal facilities can be varied but typically comprise communal kitchens, co-working spaces, lounges, gyms, private dining spaces etc. With co-living having been extensively delivered across the UK within the last five to ten years, clear trends are emerging. They are typically occupied by 18-30 years old who desire this socially focused form of living (e.g. younger workers, recent graduates), but have been popular with others (e.g. those working within a town or city for a relatively short period).

WJG recommends that the Council prepare an updated housing needs assessment to understand the need for the above forms of homes within Tameside, as it expects that they increasingly form part of the mix of homes delivered over the emerging Local Plan period. It is therefore important that the Council assesses the needs for them now, and develops positive policies within the Local Plan which secures their delivery.

WJG also recommends that the Council looks to the co-living approach defined by the Greater London Authority (GLA), as this was developed following consultation with co-living operators and residents. The GLA's approach towards co-living is detailed within Policy H16 of the London Plan (2021) and the Large Scale Purpose Built Shared Living London Plan Guidance (2024).

WJG supports the approach detailed within policy approach HSP-H1 and paragraph 8.5 of the consultation document which seeks to deliver homes within town centres at higher densities. This is a sustainable approach which secures many benefits such as: reducing the need to travel; reducing the reliance on the private car; and increasing footfall to support the shops, businesses and amenities within those centres.

Call for Sites

Within the Council's call for sites in July 2024, WJG promoted a site on Durham Street for all forms of residential development (e.g. for sale housing, BTR, co-living, extra care, purpose-built student accommodation). The site has been registered by the Council as Site 1 on its Call for Sites Map and within the Council's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2024) under reference H-DROEST-099.

WJG continues to promote this site for allocation within the emerging Local Plan and would be happy to provide any further information which the Council requires.

Final Comment

Should you wish to discuss our representation in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED].

Kind regards
Iain

Iain Smith
Planning Director

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