

## **MATTER 8:**

# **HOUSING LAND SUPPLY**

**St Albans Local Plan Examination in Public Hearings**

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF STACKBOURNE LIMITED**

**December 2019**



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of Stackbourne Ltd, the freeholder and promoter for land at Smallford Works, Smallford.
- 1.2 This Statement is made in response to the published 'Matters, Issues and Questions'. This Statement covers those questions posed within Matter 8 – The Supply and Delivery of Housing Land.
- 1.3 Stackbourne Ltd has submitted an outline application (Ref: 5/2019/3022) for up to 100 dwellings for land at Smallford Works, demonstrating that there are no technical constraints to the delivery of the site, the principle of residential development for up to 100 dwellings can be considered acceptable when assessed against the policies of the NPPF, and there are significant benefits that would result from its redevelopment, including:
- Environmental enhancements from the clean-up of intensive industrial uses to that of residential, including a significant increase in green infrastructure;
  - Fewer overall trips at peak AM, PM and throughout the day compared to the existing use, including the removal of a significant number of HGV trips throughout the day; and
  - The provision of much needed market and affordable housing in an area of historic significant shortfall in housing delivery and some of the worst affordability for local residents in the country.

## 2 HOUSING SUPPLY

- 2.1 The Council's stated supply over the Plan period amounts to some 14,872 dwellings, as set out in the table at Appendix 2 to the Plan. However, this includes a number of unsound assumptions, which are detailed below, and have the effect of undermining the soundness of the whole Plan.
- 2.2 Our Matter 3 Hearing Statement sets out our very significant concerns regarding the deliverability of the windfall assumptions within the trajectory. When combined with all facets of the trajectory that we would consider "windfall", this amounts to a total of 3,487 dwellings over the Plan period. It would be for the Council to provide robust evidence to support its final windfall figure. For comparison, the below table provides the adopted windfall assumptions for a number of recently (2019) adopted Local Plans:

**Table 2.1: Windfall Assumptions of Recently Adopted Local Plan**

Local Planning Authority	Windfall Assumption (per annum)	Housing Requirement (per annum)
Guildford	50	562
Stevenage	20	380
Rushmoor	21	436
Rugby	45	540
Peterborough	97	1,080
Huntingdonshire	80	843
Ashford	56	786

- 2.3 Even applying a generous 10% of the total housing requirement, the Council could assume a total windfall of some 91 dpa or approximately 1,365 dwellings.
- 2.4 The Council cites a "Current known/expected delivery of (2020-36) of 3,906 dwellings. We cannot see where this figure has come to or what it specifically includes. For this section, we would suggest inclusion of just those sites under construction or benefiting from an approved (or resolution to approve) planning permission. This would come to just 1,045 dwellings or combined with the above windfall assumption would come to 2,410 dwellings.

- 2.5 With regard to the strategic growth locations, there is no justification for any of these to be included within the first five years of delivery. The NPPF definition of deliverable states:

*“Deliverable: To be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. In particular:*

*a) sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission, and all sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (for example because they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans).*

*b) where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years.”*

- 2.6 The Lichfields paper “Start to Finish” looked at lead-in times and build out rates for 70 sites of 500+ dwellings, as well as 83 ‘small sites’ of 50-499 dwellings. In regard to lead-in times, this concluded that from the date of validation of an application the period to the delivery of the first unit on site increases with larger sites; with the total period for sites over 500 units being in the order of 5.3 – 6.9 years. This is particularly true where sites are constrained by complex planning issues such as environmental constraints and/or infrastructure provision. This concludes *“Large sites are typically not quick to deliver; in the absence of a live [consented] planning application, they are, on average, unlikely to be contributing to five year housing land supply calculations.*

- 2.7 Each Broad Location is to be subject to a masterplan to be submitted prior to the approval of planning applications. With the subsequent need for planning applications to be determined, the approval reserved matters applications, discharge of pre-commencement conditions, provision of strategic infrastructure and commercial deals, there is no wonder why long lead in times are experienced in general and in the case of the sites identified by the Council there is no reason to believe the circumstances would be different. Accordingly, for the purposes of the trajectory, a total of 1,220 dwellings should be removed from the first five years of the Plan. Even were an optimistic programme for delivery accepted, and it was considered appropriate to only move the start dates back to 2025/26, this would also remove 360 dwellings from the Plan period trajectory at EHH South.

- 2.8 Even with these lenient assumptions and making no further forensic assessment of the deliverability of Broad Locations, the total five year supply for the trajectory would be 1,227 dwellings, and a total Plan period supply of 12,135 dwellings. This figures excludes the necessary reductions for the

overestimated windfall provision, which would reduce the figure significantly further still when calculated correctly.

- 2.9 In terms of the requirement, we have already applied a critique to the extent of stepped requirement applied by the Council within our Matter 5 statement. Whilst it is appreciated that the PPG provides the avenue for use of a stepped trajectory, this needs to be balanced against the acute affordability crisis within the District, the ability of the area to be able to deliver higher rates of housing, and the appropriateness for such a reliance on strategic sites. All the evidence suggests that this can be done and there is no need for a stepped trajectory.
- 2.10 Accordingly, and using the Council's current housing need figure<sup>1</sup> of 913 dpa, the five year requirement would be 5,478 dwellings<sup>2</sup>, and over the Plan period this would be 16,023 dwellings<sup>3</sup>. Were the Inspectors to find the stepped trajectory a sound approach, this would result in a need of 3,390 dwellings for the first five years<sup>4</sup> and a total Plan requirement of 15,806 dwellings<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.11 In any event, the Council would fall significantly short of being able to demonstrate either a five year housing land supply at the point of adoption, or over the Plan period as a whole.
- 2.12 Significant further work should be undertaken to identify further housing sites, particularly those that can be delivered within the first five years of the Plan. Smallford Works has been demonstrated as deliverable, in line with the Local Plan objectives, and providing significant environmental, social and economic benefits, making the most of PDL.
- 2.13 At present, the Local Plan falls demonstrably short of meeting the tests of soundness.

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<sup>1</sup> Appreciating that an update to this would result in minor changes.

<sup>2</sup> Applying a 20% buffer in accordance with Paragraph 73 of the NPPF and the results of the Housing Delivery Test.

<sup>3</sup>  $5,478 + (913 * \text{the remaining 11 years of the Plan} * 1.05 \text{ to apply a 5\% buffer for market choice in line with Paragraph 73 of the NPPF})$ .

<sup>4</sup> Applying a 20% buffer in to 565 dwellings per annum.

<sup>5</sup>  $3,390 + (1,075 * \text{the remaining 11 years of the Plan} * 1.05 \text{ to apply a 5\% buffer for market choice in line with Paragraph 73 of the NPPF})$ .