



**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2011-33 EXAMINATION**  
**HEARING STATEMENT – MATTER 7: PLACE SHAPING & MASTERPLAN APPROACH**  
**(ISSUE 2)**

On behalf of:  
**Manor Oak Homes**

Respondent ID: **19/LAD0090**

Date:  
**January 2019**

Reference:  
**LR/08816/LP Examination Matter 7 – Issue 2**



## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is prepared on behalf of Manor Oak Homes, the promoters of land at West Sumners, Harlow, which forms the southern part of the proposed Garden Town Community at Water Lane (SP5.2). It is prepared in relation to **Matter 7: Place Shaping & General Masterplan Approach** and provides Manor Oak Homes' response to **Question 1** raised by the Inspector under **Issue 2** so far as it is relevant to their allocation.
- 1.2 Manor Oak Homes is extremely supportive of the proposed allocation of land at West Sumners under draft Policy SP5 (Site Ref: SP5.2 - Strategic Allocations around Harlow) considering that it would represent a natural extension of the existing community at Sumners capable of being easily integrated into the existing highway, foot and cycle network and offering the important opportunity to facilitate the regeneration of Sumners Hatch. Having regard to the expectations of Draft Policies SP3 and 4, we can confirm that Manor Oak Homes are committed to working in partnership with the Council and other relevant stakeholders, including other land owners and promoters within the Water Lane allocation area, and have appointed a full development team who are engaged in the production of a Strategic Masterplan and keen to enable the delivery of the site at the earliest opportunity.

## 2.0 Issue 2: Are the Plan's requirements for master-planning justified; and will they be effective in securing the timely delivery of comprehensively planned schemes?

- 3.1 The Plan's requirements for the master-planning of strategic sites is explained in paragraphs 2.89-2.102 and set out in Policies SP4 and SP5. This expects that Strategic Masterplans are prepared for the three proposed Garden Town Communities. Manor Oak Homes are content that the Plan's requirements for the preparation of Strategic Masterplans and Design Codes and Panel Review in relation to the Garden Town Communities are necessary and proportionate having regard to the scale of the proposed development, the issues that need to be addressed and the importance of a holistic approach that secures a form and type of development that positively promotes and achieves the aims of the Garden Town by successfully integrating existing and future communities. Ordinarily, the expectations of the Plan's proposed front-loaded approach allied to the scale of the developments themselves might raise concerns regarding the ability to realise the delivery of these developments in a timely manner. However, these expectations have been known for some time and considerable work has already been undertaken to bring these sites forward.
- 3.2 The expectations for the master planning of the Garden Town Communities as set out in the Plan have been discussed at length with those involved in their promotion via the Council run Developer's Forum, which has for the past two years been meeting quarterly to share the results of evidence base work and to seek views on the Council's approach to bringing the sites forward. Accordingly, the requirements for

strategic masterplans and design codes, including their scope and content, and design review, including the role of the Quality Design Panel and how developers would be expected to engage, were discussed with and views sought from the members of the forum prior to the Plan being submitted.

3.3 It is further important to note that the potential of the Garden Town Community sites is not something that has only recently come to the attention of the Council or adjoining authorities through the preparation of this plan; rather they have been identified by all those involved for many years, having been the subject of work undertaken as part of the now revoked East of England Plan. The result is that all sites are within the control of developers and promoters who are keen to see their development and have been the subject of ongoing rigorous assessment and testing by full development teams with the results of that work having been fully disclosed to the Council. Accordingly, the result is that much of the work necessary to inform the preparation of masterplans and design codes has already been undertaken with the delay experienced in the submission of the Plan due to legal challenge having afforded additional time to all involved. In the case of the Latton Priory and Water Lane Communities, Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) are in place and initial masterplans have already been prepared and discussed with the Council and the design review process has either started or is due to begin shortly.

