

Latton Priory, Harlow

Epping Forest Local Plan – EiP Statements Matter 6



Boyer

Report Control

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1. MATTER 6 HOUSING SUPPLY, INCLUDING SOURCES OF SUPPLY; THE HOUSING TRAJECTORY; AND THE FIVE YEAR SUPPLY.

Issue 1 will the Plan provide a land supply sufficient to deliver the housing requirement of at least 11,400 dwellings over the Plan period?

1. Table 2.3 on page 29 sets out the different components of the housing land supply for the period 2011-2033. Is data on housing completions and extant planning permissions now available up to 31 March 2018? If so, should the table be updated to reflect this? Should the table indicate how much housing is expected to be provided through allocations outside the Garden Communities? Should it be made clear whether the total housing supply for the Plan period will be above or below the requirement?

1.1 A synopsis of the sources of supply is presented in the trajectories provided at Appendix 5 of the Plan. Updated information concerning completions is provided with the Housing Implementation Strategy Update, January 2019. We do agree that the information on page 29 of the Plan could be presented more clearly.

2. Policy SP2(c) indicates that additional housing could be delivered through Neighbourhood Plans and on rural exception sites in accordance with Policy 14 H3. Is it possible to quantify this contribution and should it be reflected in Table 2.3?

1.2 The Plan does not rely upon Neighbourhood Plan allocations to achieve the identified housing requirement, nor contributions from rural exceptions sites¹. Indeed, we would note that rural exception sites (as provided for in policy H3) concern the meeting of specific local needs, rather than meeting the overarching (Plan-level) requirement. If the LPA has specific knowledge of numbers likely to be achieved through emergent Neighbourhood Plans or known rural exception schemes, then such details should certainly be presented in the Plan. However, it is reasonable to assume that a proportion of windfall development (which the Plan forecasts will be provided) will include small-scale allocations in Neighbourhood Plans or be provided via rural exception schemes.

3. Is the expected windfall allowance of 35 dwellings per annum for 11 years (385 in total) justified? Representations suggest that the figure might be either higher or lower.

¹ Noting that the Council proposes a stepped requirement, as set out in our response to 'Issue 2'.

- 1.3 The Plan's assumptions concerning windfall development are conservative, in that completions are forecast to be lower than those which were recorded during the last Plan-period. This is not necessarily an illogical approach, given that Epping Forest is largely washed-over by the Green Belt and many infill / brownfield land opportunities have already been redeveloped. Conversely, the NPPF, 2018 (at Section 11), places a strong emphasis on achieving higher densities in suitable locations - as does Policy SP3 of the Plan. Similarly, the Government also continues to explore opportunities to maximise the provision of new homes through the liberalisation of the permitted development regime. There is thus a clear direction of travel, which is setting a policy context that is likely to bolster the supply of windfall opportunities. Taking account of these factors (that could both constrain and release windfall capacity), we consider that, on balance, it is reasonable to assume that approximately 35 windfall dwellings will be provided each year.

4. In determining the contribution of allocated sites to the housing land supply, how have site densities been worked out? Is there any general risk that the capacity of sites has been over-estimated?

- 1.4 Our experience of the strategic master-planning process for the Garden Town sites (as undertaken in connection with proposed allocation SP5.1, Latton Priory), is that there is a high likelihood that the capacity of sites has been under-estimated, rather than over-estimated.
- 1.5 As indicated in our response to Matter 4 (Issue 4) and Matter 8, the quantum (vis-à-vis density) of development envisaged at the proposed Latton Priory allocation is materially lower than our client's master-planning work suggests could be achieved. The proposed allocation of 1,050 dwellings, within the allocation, results in a net density of approximately 25 dwellings per hectare. We consider this to be an exceptionally low average density. Master-planning work to date, supported by other key technical work streams, indicates the site could accommodate a range of densities delivering an average density of circa 37 dph, which falls well within the density range set out in Policy SP3 I(iii). There are also opportunities to achieve approximately 100 units within the proposed local centre.
- 1.6 Accordingly, we maintain that in the case of Latton Priory, which can be considered an important case study for the consideration of the capacity of major sites, the quantum of achievable development has been underestimated by approximately 450 units.
- 1.7 We are also concerned that the capacity of the Latton Priory (and potentially other Garden Town sites) may have been under-estimated due to a perceived highway capacity limit to growth around Harlow. As detailed in our response to Matter 4, we do not consider that there is any such limit and have presented evidence to that effect (see Appendix 1 to our Matter 4 Statement). Therefore, there exists an opportunity to achieve additional sustainable development at Harlow, should the Inspector deem that this is appropriate.

