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**Rochford District Council Local Development Framework**

**Rochford Core Strategy Examination in Public**

**Hearing Statement in response to Matter 2:**

**Location and Supply of New Homes**

**Prepared by WGDP Ltd (Representations ID: 16036, 16046, 16050, 16070, 16071,  
16072 & 16073 – CS Housing Chapter Policies H1 & H2)**

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**On behalf of: Mr & Mrs Poole - Lime House Nursery Industrial Park**

**20<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

## **1.0 Introduction and Summary of Soundness**

- 1.1 This evidence is submitted on behalf of Mr & Mrs Poole, who own the freehold of the land and buildings at Lime House Nursery Industrial Park and the Rayleigh Garden Centre, which is situated off the Eastwood Road, on the south-eastern edge of Rayleigh.
- 1.2 The entire site is included in the Green Belt, and the underlying basis of all of the representations is that this should be reviewed; the site is capable of development without reducing the openness of the Green Belt in this location, and offers an excellent alternative strategic and highly sustainable housing option for the District in the Plan period.
- 1.3 This Submission addresses the questions raised by the Inspector in the Revised Matters and Issues for the Examination in relation to Matter 2 – The Location and Supply of New Homes issued on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.
- 1.4 In our submission in respect of Matter 2, we find the Core Strategy unsound for the following reasons:
  - The Core Strategy assumes that all sources of housing land supply are deliverable and developable within the Plan period. It is not always possible to have maximum certainty about the deliverability of the strategy - it fails to show how contingencies will be handled or include any non-implementation/discount allowance of the commitments. The Council's housing land supply estimate is therefore over ambitious, and will not meet the strategic housing requirement.
  - The assessment of the deliverability and developability of each of the four employment sites, in particular Stambridge Mills and Rawreth Industrial Estate that have been identified for re-allocation for alternative uses, including residential development, is not based on a credible or transparent evidence base. The Plan is therefore unjustified.

We suggest the following changes in order to make the Plan sound:

- It would be prudent for the Council to apply a 10% non-implementation allowance to all sources of housing land supply, after completions.
- The redevelopment of Stambridge Mills and Rawreth Industrial Estate should be deleted from Policy H1.
- At least an additional 783 dwellings, should be identified as extensions to residential envelopes via the reallocation of the Green Belt in Policy H2 (in the period to 2015 and 2015 to 2021) of the Core Strategy, of which at least 50% should be provided within the Tier 1 settlements. This would include Lime House Nursery Industrial Park.
- Reference should be made within the Core Strategy to the Sites Allocation DPD being brought forward in an expeditious fashion to ensure a continuous housing land supply from defined and specific identified sources, from 2011.



## 2.0 Location and Supply of New Homes

### **Question 2 a – Will the strategy deliver the number of new homes required to meet the RSS requirements?**

- 2.1 The East of England Plan requires a minimum of 4,600 dwellings to be provided in the District between 2001 and 2021. In addition, the Local Planning Authority is required to plan for the delivery of housing over at least 15 years from the date of adoption of the Core Strategy (2010) and, in doing so, assume that the average annual requirement of 250 units will continue beyond 2021 to 2025. As such, the Core Strategy addresses the location of housing provision to 2025. The total housing requirement for the period from 2006 – 2025 is 4,750 dwellings.
- 2.2 PPS12 – Local Spatial Planning at paragraph 4.52 provides that to be “sound” a core strategy should be JUSTIFIED, EFFECTIVE and consistent with NATIONAL POLICY. In addition, to be “justified” it should be founded on a robust and transparent evidence base, and represent the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives.
- 2.3 Paragraph 4.13 of PPS 12 confirms that the time horizon of a Core Strategy should be “at least 15 years from the date of adoption”. Whilst the Rochford Core Strategy makes provision for the supply of housing until 2025 and is based on the assumption that it is adopted in 2010, it fails to take account of the likely delays to the adoption of the Core Strategy, and is insufficiently flexible.
- 2.4 It is apparent from the table at paragraph 4.6 of the Submission Version of the Core Strategy that the Council relies on all of the commitments to be delivered during the Plan period. However, plans should be able to show how they handle contingencies, given that it is not always possible to have maximum certainty about the deliverability of the strategy.
- 2.5 On this note, the Plan has failed to include any allowance for the non-implementation of any of the sources of housing land identified. It is unrealistic in the context of the current economic climate and other deliverability factors that the strategy will deliver the number of new homes required to meet the RSS requirement. In the absence of Council evidence to the contrary, it would be realistic to include a 10% non-implementation discount to cover all sources of housing supply which has been widely used by other local planning authorities to provide sufficient flexibility to ensure that the RSS housing requirements are met within the Plan period – see **Appendix 1 to this paper**.
- 2.6 It also fails to consider the supply of housing land against the objectives of PPS3 – Housing, contained in paragraph 54, which confirms that for sites to be deliverable in the first 5 years – at the point of adoption of the Local Development Document they should be available ‘now’; be suitable; and be achievable and have a reasonable prospect of delivering housing on the site within 5 years.
- 2.7 Guidance issued by DCLG in relation to SHLAA’s states that an assessment should “*assess the deliverability/developability of all sites*”. The Guidance suggests that this is a fundamental difference between an Urban Housing Capacity Study and a SHLAA. We have serious concerns relating to the deliverability and developability of some of the housing sites identified within the SHLAA; we have reservations as to

