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# EXAMINATION STATEMENT – MATTER 05

## St Albans City and District Council - Local Plan

Representations on behalf of:  
Crest Strategic Projects  
Bloor Homes  
The Ivory family  
Trustees of M E Simons 1999 Discretionary Trust  
Mr Wimms  
(ID: 1158079)

December 2019

**EXAMINATION STATEMENT – MATTER 05**  
**ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT - LOCAL PLAN**  
**REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF:**  
**CREST STRATEGIC PROJECTS**  
**BLOOR HOMES**  
**THE IVORY FAMILY**  
**TRUSTEES OF M E SIMONS 1999 DISCRETIONARY TRUST**  
**MR WIMMS**  
**DECEMBER 2019**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Barton Willmore LLP on behalf of Crest Strategic Projects, Bloor Homes, the Ivory family, Trustees of M E Simons 1999 Discretionary Trust and Mr Wimms (referred to as “the developers”), who have land interests at North-East Harpenden, hereinafter referred to as “the Site”. The submitted St Albans City and District Council (SACDC) Local Plan earmarks the Site as a Broad Location for Growth (Policy S6 (vii)).
- 1.2 Representations have been made on behalf of our Clients throughout the production of the Local Plan, including to:
- i) Strategic Local Plan – Reg 18 Consultation (Nov 2014)<sup>1</sup>;
  - ii) Publication Draft Local Plan – Reg 19 Consultation (Feb 2016)<sup>2</sup>;
  - iii) “Have Your Say” – Reg 18 Consultation (Feb 2018); and
  - iv) Publication Draft Local Plan – Reg 19 Consultation (Oct 2018).
- 1.3 The Local Plan was submitted (March 2019) after transitional arrangements for applying the 2012 NPPF ceased to apply and so the 2019 NPPF is wholly applicable to and reference is therefore made to the 2019 NPPF in responses to the Inspector’s questions, unless otherwise stated.
- 1.4 These representations respond to the Inspector’s questions (where relevant) within Matter 05 and have been considered in the context of the tests of ‘Soundness’ as set out in the NPPF (Para 35). The NPPF tests require that a Plan is:
- **Positively Prepared** – the Plan should provide a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
  - **Justified** – the Plan should be an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
  - **Effective** – the Plan should be deliverable over the Plan period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
  - **Consistent with National Policy** – the Plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF.

<sup>1</sup> This related to the Strategic Local Plan as withdrawn from Examination by SACDC (2017).

<sup>2</sup> As per footnote 1 above.

- 1.5 Notwithstanding the land interests of our Clients, these representations have been prepared in objective terms in recognition of prevailing planning policy and guidance, in particular the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance.

## 2.0 RESPONSE TO MATTER 05 – OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED NEEDS

**Main Issue: Whether the Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy in relation to the overall provision for housing and employment land.**

*Question 2. Are any starting point Local Housing Need adjustments necessary?*

- 2.1 The Local Plan seeks to meet the Government’s Standardised Methodology for Assessing Housing Needs over the 16-year Plan period (2020 – 2036) as 14,608 new dwellings (i.e. 913dpa). This aspect of the Plan is supported.
- 2.2 However, it is considered that the above housing target should be treated as a minimum figure in the light of the following circumstances:
- St Albans has an acute affordability problem. Housing need must be sufficient to improve this issue and deliver the sufficient affordable housing as per the Local Plan objectives.
  - The standard methodology incorporates an adjustment to the calculation of local housing need based on the median affordability ratio. St Albans has the 12<sup>th</sup> highest affordability ratio in England and Wales (4<sup>th</sup> outside of London).
  - The proposed Standard Methodology includes a “cap” at 40% above baseline housing need. In order to address affordability/market signals, an uncapped figure for housing need would result in 1,172dpa.
- 2.3 The proposed need in SACDC is therefore considered to extend up to 1,172dpa and it is advised that the figure of 913dpa be treated as a minimum in line with the NPPF (para 35) which seeks for Local Plans to be positively prepared, and as a minimum meets the area’s objectively assessed needs. It is therefore considered appropriate that **Policy S4** is amended as follows:

**The minimum housing requirement/~~target~~ over the 16-year period 2020-2036 is 14,608 additional homes at an overall average of 913 homes per annum.**

[Proposed additional text underlined and deleted text ~~struck through~~.]

***Question 4. Is the stepped trajectory in Policy S4 and appendix 2 of the Plan appropriate and justified?***

- 2.4 Our response to this question is set out in further detail in our Matter 08 Statement. Notwithstanding this, we outline the relevant points below.
- 2.5 **Policy S4** sets out a staggered rate of delivery (i.e. stepped trajectory) in SACDC as follows:
- 2020 – 2025: 565dpa;
  - 2025 – 2030: 1,075dpa;
  - 2030 – 2036: 1,075dpa; and
  - Average of 913dpa between 2020 – 2036.
- 2.6 The Planning Practice Guidance<sup>3</sup> recognises that stepped trajectories can be used in Plan-making. Such trajectories should however only be applied where site delivery requires long lead-in times or where infrastructure is a prerequisite to development (thus resulting in later delivery).
- 2.7 The objective of the Plan should be to meet needs across the entire duration of the Plan, particularly within the first five years of the Plan. Stepping/staggering development towards the mid/back end of the Plan period should only be considered if this is not achievable.
- 2.8 Where the trajectory relates to the Site at North-East Harpenden, we have undertaken a thorough review of SACDC's evidence base and cannot identify any justification for why the Site has been "stepped back" in the trajectory as commencing from 2026/27.
- 2.9 To the contrary, the SHLAA and the Development Site and Strategy Options Evaluation (DSSOE) assessments for the Site do not identify any constraints to development at the Site that would prevent delivery earlier than 2026/27. Additionally, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) does not identify the necessity for wider/strategic-level infrastructure schemes to be delivered before development in this location can take place.
- 2.10 Within our previous representations (to both the Regulation 18 and 19 consultation versions of the submitted Local Plan), we clearly demonstrated the ability of the Site to come forward early in the Plan period (from 2022/23) – our delivery programme (**Appendix 1**) sets this out.

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to ID: 68-019-20190722 (PPG)

- 2.11 Our position was supported through technical input (as part of our Reg 18/19 representations) for the Site (including on landscape, landform, ecology, highways, access, drainage, infrastructure and archaeology) which confirms that there are no constraints to development/timing for delivery.
- 2.12 In the light of the above, SACDC's stepped trajectory (as proposed by Policy S4 and set out in Appendix 2 of the Plan) for the Site at North-East Harpenden is not appropriate or justified. It is therefore recommended that the trajectory is revised to allow for development to commence at the Site from 2022/23.



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Developers' Delivery Programme for North-East Harpenden**

# LAND AT NORTH-EAST HARPENDEN INDICATIVE HOUSING DELIVERY (OCTOBER 2018)



Year	Dwellings Delivered*	Cumulative Delivery	Supporting Infrastructure to Meet On-Site Needs
2020/2021	LOCAL PLAN ADOPTION / OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION		
2021/2022	RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATIONS / CONDITION DISCHARGE / SECTION 106 OBLIGATIONS		
2022/2023	COMMENCE ON SITE		
2022/2023	50	50	
2023/2024	80	130	
2024/2025	80	210	2FE Primary School / Early Years
2025/2026	80	290	Local Centre inc. GP Surgery / Flexi-care scheme
2026/2027	80	370	
2027/2028	80	450	
2028/2029	80	530	
2029/2030	80	610	
2030/2031	80	690	
2031/2032	70	760	

\*Encompassing: - Flexi-care scheme  
- Special needs accommodation  
- Self/Custom build

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