Issue 2: Will the Plan ensure that there is a reasonable prospect of a five-year land supply being achieved upon adoption and throughout the lifetime of the Plan as required by paragraph 47 of the NPPF?

1. What is the five-year supply requirement upon adoption of the Plan having particular regard to the following:

a. With a requirement to provide 11,400 dwellings over the 22 year Plan period 2011-33, the annualised housing requirement would be 518 dwellings. What is the shortfall in delivery since the start of the Plan period (up to 31 March 2018 if appropriate); and how and over what period is it intended to make up for this? Is it justified not to seek to recover the shortfall within the first five-year period after the Plan is adopted?

- 1.8 The Council identifies a cumulative shortfall of 1,856 dwellings, up to 2017/18. This was calculated against the annualised requirement of 518 dwellings per annum (dpa). The Housing Implementation Paper Update (2019) contends that the Liverpool Approach should be applied to the treatment of the shortfall, which is to say the shortfall should be addressed over the Plan-period. In the same document, the Council also make the case for a stepped requirement, which infers that completions will increase during the 2023/24 to 2032/33 period².
- 1.9 It is evident that the Council considers that the application of the Liverpool Method, together with a stepped trajectory, is necessary because the average annualised housing requirement (as proposed) is significantly higher than average completions during recent years (notwithstanding relatively high-levels of completion in 2017/18). Similarly, the Council also makes the case that these arrangements are both necessary and justified, as a consequence of the Plan's spatial / housing strategy. Whilst a portfolio of sites (of differing sizes) are proposed for allocation, the overall strategy seeks to achieve growth (primarily) through medium and large-scale sites, and strategic allocations. The Council's view is that this approach will inevitably result in patterns of delivery which exhibit a bias towards completions in the latter part of the Plan-period.
- 1.10 Regardless of the overall merits of the proposed approach (and notwithstanding the generalities described in the NLP Report³ and the Letwin Review⁴, which the Council reference), it should not simply be assumed that *all* strategic allocations are associated with protracted lead-in times. The circumstances of different sites will vary greatly and will be contingent upon a significant number of localised factors. There exists (for example) a conceptual difference between those sites that are controlled by multiple landowner and/or developer interests, or which are subject to significant physical constraints, and those sites which are free of these limitations and therefore comparatively simple to develop.

² The stepped requirement is proposed as follows; 2011/12 – 2017/18: 216 dpa, 2018/19 – 2022/23: 425 dpa, 2023/24 to 2032/33: 742 dpa

³ *'Start to Finish: How Quickly do Large-Scale Housing Sites Deliver?'* (NLP, 2016)

⁴ *'Independent Review of Build Out, Final Report'* (MHCLG, 2018)

- 1.11 The proposed allocation at Latton Priory (be this for 1,050 or 1,500 units), may represent a significant allocation in the context of this Plan. However, it is comparatively small compared to developments of a truly strategic scale (such as those exceeding 2,000 units, which the NLP report associates with very protracted timescales). Latton Priory is within the control of a longstanding single owner, can provide strategic SANG (on-site) and is not significantly constrained. In particular there exists existing utility and highways infrastructure capacity to enable the release of early phase delivery. Master-planning activities and supporting technical work are also well-advanced, such that the site's capacity for development is clearly understood.
- 1.12 The trajectories, as presented in our response to Issue 2, Question 2 'b', have been carefully calculated. The projections are based on the understanding and expertise of the controlling developer interests, both of which have an established record of bringing forward large sites, and were also informed by ongoing discussions with the LPA. This includes an understanding of phasing, infrastructure requirements and triggers for implementation.

b. What buffer should be included in the five-year supply requirement (moved forward from later in the Plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land? Is the relevant buffer justified? The Housing Trajectory in Appendix 5 indicates that 5% has been added to the annualised requirement for every remaining year of the Plan period. Why is this?

- 1.13 The NPPF (2012) is clear, at paragraph 47, that the buffer (whether this is 5% or 20%) is to be applied to the requirement for the relevant five year period. With respect to what the buffer should be, it is notable that completions (except for 2017/18) have typically fallen below the requirement now proposed in the Plan. However, completions up to 2010/11 exceeded the lower requirement presented in the East of England Plan (2008).

