

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004 (AS AMENDED)

ROCHFORD DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

CORE STRATEGY

PUBLIC EXAMINATION

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF SWAN HILL HOMES LIMITED

MATTER/ISSUE 2: LOCATION AND SUPPLY OF NEW HOMES

1.0 MATTER/ISSUE 2: LOCATION AND SUPPLY OF NEW HOMES:

a) Will the strategy deliver the number of new homes required to meet the RSS requirements?

- 1.1 Firstly, it is noted that the Table at paragraph 4.6 (page 39/40) of the CS sets out both the annual average housing requirement between 2006 and 2025 (250) and, taking into account completions between 2006 and 2008, plus extant planning permissions that there is a residual requirement (extrapolated) of 3,922 dwellings. The Table then relies upon existing allocations (to which there is no objection) and 'other appropriate sites identified in the SHLAA'. This latter category is queried as there is little supporting information in the CS as to which these sites are and, crucially, whether they pass the tests at paragraphs 52 to 57 of PPS3. This lack of information raises doubts over the reliability of this part of the Table in terms of actual delivery.
- 1.2 The consequence of the point raised in paragraph 1.1 above is that the residual requirement that will need to be met by Green Belt releases may, in practice, be higher than currently expected. In turn, if the CS Green Belt policies are not sufficiently flexible to accommodate this type of circumstance then a shortfall in housing provision could be the outcome.
- 1.3 Secondly, in relation to 'Policy H1: The efficient use of land for housing', and whilst the advice on this issue in PPS3 (paragraph 45-51) is acknowledged and the objective of draft CS Policy H1 not challenged in principle, it is important to note that a 'balance' has to be struck between prioritising the use of previously developed land (PDL) with ensuring that sufficient local jobs are retained and/or created in locations where new housing is to be sited. This essential homes/jobs balance is a key to seeking to reduce both dependency on the use of the private car and on out-commuting to work. In this regard there is an obvious tension between CS paragraphs 2.39, 11.30 and housing policy H1.
- 1.4 For example, the redevelopment of the disused Star Lane Brickworks site in Great Wakering appears as a typical PDL site which could be considered for redevelopment for other uses such as housing because its employment function has already ceased and, given the type of buildings on site is unlikely to be suitable for easy conversion to other employment uses. It is therefore logical, given the RSS requirement and the constraints acting on the District, that it could be considered for redevelopment.

- 1.5 However, in contrast, the Star Lane Industrial Estate (located to the north of the brickworks site) continues to provide a range of local employment opportunities and given that over 75% of local businesses are of a small size (i.e. 1 to 4 people) provides a valuable employment resource. Therefore, whilst a PDL site careful consideration should be given as to whether it would be appropriate to consider it for re-use for non-employment purposes, particularly in the context of the tension between CS paragraphs 2.39, 11.30 and housing policy H1.
- 1.6 This theme will be returned to under Q2(c).
- 1.7 Further, whilst it is noted that Policies H1 and H2 would, together, provide a total of 2,785 dwellings, with policy H3 sites capable of being brought forward into the pre-2021 phase if required, the CS does not address the issue of some of the identified development locations not coming forward or coming forward later than planned and/or providing lesser numbers, particularly in the latter part of the plan period. The CS could be improved by addressing this issue, particularly having regard to the need for Green Belt boundary reviews. One approach to this might be to identify 'safeguarded/reserve' sites which although taken out of the Green Belt at this time would not be released for development unless needed to meet the RSS requirement in the latter part of the plan period, thus avoiding the need for a further ad-hoc Green Belt boundary review (PPG2 paragraphs 2.12-13 and Annex B).
- 1.8 It is also noted that in relation to 'delivery' the Table at Appendix 2 of the housing chapter (page 57) indicates that there would be 125 completions on extensions to residential envelopes in the year 2011/12 and 350 in the year 2012/13. Assuming that the CS is adopted towards the end of 2010 or early in 2011 and, having regard to the time required for the preparation, submission and determination of planning application/s (typically at least 12 months) after the adoption of the CS, together with the lead-in times needed for green field sites to start producing completions (i.e. usually at the very least 12 months) it is very unlikely that any significant numbers of completions will be achieved on the urban extension sites before early 2013. To that extent the projection at Appendix H2 is considered to be unrealistic and represents a 'threat' to delivery. It is contended that the projection should be revisited. It is also argued that the result of reassessing the projection will increase the annual average requirement needed to be achieved year-on-year from 2013/14 to 2024/5. In this regard care has to be taken in the assumptions made in respect of the total of completions that could be achieved on a small number of larger urban extension sites. It may be preferable to have a larger number of urban extension sites than currently envisaged in the draft CS, which would be more likely to provide a continuous supply of housing land and crucially, completions.
- 1.9 Therefore, in conclusion, whilst the CS has the potential to deliver the number of houses required by the RSS, there are factors that can directly affect the delivery which the CS should more robustly address. To that extent it is considered that the CS could be improved and is currently unsound in the context of being 'Justified' and 'Effective' in terms of the requirements of PPS12.
- 1.10 It is considered that this part of the CS could be made sound by revisions to the document that address the issues raised in the preceding paragraphs (i.e. the 'balance' to be struck between the reliance on existing active employment PDL sites to deliver housing and the homes/jobs relationship; the need to be clear on how the total RSS provision is to be met; and the need to be more realistic in relation to the projections in Appendix 2).

