
EXAMINATION STATEMENT – MATTER 08

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

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ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN
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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)¹;
 - ii) Publication Draft Local Plan – Reg 19 Consultation (Feb 2016)²;
 - 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 08 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.

¹ This related to the Strategic Local Plan as withdrawn from Examination by SACDC (2017).

² 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 08 – THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF HOUSING LAND

Main Issue: Whether the approach towards the supply and delivery of housing land is justified and effective and consistent with national planning policy.

Question 4. Is the housing trajectory realistic?

- 2.1 **Policy S4** sets out the housing requirement for SACDC over the Plan period. The policy also sets out a staggered rate of delivery as follows:
- 2020 – 2025: 565dpa;
 - 2025 – 2030: 1,075dpa;
 - 2030 – 2036: 1,075dpa; and
 - Average of 913dpa between 2020 – 2036.
- 2.2 The above policy is supplemented by the Housing Trajectory contained in Appendix 2 of the submitted Local Plan. For the Broad Location at North-East Harpenden, the Housing Trajectory proposes that 75 dwellings will be delivered per annum from 2026/27 – 2035/36 (except for 2031/32 only where delivery of 85 dwellings is identified).
- 2.3 We support the planned growth for the Site and the proposed annual delivery rates are broadly supported. Our Reg 19 representations included the developers' delivery programme for the Site (**Appendix 1**) whereby delivery would entail 50 dwellings in the first year and 80dpa thereafter – this is broadly aligned with SACDC's trajectory. The delivery rates are realistic and highly achievable with the two outlets operating from the Site (Crest and Bloor).
- 2.4 The delivery rates are also well within the upper end of annual delivery rates as advised by the Letwin Review³ (275dpa) and Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners: Start to Finish – How Quickly Do Large-Scale Housing Sites Deliver⁴ (161dpa) – these upper figures are generally accepted by Local Plan Inspectors.
- 2.5 It is however unclear to us as to why the stepped trajectory is being proposed for the Site – notably a late delivery timeframe as commencing from 2026/27.

³ Refer to Independent Review of Build Out: Final Report (Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin MP, Oct 2018).

⁴ Refer to Start to Finish – How Quickly Do Large-Scale Housing Sites Deliver (Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners, Nov 2016).

- 2.6 Our previous representations (to both the Regulation 18 and 19 consultation versions of the Local Plan) included an array of technical input for the Site, including on landscape, landform, ecology, highways, access, drainage, infrastructure and archaeology.
- 2.7 The above information confirmed that there are no Site constraints to development and accordingly the development could commence from 2022/23. Furthermore, SACDC's IDP does not identify wider infrastructure schemes as a prerequisite to development at the Site.
- 2.8 On-Site infrastructure delivery (as identified in the IDP) will include delivery of 1no. 2FE Primary School, as well as a Local Centre (including Healthcare and Flexi-care schemes). These aspects of infrastructure can be delivered alongside housing delivery during the period 2024 – 2027 (as shown at **Appendix 1**) – as addressed in our Matter 07 Statement.
- 2.9 It is therefore recommended that the Housing Trajectory for the Site is amended to reflect our trajectory at **Appendix 1**.

Question 6. Has there been persistent under delivery of housing? In terms of a buffer for a five-year supply of housing sites, should this be 5% or 20% in relation to para 73 of the NPPF?

- 2.10 The NPPF (para 73) directs that in addition to the supply of specific deliverable sites, a buffer should be included (moved forward from later in the Plan period). The buffer provision should total 5%, 10% or 20% dependent on previous rates of housing delivery. A 20% buffer is applicable to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply where there has been under delivery of housing over the previous 3-years.
- 2.11 Footnote 39 of the NPPF states that from November 2018, the previous three years supply will be measured against the Housing Delivery Test and where this indicates that delivery was below 85% of the housing requirement, a 20% buffer is to be applied.
- 2.12 The latest available (2018) HDT for SACDC is as follows:

Table 1: Housing Delivery Test (2018) for SACDC:

No. of homes required			Total requirement	No. of homes delivered			Total delivered
2015-16	2016-17	2017-18		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	
670	668	649	1,987	396	347	412	1,155 (58%)

- 2.13 The above indicates that a 20% buffer is to be used and **Policy S4** correctly recognises that a 20% buffer should be accounted for in the first 5-years of the Plan (2020-2025).

- 2.14 This is however at odds with the proposed stepped trajectory in the Plan which does not address the need to raise housing delivery in the first five years to accommodate the 20% buffer. Instead the stepped trajectory only proposes to deliver 3,401 dwellings (2020 – 2025), as against the five-year target of 5,478 units (913dpa x 5 + 20%). It is recommended that the development trajectory (including for North-East Harpenden) is revised to meet the needs of the Plan within the first five years to ensure 5,478 units are identified for delivery in this first five-year period.
- 2.15 Land at North-East Harpenden should thus be brought forward to commence from 2022/23 which will make a contribution of 130 units in the first five years of the Plan.

Question 7. What are the implications of the stepped delivery of housing on the supply and delivery of housing?

Question 8. What impact will this have on the 5-year supply of deliverable housing land and the delivery of affordable housing?

- 2.16 The answer to the above two questions is inter-related. The stepped trajectory results in a shortfall in housing delivery (including affordable housing) early in the Plan period. In the first 5-years the shortfall amounts to 2,077 dwellings.
- 2.17 Whilst the PPG recognises the use of stepped trajectories in Plan-making (in instances where long lead-in times will occur or where infrastructure is a prerequisite to development), there is no evidence as to why the North-East Harpenden Site has been “stepped back” in the trajectory (from 2026/27). We consider that the Site should be “stepped forward” in the trajectory to commence from 2022/23 in order to boost the short-term/five-year supply.

Question 9. On the basis of the Plan as submitted, is it realistic that it would provide for:

- a) A supply of specific deliverable sites to meet the housing requirement for five years from the point of adoption?***
- b) A supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth for years 6 – 10 from the point of adoption?***

- 2.18 The Local Plan does provide for sufficient sites over the entire duration of the Plan period (up to 2035/36). However, as indicated above, this includes a shortfall in years 1 – 5. The trajectory seeks to remedy this with surpluses provided in each of the years (6 – 10).

- 2.19 There is however no justification for this where it relates to the Site at North-East Harpenden. For the purpose of the delivery period (years 6 – 10), the Site is considered as a Broad Location “in name only”. The Site is considered to take the form of a site allocation given that it has specific site boundaries as identified within the Local Plan evidence base (including SHLAA, Green Belt Review, etc.).
- 2.20 Additionally, other Broad Locations are identified to come forward in years 1 – 5, namely at; East Hemel Hempstead (North and South), North West Harpenden, East St Albans, and North St Albans. There is no reason why the Site at North-East Harpenden cannot also come forward within years 1 – 5 and the trajectory should therefore be revised accordingly (as set out above).

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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