the deliverability of the sources of supply, and consequently consider that the strategic housing requirement will not be met by the Submission Core Strategy.

- 2.8 Whilst a plan which covers the period to 2025 gives time for the market to recover, the Council's strategy is overly-reliant on the redevelopment of four employment sites (see Policy H1), all of which are currently allocated for employment use; and three of which are fully operational. Collectively, they have a capacity of 795 dwellings, and represent a total of 19% of the District's residual housing land supply (less actual completions during 2006 – 2008) to be delivered in the period to 2025.
- 2.9 Whilst the redevelopment of such sites for residential use would reduce demand for residential development on greenfield sites, it would at the same time create a need for alternative sites to be found for employment on land within the Green Belt which the Submission Version of the Core Strategy proposes. Such an approach, which would require site remediation of existing employment land to allow residential development, together with the development of land within the Green Belt to facilitate development and the implementation of additional infrastructure to serve the new employment area is a highly unsustainable strategy.
- 2.10 Given the nature of the objections to the Core Strategy, particularly those raised by the Environment Agency in relation to flooding which confirm that the Core Strategy is not supported by a compliant Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and the Stambridge Mills Housing Site Allocation is not compatible with PPS25, it would be prudent to extend the adoption date to 2026.
- 2.11 The key argument is that the Core Strategy is overly-reliant on the employment sites coming forward, and the circumstances are such that the redevelopment of at least two of the sites is unlikely within the Plan period. Their redevelopment would be unsustainable and accordingly the Core Strategy fails the test of "soundness".

**Question 2b: Is the CS consistent with PPS3 particularly in respect of the following:**

***i - The requirement to address housing delivery for at least 15 years from the date of adoption.***

- 2.12 Given the reservations expressed about the District's housing land supply which will reduce the supply shown on the housing trajectory, the Core Strategy is inconsistent with PPS3 in addressing the delivery of housing for at least 15 years from the date of adoption.
- 2.13 Paragraph 53 at PPS3 states that "*at the local level, Local Planning Authorities should set out in Local Development Documents their policies and strategies for delivering the level of housing provision, including identifying broad locations and specific sites that will enable continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years from the date of adoption, taking account of the level of housing provision set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy*".
- 2.14 On this note, the Core Strategy should identify sufficient specific deliverable sites to deliver housing in the first 5 years. It should also identify a further specific supply of developable sites for years 6-10 and, where possible for years 11-15. Where it is



not possible to identify specific sites for years 11-15, broad locations for future growth should be indicated. Paragraph 56 of PPS3 states that to be developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development, and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available for, and could be developed at the point envisaged.