b) 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;

- 1.11 Much of the comment set out above in relation to Q2 (a) applies equally here. The requirements of PPS3 (paragraphs 52-57 are clear.
- 1.12 Whilst the combined effect of housing policies H2 and H3, if achieved in full, would be the provision of 2,785 additional dwellings on extensions to residential envelopes sites (i.e. urban extensions) the CS does not address the issue of non-delivery. It is well established that not all sites will necessarily come forward for development as expected and that the number of completions expected may be below that originally anticipated and relied upon in the CS. The CS should therefore include a non-implementation allowance in order to ensure it can meet its RSS and PPS3 requirements.
- 1.13 Further, where PDL sites are intended to be relied upon in the context of the description of 'other appropriate sites indentified in the SHLAA' (i.e. Appendix D sites) in the housing land supply table on page 39 then the Council should be sure that they meet the requirements of paragraph 54 of PPS3. Without a Schedule of such sites being included in the CS it is not possible to determine to what extent reliance on such sites is sound. The CS would be improved by the provision of such a Schedule.
- 1.14 Further, as explained in relation to Q2 (a) the CS could be made more robust, in relation to the delivery of its RSS housing requirement, if it were to include 'safeguarded/reserve' housing sites – i.e. land to be taken out of the Green Belt but safeguarded from development unless other allocated sites fail to come forward as envisaged during the plan period (PPG2 paragraph 2.12-13 and Annex B).
- 1.15 In conclusion, therefore, as with Q2 (a) whilst the CS has the potential to adequately address the RSS housing requirement, as currently drafted it is considered to be unsound in the context of the PPS12 requirements of being 'Justified' and 'Effective'. It is considered that the draft CS could be made sound by revisions in order to address the above issues.

ii) Bearing in mind that Green Belt releases may be necessary, does the CS 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;

- 1.16 This is a particularly important issue. Whilst the draft CS acknowledges that land will need to be released from the Green Belt in order to accommodate the green field element of meeting the RSS requirement, there is tension between the wording of Policies H2 and H3 and Policy GB1 (Green Belt). It is considered that policies H2 and H3 should contain a specific acknowledgment of the need for the release of Green Belt land in order to accommodate the housing requirements set out in the policies. Secondly, policy GB1 should be revised to provide a clearer framework for undertaking a review of the boundary of the Green Belt where this is necessary to accommodate the RSS housing requirement, whilst at the same time setting out the type of criteria that will be used to assess such changes.