2. On the basis of the answer to Question 1, will there be a five-year housing land supply upon adoption of the Plan? What evidence is there to support this? Can the Council produce a spreadsheet to show how individual sites are expected to contribute to delivery in each year? In particular:

- 1.14 The Council's position is that the Plan will only demonstrate a five year supply, upon adoption, if the Liverpool Method is applied, in conjunction with a 5% buffer and a stepped requirement. This is as acknowledged in the Housing Implementation Paper Update 2019.
- 1.15 In respect of site-specific trajectories (and as noted) the Promoters of Latton Priory have provided such to the LPA.

a. If the Plan is not adopted until mid-late 2019, is it realistic to expect allocated sites to start delivering in 2018/19 and 2019/20?

1.16 Where there is evidence that sites can be regarded as deliverable and there has been a clear (and recent) indication from the developer that a site will start to achieve completions between 2018 and 2020, then potentially yes. Such matters are highly site-specific, but it is noted that the Council has sought to apply the revised (more rigorous) definition of ‘deliverability’, as set out in Glossary of the NPPF, 2018⁵. Likewise, it has granted planning permission on some sites that are proposed for allocation.

b. Is it realistic to rely upon sites requiring the adoption of a Strategic Masterplan, including the Garden Town Sites, for the five year supply?

1.17 It must not be assumed that the requirement to prepare Strategic Masterplans will delay the submission of planning applications. A strategic masterplan process, if properly formulated, can reduce the extent, complexity and duration of the pre and post-application process.

1.18 Strategic Masterplans can also be effective in providing a sound and generally agreed basis for progressing planning applications and such Frameworks can significantly reduce the time taken to achieve a resolution to grant, and to conclude a S106 agreement. For example, our clients’ participation in the Strategic Masterplan process for Latton Priory is on the basis that this will be an efficient and time-limited process, which is clearly defined and fit for purpose.

1.19 Furthermore, as indicated in our response to ‘Matter 7 Issue 2’, there is nothing to prevent a planning application being submitted in advance of the conclusion and/or the formal adoption of a Strategic Masterplan. It is also noted (in the same response) that the preparation of such Masterplans is likely to be propelled forward via the collaborative efforts of the respective developer(s) and the LPA. This is also made clear at paragraph 2.94 of the Plan.

1.20 Notwithstanding this point, there is a case for a commitment to flexibility and the Plan infers such at paragraph 2.92. Similarly, it is also relevant that the development management process provides the Council with the means to allow planning permission to be granted, in circumstances where material considerations (and the benefits of the proposals) indicate that it is appropriate to do so.

1.21 We would refer the Inspector to comments made previously (in relation to ‘Issue 2, Question ‘a’) and also draw attention to the trajectories provided below. These confirm the potential for the Latton Priory site to achieve completions with five years. The trajectories also provide evidence in relation to the general question of deliverability of sites which are subject to a Strategic Masterplan process.

⁵ We note that the definition of deliverability was amended slightly in the NPPF Update of 19 February 2019. However, this alteration is unlikely to significantly influence the overall land supply position.

Trajectory for 1,050 dwellings to be phased in accordance with the Housing Implementation Strategy Update (2019)

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
50	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Trajectory for 1,500 dwellings. This follows the principles of the above trajectory, but is revised pro-rata to reflect the increased site capacity