- 2.15 Whilst the housing trajectory identifies the sources of housing delivery over the 15 year period, it is not accompanied by a housing implementation strategy that describes the approach to managing delivery of the housing and previously-developed land targets and trajectories. At the very least, this should include:
- Scenario and contingency planning to identify different delivery options in the event that actual housing delivery does not occur at the rate expected;
  - A risk assessment to identify obstacles and constraints to housing delivery; and
  - An approach of engaging with developers, to ensure that housing delivery objectives are widely understood.
- 2.16 The Council for the reasons outlined in our response to Question 2.1 has not provided a supply of deliverable housing sites beyond 2010. At present, the housing trajectory (pg 57) is contrary to national planning policy (paragraph 55 of PPS3 - Housing), and therefore must be considered unsound.

***ii – Bearing in mind that Green Belt releases may be necessary, does the Core Strategy provide the appropriate context and give adequate guidance for a subsequent site allocations DPD readily to identify the land needed without having to re-visit strategic considerations;***

- 2.17 Presently, and for the reasons given in the response to Question 2.1, the Core Strategy does not provide sufficient guidance on the level and distribution of housing required in subsequent DPDs. To redress this, the Core Strategy should seek to reallocate additional Green Belt land for residential development via an extension to residential envelopes. This would be for a total of 783 dwellings in the period from 2011 to 2021 .
- 2.18 This should be undertaken in accordance with the settlement hierarchy shown at paragraph 4.9 of the Submission Version of the Core Strategy which focuses development on the higher tier settlements, such as Rayleigh; Rochford/Ashingdon; and Hockley/Hawkwell in the first instance. The number of dwellings in any settlement should be commensurate with its position in the hierarchy. In addition, the Core Strategy should include provision for:
- Identifying additional land in the form of housing allocations in the Site Allocations DPD to create a more sustainable pattern of development;
  - Sites should avoid areas of high flood risk (Policy ENV3);
  - Sites should avoid areas of nature conservation interest (Policy ENV1);

- Include reference in the Core Strategy as to the need for the Site Allocations DPD to be brought forward in an expeditious fashion to ensure a continuous housing land supply from specific, identified sources from 2010; and
- Moreover, the housing trajectory should be altered to identify the point at which the adoption of the Site Allocations DPS will occur, and contribution from the allocated sites to housing land supply.

Our recommended working to Policy H2 – Extensions to residential envelopes and phasing is contained in **Appendix 2 to this paper.**

***iii – Is there sufficient flexibility and will the Core Strategy deliver a continuous supply of housing land?***

- 2.18 PPS12 places considerable emphasis on contingencies and flexibility. Paragraph 4.46 emphasises that *"plans should be able to show how they handle contingencies"*, and continues that the Core Strategy should show what alternative strategies have been prepared to handle this uncertainty and what would trigger their use. The Core Strategy contains no contingencies and flexibility other than by saying that the detailed location and quantum of development will articulated within the Allocations DPD. There are no reasonable alternative strategies that have been identified.
- 2.19 On the matter of being 'flexible', the PINS July 2008, Soundness Guide asks:
- Is the DPD flexible enough to respond to a variety of, or unexpected changes in circumstances?
  - Is the DPD sufficiently flexible to deal with any changes to, for example, housing figures from and emerging RSS?
  - Does the DPD include the remedial actions that will be taken if the strategies/policies are failing?
- 2.20 On the issues of "monitoring", the Core Strategy contains very limited information, and does not appear to contain much in the way of measureable critical success factors. This is because the Core Strategy is not founded on a robust or credible evidence base, and therefore to be sound, needs to be the subject of extensive redrafting.

***Question 2c – Are the broad allocations identified for the supply of new housing the most appropriate when considered against all reasonable alternatives?***

- 2.21 PPS12, paragraphs 4.39 – 4.43 advises that it is necessary that plans are subject to sustainability appraisal. In particular, paragraph 4.43 states that:
- "Sustainability Assessment should inform the evaluation of alternatives"*.
- 2.22 Under the heading of 'Alternatives', paragraph 4.38 states that the LPA is required *"to seek out and evaluate reasonable alternatives promoted by themselves and others"*. It continues that *"being able to demonstrate that the plan is the most appropriate having gone through an objective process of assessing alternatives will*



*pay dividends in terms of an easier passage for the plan through the examination process. It will assist in the process of evaluating the claims of those who wish to oppose the strategy”.*

- 2.23 Neither the Core Strategy nor the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal has carried out any comparative assessment of the broad allocations identified in relation to any reasonable alternatives promoted either by the Council or by other parties. Whilst sites have been individually appraised in the SHLAA, there is no comparative assessment of individual strategic sites, therefore the Core Strategy is unsound in that it is not justified (PPS12, paragraph 4.36) in that it has not been demonstrated through the necessary sustainability appraisal to be the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives.
- 2.24 We have put forward that one of the reasonable alternatives, which would lead to the Core Strategy being found sound on this point, would be for it to re-allocate additional land in the Green Belt such as our client’s land and property at Lime House Nursery Industrial Park, Rayleigh.