3.4 In relation to the specific points raised by the Inspector under Question 1, we would comment as follows:

- a) No comment.
- b) Paragraph 2.96 requires that the Strategic Masterplans be prepared in a form and manner capable of adoption as SPDs. It is understood from our discussions with the Council that although the Masterplans will be expected to be capable of adoption, such that in terms of form and content they can be consulted upon and used as a sound base for the preparation of future planning applications, there is no intention at this stage that they will actually be adopted. For this reason, the expectation of paragraph 2.96 does not in the view of Manor Oak Homes raise any concerns regarding the timely delivery of the Garden Town Community Sites.

It is Manor Oak Homes' view that it is not necessary for the Strategic Masterplans to be adopted as SPDs as the masterplans and the work that has informed them are to be discussed with all key consultees as part of a planned and wide-ranging consultation exercise and their purpose is to inform the preparation of planning applications, which will most likely take place in tandem. However, should the Council decide to formally adopt the Masterplans as SPDs it would add another consideration to the process but there is no reason why it should result in unnecessary delay. In recognition of the need to enable the timely delivery of the Garden Community Sites work on preparing the masterplans has already begun and discussion and dialogue on their form and content is underway with relevant stakeholders. There is no intention, especially in the case of Manor Oak Homes, that this work will slow pending the outcome of the Local Plan Examination; on the contrary,

they fully intend to continue the progression of their Strategic Masterplan with a view to commencing public consultation in the early part of this year so that an outline planning application can be submitted in late 2019/early 2020. The level and transparency of the dialogue and discussion that is/ will continue to take place is such that if the Council were to decide to formally adopt the masterplan there is no reason why it should prevent or delay the preparation and progression of a planning application.

- c) No comment.
- d) The potential difficulties that could arise from multiple ownerships, not only in terms of disagreement between landowners and developers but also in terms of achieving a co-ordinated, high quality approach to design, has been anticipated by the Plan. In the case of land at Water Lane, which comprises our client's land at West Sumners to the south and land at West Katherines within the control of Persimmon, Martin Grant Homes and Taylor Wimpey and the nurseries (south of Water Lane) to the north, the Plan as submitted has brought all land together under one allocation requiring the submission of a single strategic masterplan. In Manor Oak Homes view, the separate promotion of land at West Sumners, land at West Katherines and that to the south of Water Lane does not raise any delivery issues within the proposed structure of the policy.

While very much welcoming the allocation of their land within the proposed Water Lane area, Manor Oak Homes did initially express some reservations regarding the need to produce a joint masterplan for the area given the relative self-containment of the northern and southern parcels and the fact that they differ in relation to their characteristics, features, impacts and potential benefits and the requirement to produce a joint document would create a dependency on those promoting the other land parcels within the allocation. Since this time though, further discussion has taken place with officers and the developers and promoters of the other parcels within the allocation regarding the scope and content of the masterplan. It has been agreed that in view of the relative self-containment of the northern and southern parcels that these areas will be master planned in detail separately to take into account these differences and to address them individually, but under the umbrella of the Strategic Masterplan, which in this case is envisaged to take the form of a high level strategic framework that will be informed by a co-ordinated and joint approach to assessing and dealing with key strategic issues, namely highways and infrastructure delivery. A process of joint working has already been established between Manor Oak Homes and the other promoters and developers via the PPA arrangement with all parties jointly attending meetings on strategic matters. The need to work jointly does not extend to any expectation for joint applications for the whole allocation thereby assisting delivery.

It is important in our view that the existence of multiple ownerships is not viewed just in the negative in terms of risk to delivery. A range of willing owners and developers can also offer the opportunity

to deliver more quickly by building out parcels consecutively and offering a greater choice of product to the market adding to the character and offer of Harlow.

- 3.5 For the reasons set out above and having regard to the considerable work already undertaken by those involved, Manor Oak Homes consider that rather than delay the process, the front-loaded approach proposed by the Plan will actually serve over the longer term to speed up and ensure the timely delivery of the Garden Communities, which are so important not only to meeting Epping Forest's needs but also to the wider aim of realising the regeneration of Harlow and the provision of a sustainable Garden Town.