- 1.17 For example, draft policy GB1 makes a reference to seeking to avoid the coalescence of settlements which is one of the 5 purposes of including land in a Green Belt (PPG2 paragraph 1.5). For example, where land 'West of Great Wakering' (draft CS housing Policy H3) is being identified for development, involving several potential competing sites, then consideration must be given to how the alternative sites fair in relation to the advice in paragraph 1.5 of PPG2. For example, one site might be more prominent than another and therefore have a greater impact of the 'openness of the Green Belt. The CS policy GB1 'framework' should therefore be clearer on how the green belt boundary review process will be undertaken and how, where there are competing sites, such sites will be evaluated against one another in Green Belt policy impact terms, as part of the Site Allocations DPD process.
- 1.18 Further, as explained in relation to Q2 (a) the CS could be made more robust, in relation to the delivery of its RSS housing requirement, if it were to include 'safeguarded/reserve' housing sites – i.e. land to be taken out of the Green Belt but safeguarded from development unless other allocated sites fail to come forward as envisaged during the plan period (PPG2 paragraph 2.12-13 and Annex B).
- 1.19 In addition, in relation to the protection of the Green Belt, draft policy GB1 could be improved by including wording that deals with how development proposals within the Green Belt would be assessed in the context of the advice at paragraphs 3.1 – 3.10 of PPG2.
- 1.20 Therefore, in conclusion, in the context of the above comments the draft CS is considered to be unsound in relation to not being 'Justified' or 'Effective' in PPS12 terms. It is considered, however, that the CS could be made sound by addressing the issues raised above and making changes to the wording of policies H2, H3 and GB1.

iii) Is there sufficient flexibility and will the CS deliver a continuous supply of housing land?

- 1.21 As drafted the CS is too inflexible. As explained above, the lack of a non-implementation allowance coupled to the lack of any 'safeguarded/reserve' sites taken together with reliance on /other (*unspecified*) appropriate sites from the SHLAA (table on page 39/40) means that the draft CS is less robust than it could be. Achieving a predictable and continuous supply of housing land is not an easy task as there are many externalities that can affect when and how land is brought forward for development. It is therefore logical and sensible that an allowance is made for the non-implementation of sites and 'safeguarded/reserve' sites to be included within the CS. Such an approach would provide more flexibility and therefore greater certainty of housing land supply.
- 1.22 Further, taking the current severe economic recession into account there is a clear case for the merging of draft policies H2 and H3 and to remove any references to 'phasing' of the release of sites beyond the annual average requirement that needs to be met year-on-year. This approach would provide much more flexibility with sites coming forward as they become available. This is far more likely to result in a continuous supply of land than a phased approach.

c) Are the broad locations identified for the supply of new housing the most appropriate when considered against all reasonable alternatives?

- 1.23 This is a key issue for the draft CS and has to be assessed against all of the draft CS policies holistically. For example, in relation to the identification in housing policy H3 of 'West Great Wakering' to provide 250 dwellings in the post 2021 period, the 'assessment' of the alternative options needs to have regard to a range of factors.

- 1.24 In the context of making the best use of PDL sites the land at the disused Star Lane Brickworks appears to be a good opportunity for re-use for a non-employment use. This is because the jobs have already gone and the on-site buildings and infrastructure do not lend themselves readily to conversion for other employment uses. Further, because of the existing buildings on the site the redevelopment of the site would not have any additional adverse impact on the openness of this part of the Green Belt.
- 1.25 In contrast, however, the redevelopment of the Star Lane Industrial Estate (i.e. situated to the north of the brickworks) which currently provides employment for a wide range of small businesses, for housing, would result in a loss of local jobs and adversely affect the sustainability of Great Wakering. There is clearly tension here between the employment, housing and Green Belt objectives of the draft CS (paragraphs 2.39, 11.30 and policy H1). The proposal to re-allocate replacement employment land to the south of the brickworks site for employment immediately results in tension with Green Belt policy GB1 and paragraph 1.5 of PPG2 as the proposed site lies in a very open and prominent location which would have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 1.26 An alternative approach would be acceptance of the appropriateness of the redevelopment of the Star Lane Brickworks site and to then allocate it for new mixed employment uses as a site to which to 'decant' the existing uses on the Star Lane Industrial Estate – thereby retaining local job opportunities without having any adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 1.27 This approach could be coupled to the redevelopment of the existing Star Lane Industrial Estate for housing together with the land south of the High Street (i.e. Call-for-Sites Reference 202(7), SHLAA site reference 7 Appdx C and West of Great Wakering Option WGW1 in the draft Site Allocations DPD) which have a combined capacity of 250+ dwellings. This approach would deliver the 250 dwellings ear-marked for Great Wakering (including affordable housing) as well as securing the retention of local jobs and the redevelopment of the redundant Star Lane Brickworks site, without having any adverse impact of the openness of the Green Belt, clearly a well planned and sustainable outcome.
- 1.28 This specific example highlights the importance in the CS of not becoming too site specific. Whilst PPS12 states that the broad locations of 'strategic sites' (PPS12 paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7) can be identified in core strategies. In the Great Wakering example where the quantum of development is modest at 250 dwellings and whilst this could be considered to be 'strategic' in the context of the very rural nature of much of Rochford District and the importance of establishing a clear settlement hierarchy through the CS, it is argued that the identification of 'broad areas' should be a very carefully addressed particularly where there are known to be competing sites. This will allow the detailed site assessments and allocations to be made through the Site Allocations DPD in due course. This process however relies heavily on the provision of an appropriate policy framework being provided by the CS. This particularly relates to our earlier comments regarding housing land supply and delivery considerations as well as draft CS policy GB1
- 1.29 Returning to the west of Great Wakering example, the identification of 'West Great Wakering' in housing policy H3, to accommodate 250 additional dwellings is strongly supported.