***Question 2d – Is there adequate evidence to support the requirements of Policy CS7 (Housing mix)?***

We have been unable to identify Policy CS7 in the Core Strategy Submission version, however, would contend that the proposed housing mix should be undertaken in accordance with an up to date Housing Needs Survey which considers both private and affordable housing mix requirements.

***Question 2e – Is Policy H6 (Gypsy and Traveller Sites) consistent with the advice in Circular 01/2006 and the RSS, notably the Core Strategy only deals with provision to 2011. Is there evidence that the criteria proposed are reasonable and that sites will be allocated?***

No comment.

***Question 2f – Is there adequate evidence of local circumstances that both warrant and allow the introduction of local policies in relation to CSH and BREEM standards (Policies ENV9 and ENV10), in accordance with PPS1 Supplement on Climate Change especially paragraphs 31-22?***

No comment.

***Question 2g – Is there evidence to demonstrate that the requirements of Policy H6 (lifetime homes) will not have an unacceptable impact on the deliverability (viability) of new housing?***

No comment.

## Appendix 1 – Revised Housing Land Supply 2006 – 2025

(paragraph 4.6, Core Strategy)

| Source   | Dwellings                            |                               |                                |                   |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
|  | 2006 - 2015                          | 2015 - 2021                   | 2021 - 2025                    | Total 2006 - 2025 |
| Housing requirement (250 dwellings per year)                       | 2250                                 | 1500                          | 1000                           | 4750              |
| Actual completions (2006 - 2008)                                   | 618                                  | -                             | -                              | 618               |
| Extant planning permissions  | 210                                  | 0                             | 0                              | 210               |
| Existing allocations/other appropriate sites identified in SHLAA * | 671                                  | 506                           | 0                              | 1177              |
|  | 421                                  | 286                           | 0                              | 707               |
| Total without Green Belt release                                   | 1249                                 | 286                           | 0                              | 1535              |
| Green Belt release required  | 1001                                 | 1214                          | 1000                           | 3215              |
|  | <i>RDC CS - 751 dwellings</i>        | <i>RDC CS - 994 dwellings</i> | <i>RDC CS - 1000 dwellings</i> |                   |
| Less 10% non-implementation allowance                              | 163                                  | 150                           | 100                            | 413               |
|  | <i>(applied to residual balance)</i> |                               |                                |                   |
| Revised Green Belt release required                                | 1164                                 | 1364                          | 1100                           | 3628              |

Note: \* Delete proposed redevelopment of Stambridge Mills and Rawreth Industrial Estate for residential development - Policy H1.



## Appendix 2 – Revised Policy Wording for Policy H2

### Extensions to residential envelopes and phasing

| Area   | Dwellings by 2015 | Dwellings<br>2015 - 2021 |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------|
| North of London Road,<br>Rayleigh  |                   | 550                      |
| <b>Lime House Nursery<br/>Industrial Park,<br/>Rayleigh<br/>Call for Sites No: 129</b>   |                   | <b>110</b>               |
| West Rochford  | 450               |                          |
| West Hockley   | 50                |                          |
| South Hawkwell   | 175               |                          |
| East Ashingdon   | 100               |                          |
| South West Hullbridge  |                   | 250                      |
| South Canewdon   |                   | 60                       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>775</b>        | <b>970</b>               |
| <i>Additional land required to<br/>be identified in Site<br/>Allocations DPD for<br/>extensions to residential<br/>envelopes</i> | 389               | 394                      |
| <b>Total Dwellings<br/>2006 - 2021</b>   | <b>1164</b>       | <b>1364</b>              |

Signed: WGDP Limited WGDP Limited  
Date: 19 April 2010.