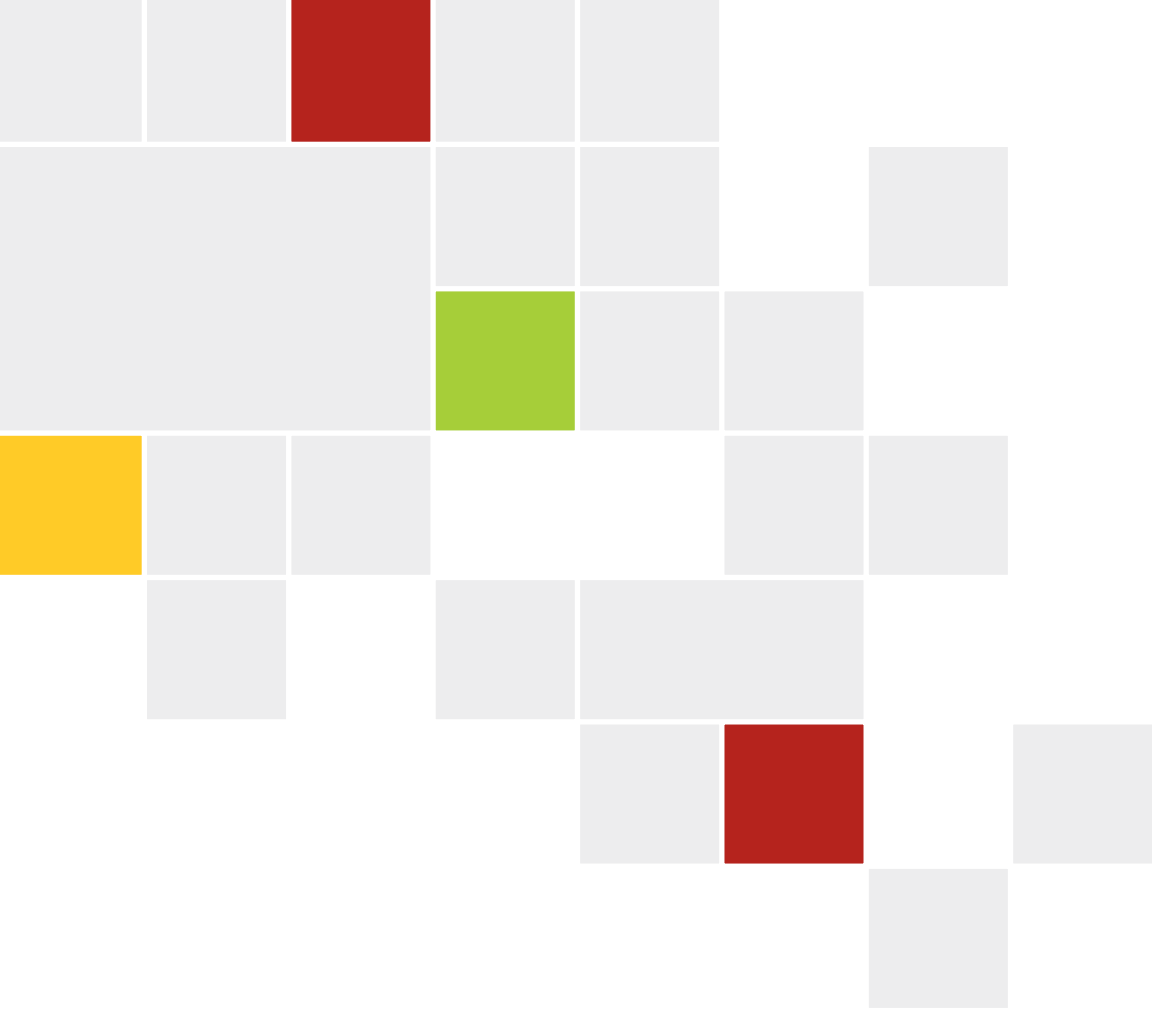
2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33
50	100	100	150	150	150	200	200	200	100	100

1.22 In formulating these trajectories, the Promoters have had regard to the extensive technical work and master-planning activities undertaken to date. We have also engaged extensively with the LPA. A schedule of key activities and milestones is provided below and was issued to the Council in January 2019.

Schedule of key activities:

- 2019 – Strategic Masterplan production, scope of application agreed and outline application submitted in Quarter 3;
- 2020 – Strategic masterplan adopted Q2/Q3, resolution to grant permission Q3/Q4;
- 2021 – S106 / Planning Permission Q1/Q2 then first sale of land to housebuilder completed Q2/Q3;
- 2022 – Housebuilder / reserved matters, initial infrastructure, sales complex and build start;
- 2023 – Build and sale of 50 units (private and affordable) one outlet and start-up lag;
- 2026/27 – First sale of circa 400 units with obligation to build the link road. Also primary school to be opened within this year. Link road to be opened to the east (this aligns broadly to circa 500-600 capacity). Start of sale of units from the east of the site;
- 2029 – Selling from west, east and local centre residential delivery; and,
- 2032 – From this point, the local centre is complete, so building out the final residential plots.

1.23 We also reiterate that the Council has committed to additional flexibility in terms of when the Strategic Masterplan for Latton Priory will subject to public consultation, noting that this could commence prior to the formal adoption of the Local Plan. Accordingly, it is considered that the above schedule is realistic and provides a reasoned basis for the trajectories presented. We therefore maintain that it will be possible for Latton Priory to deliver completions within five years.



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