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

Note: this has been assumed to have meant to be a reference to housing policy H5: Dwelling Types?

- 1.30 It is accepted that housing sites should contain a variety of house types, sizes and tenures. Further, the detailed mix of housing types should be determined on a site-by-site basis having regard to the characteristics of the site, its context, surrounding area, local need and market conditions. This should form part of the development management process and should not be overly prescribed in a CS. The 'prescription' in the second paragraph of draft housing policy H5 is therefore objected to.
- 1.31 If the Council wishes to produce a Housing Mix SPD then it is open to it to do so. This would provide land owners, developers and house builders with the opportunity to comment in detail.
- e) Is policy H6 [H7?] (Gypsy and Traveller sites) consistent with the advice in circular 01/2006 and the RSS, notably the CS only deals with the provision to 2011. Is there evidence that the criteria proposed are reasonable and that sites will be allocated?**
- 1.32 No comment.
- f) 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 31-33?**
- 1.33 It is considered that the Council have failed to demonstrate in the CS sufficient local justification (in the context of paragraphs 31-33 of PPS1 Planning and Climate Change Supplement) to support the imposition of CSH and BREEM standards which are higher than those required by Building Regulations.
- g) 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?**
- 1.34 It is considered that the requirements of draft CS policy H6 are too onerous. The practical impact of the policy is to burden the house builder with additional costs which are bound to affect viability and the cost of open market housing. It is noted that there is no National requirement that all new houses should have to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard. Until such a National requirement exists it is considered that house builders should not be required to do anything other than comply with current Building Regulations.

END

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PUBLIC EXAMINATION

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF SWAN HILL HOMES LIMITED

MATTER/ISSUE 4: EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1.0 MATTER/ISSUE 4: EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

a) Will the Core Strategy ensure that sufficient land is available to meet the additional jobs required by the RSS in the most appropriate locations?

- 1.1 The starting point is to note that Policy ETG5 of the East of England Plan requires Rochford District to make provision for 3,000 additional jobs in the period 2001 to 2021.
- 1.2 However, simple numerical provision does not reveal the whole picture. Key issues to be considered are the protection of existing employment locations (draft policy ED3) where these are performing well and are in sustainable locations, the identification of new land allocations and the careful consideration of the types of existing employment and the type of future employment needed within the District or to which the District aspires (i.e. high quality high value technology and B1 jobs in particular) together with the protection and creation of 'local' jobs in areas where new housing is to be developed.
- 1.3 For example, CS paragraph 11.31 identifies the location of existing employment sites and paragraph 11.32 sets out a list of employment sites which the Council will seek to protect from redevelopment for non-employment uses. This approach is supported with the exception of the identification of the Star Lane Industrial Estate (including the disused brickworks) being reallocated elsewhere in the District and the site redeveloped for alternative uses (i.e. housing).
- 1.4 This is because whilst there is no objection to the redevelopment of the brickworks element of the site in principle its redevelopment should be for an employment rather than residential use. This is because this would permit the relocation of the existing small employment uses present on the northern part of the Star Lane Industrial Estate site onto the former brickworks land thereby protecting the existing local jobs without needing to allocate a new green field site within the Green Belt, as proposed in draft policy ED4.

