

Matter PM1B: Housing Land Supply and Joint Trajectory

North Barton Road Land Owners Group

Cambridge City Council Id. 5336

South Cambridgeshire District Council Id. 21302

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Local Plan Examinations

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
MATTER PM1B - 5 YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AND JOINT TRAJECTORY.....	2
PM1B.1.....	2
PM1B.2.....	3
PM1B.3.....	5
PM1B.4.....	7

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Carter Jonas LLP on behalf of the North Barton Road Land Owners Group (North BRLOG) to the consultation on Modifications to the draft Cambridge Local Plan (Draft CLP2014) and the draft South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (Draft SCLP). North BRLOG comprises four landowners, as follows: Corpus Christi College, Downing College, Jesus College, and University of Cambridge. North BRLOG owns land to the North of Barton Road which is on the south western built-up edge of Cambridge.
- 1.2 We have previously commented on housing delivery matters and the joint housing trajectory in our original Representations Report to Draft SCLP, in our hearing statement for Matter 8, and in representations to the recent LP Modifications consultation.
- 1.3 In summary, we maintain our objection to the proposed joint housing trajectory. The joint housing trajectory has been introduced to address the housing land supply shortfall in South Cambridgeshire. No alternatives to the joint housing trajectory have been considered or assessed, and it has not been assessed against housing related sustainability objectives. The use of a joint housing trajectory is not advocated in the NPPF. The proposed joint housing trajectory would have negative consequences for the supply of housing and affordable housing in South Cambridgeshire during the early years of the plan period, and could have negative consequences for Cambridge in the middle and later years depending on the delivery of the proposed new settlements. The aims of the NPPF to boost significantly the supply of housing would be better met if the Authorities were to have their own individual trajectories as advocated by national advice. The Councils are not preparing a joint Local Plan within which a joint trajectory would be appropriate. The failure to identify sufficient land to maintain a five year housing land supply with South Cambridgeshire is an urgent and serious soundness matter that needs to be rectified if the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan is to be found sound. The housing land supply shortfall should be addressed by allocating additional land for housing, and not through a mechanism that either deliberately seeks to under-deliver housing, or which at the very least, is likely to have that effect.

2. MATTER PM1B 5 YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AND JOINT TRAJECTORY

PM1B.1

The Framework (paragraph 47) states, amongst other things, that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements. Planning Policy Guidance Ref 010 2a-010-20140306 advises: Where there is a joint plan, housing requirements and the need to identify a five year supply of sites can apply across the joint plan area. The approach being taken should be set out clearly in the plan.

Are there any local circumstances which justify the use of a joint trajectory without a joint plan? If so what are they?

- 2.1 We commented on the Memorandum of Understanding on the proposed joint housing trajectory in our response to Qu iii of our Matter 8B Statement. Those comments remain valid. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF makes no provision for combined housing trajectories, and the responsibility for maintaining a five year housing land supply rests with individual local planning authorities. Even where a joint development plan document is prepared each authority still retains overall responsibility for maintaining its own housing land supply. The reason that a joint housing trajectory is proposed for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire is to address the current housing land supply shortfall in South Cambridgeshire.
- 2.2 A joint plan for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire is not being prepared by the Councils. There are no local circumstances to justify the use of a joint housing trajectory. In our opinion, there are local circumstances that indicate that a joint housing trajectory should not be used, because of the urgent need for housing and affordable housing in South Cambridgeshire and the unnecessary delay to housing delivery that are part of the joint housing trajectory.
- 2.3 It is claimed that the joint housing trajectory supports the proposed development strategy, which is based on development within and on the edge of Cambridge in the early part of the plan period and new settlements within South Cambridgeshire towards the middle and later years. In our opinion, the joint housing trajectory is not required to deliver the proposed development strategy and it is inappropriate. The potential development sites within Cambridge have been assessed and identified. The majority of the strategic developments on the edge of Cambridge have planning permission and are under construction, and as such will be delivered in the early part of the plan period. The proposed main modifications to the Local Plans (Ref. PM/SC/2/N, PM/SC/3/H and PM/SC/3/I)

remove any restrictions on the timetable for the delivery of the new settlements at Waterbeach and Bourn Airfield, and in theory these sites could be delivered earlier than anticipated in the housing trajectory; we are aware that the promoters of both these schemes intend to bring them forward early. Therefore, it appears that the joint housing trajectory serves no purpose, other than to under deliver housing within South Cambridgeshire in the early years of the plan period.

- 2.4 The joint housing trajectory is contained in proposed main modifications and was not part of the submitted Plans. It is up to the Inspector to decide whether the joint housing trajectory is required to rectify a soundness related issue. There is no soundness related issue with the development strategy that the joint housing trajectory needs to resolve. There are soundness issues with the development strategy that are unrelated to the joint housing trajectory, and these have been and will be discussed in other hearing sessions.

PM1B.2

Will the use of a joint trajectory assist in meeting the objectives of the Framework, including the delivery of sustainable development and boosting, significantly, the supply of land for housing?