- 1.5 This approach would then allow the redevelopment of the northern part of the Star Lane Industrial Estate for housing together with the land south of the High Street (i.e. Call-for-Sites reference 202 (7), SHLAA site reference 7 Appdx C and West of Great Wakering Option WGW1 in the draft Site Allocations DPD).
- 1.6 It is argued that this approach would achieve the objective of CS paragraph 11.32 and policy ED4 without needing to release Green Belt land in a location which is very prominent and which would have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 1.7 This is an example where the employment provisions of the draft CS would benefit from a closer and more tailored assessment on a site by site basis, taking into account all policies of the draft CS.
- 1.8 Therefore, whilst the overall objective of draft policy ED3 is supported, the detail in the second and third paragraphs of the policy is objected to. Further, this level of detail may be inappropriate in a core strategy and the determination of which of the existing employment sites that may be suitable for redevelopment for alternative uses should more properly be a function of the Site Allocations DPD rather than a core strategy.
- 1.9 The identification of Southend Airport as a catalyst for economic development is supported and this model has been proven to work at regional airports in several locations throughout England including, for example, at Southampton and Exeter. Such locations also have a good track record of attracting high quality high value jobs which are needed in Rochford District.
- 1.10 It is noted that paragraph 11.33 of the draft CS states that whilst the Employment Land Study has identified that there is generally a sufficient supply of employment land within the District, there is a particular identified need for 2.2 ha of additional office space. This is supported as it would help to accommodate high quality high value jobs and provide a better balance in terms of the type of jobs available in the District.
- 1.11 Whilst locations in the west of the District are better related to the strategic road network, the local need for jobs in the smaller communities of the District must not be overlooked or be left un-provided for. The example I have used above in relation to the Star Lane Industrial Estates in Great Wakering is a good example of how local jobs can be both protected and the quality of the employment opportunities enhanced. Such an approach can also make a contribution towards reducing dependency on the use of the private car and out-commuting to work.
- 1.12 The identification of 18 ha of additional employment land in draft policy ED4 is supported. However, whilst there is no objection to the listing of the broad locations of new employment sites the level of detail in the policy is questioned and may be more appropriate for a Site Allocations DPD.
- 1.13 In addition, the allocation of land to the south of Great Wakering for a new strategically located employment park is objected to as being unnecessary in the context of my earlier suggestion regarding the redevelopment of the disused Star Lane brickworks site for new mixed-use employment purposes in order to decant the existing employment uses from the northern part of the Star Lane Industrial Estate thereby both retaining local job opportunities and providing the opportunity to ensure that the new development offers a higher quality of employment accommodation, without the need for the release of prominent Green Belt land.

- 1.14 It is also important that the suite of employment policies are not read in such a way as to preclude 'other' new employment sites coming forward in appropriate locations during the plan period.
- 1.15 The use of public funding to 'kick-start' new employment development is also supported, particularly in relation to the development of Innovation Centres, the development of specialist Knowledge Hubs and the use of Enterprise Centres.
- 1.16 Creating the right environment for economic development to thrive is dependent on a wide variety of Agencies and in that regard the Economic Development Strategy is a key driver of change and future economic success of the District. Given that it appears that sufficient land is available to meet the RSS jobs provision the key to achieving this is making Rochford an attractive and desirable place for employers to wish to locate within. Central to this is making sites available in appropriate sustainable locations coupled to the widespread advertisement and promotion of the availability of such opportunities.
- 1.17 In conclusion, therefore, whilst it is considered that draft employment policies ED3 and ED4 are unsound in the context of not being properly 'Justified' or 'Effective' in PPS12 terms, because the former identifies the Star Lane Industrial Estate (including the brickworks) for redevelopment for alternative uses and the latter (unnecessarily) identifies land in the Green Belt south of Great Wakering as a site to relocate the Star Lane Industrial Estate uses, when a more appropriate and sustainable planning solution is readily available – see above paragraphs.
- 1.18 However, it is considered that policies ED3 and ED4 could be made sound by revisions which address the issues raised above.

END