- 2.5 There are two matters not raised in the questions, but previously commented on in our representations, which should be noted. Firstly, the Sustainability Appraisal of the LP Modifications considers that the joint housing trajectory is an administrative change which does not affect the sustainability objectives (see Table 10.2 in SA Addendum Report at pg. 132). In our opinion, the planned under-delivery of housing and affordable housing in South Cambridgeshire through the joint housing trajectory and the over-reliance on new settlements would lead to negative impacts on housing related sustainability objectives including meeting housing needs. Secondly, no alternatives to a joint housing trajectory have been considered or consulted on by the Councils. South Cambridgeshire District Council could have undertaken a variety of actions to address the current housing land supply shortfall in development management and plan-making e.g. approve planning applications, reassess Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sites, and/or allocate additional deliverable sites which could be brought forward at an early date. None of these potential actions were considered as an alternative to the joint housing trajectory.
- 2.6 The joint housing trajectory is a negative and unfortunate (some might say convenient) response to South Cambridgeshire District Council being unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. There is a chronic need for housing and affordable housing in both Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, in order to

support the local economy, address congestion and encourage travel by sustainable modes of transport, and reduce commuting distances. The joint housing trajectory is an approach that seeks to deliberately under deliver housing in South Cambridgeshire during the early years of the plan period, which cannot be justified on housing need grounds. It is unacceptable for those in housing need now to be expected to wait until the later years of the plan period before those needs are met. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing, whereas the joint housing trajectory seeks to under deliver housing. Furthermore, as set out in our Matter 8 Statement, housing delivery in South Cambridgeshire has fallen well short of the housing requirements of the adopted Core Strategy and previous Structure Plan, which demonstrates a history of under-delivery. That under-delivery of housing is largely related to the over-reliance on new settlements. It would be inappropriate in these circumstances to proceed with a strategy that deliberately planned to under-deliver housing. In addition, as set out in our representations, the existing new settlements often do not deliver policy compliant levels of affordable housing and we are aware that other strategic sites in South Cambridgeshire are seeking to reduce the provision of affordable housing, and as such the delivery of affordable housing would be further reduced when considered in conjunction with the joint housing trajectory.

- 2.7 As set out in our response to Question PM1A, the proposed development strategy would be unaffected by the currently proposed joint housing trajectory because development on the edge of Cambridge is already committed and under construction, and all restrictions on the timing of delivery of the planned new settlements at Waterbeach and Bourn Airfield have been removed. We comment on the sustainability of the proposed development strategy in our representations, and conclude that additional development on the edge of Cambridge is more sustainable, but these matters will be addressed in other hearing sessions.
- 2.8 We conclude that the objectives of the NPPF would be better met if there was no joint housing trajectory because more housing would be required during the early years of the plan period, to address historic under-delivery of housing in South Cambridgeshire and to meet current housing and affordable housing needs.
- 2.9 We requested in our representations that all references to a joint housing trajectory should be deleted from Draft CLP2014 and Draft SCLP. Without a joint housing trajectory South Cambridgeshire District Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply which would be unsound. In these circumstances additional sites would need to be identified and allocated in Draft SCLP to address the housing land supply shortfall against the proposed housing target. If,

as requested in our representations, the housing target needs to increase to meet the GL Hearn assessment of Objectively Assessed Housing Need then further additional sites will need to be identified.

PM1B.3

Is it clear how this approach would work in practice; i.e how would the five year land supply would be calculated and updated; and it is clear how any failure to provide a five year supply would be resolved?

- 2.10 It is not clear how the joint housing trajectory would work in practice. We have particular concerns about how the housing land supply would be calculated and the decision-making process required to resolve a five year housing land supply shortfall when it occurs.
- 2.11 As set out in our representations and Matter 8 Hearing Statement, the Sedgefield approach to meeting the housing shortfall is the most appropriate for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The Sedgefield approach is preferred in the Planning Practice Guidance, it is the approach used by East Cambridgeshire District Council, and it was applied by the Inspector when deciding the two Waterbeach appeals. It appears that Sedgefield is the most appropriate approach to adopt for the proposed joint housing trajectory, and it should be straightforward to agree this.
- 2.12 However, it is more difficult to determine the appropriate buffer to apply for the joint housing trajectory - 5% or 20% - as required by Paragraph 47 of the NPPF. Housing monitoring data demonstrates that in Cambridge the housing target of Draft CLP2014 is being met, but over a longer period the housing requirements of the adopted Cambridge Local Plan 2006 were not met in most years resulting in a significant housing shortfall. As such, there is a record of persistent under-delivery in Cambridge during the last 10 to 15 years. There is a case for a 20% buffer to be applied in Cambridge on the basis of housing delivery over the longer period, but possibly not when considered against the plan period for Draft CLP2014. In the case of South Cambridgeshire there is no dispute that there has been a record of persistent under-delivery against the housing targets of the adopted Core Strategy 2007 and Draft SCLP. A 20% buffer is the only reasonable option to use when calculating the housing land supply for South Cambridgeshire. The question that arises from the above is which buffer should be used for the joint housing trajectory. A 20% buffer would be reasonable for both Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire now, and for the proposed joint housing trajectory. It is not clear what buffer would be used, for example, if housing delivery rates improved in Cambridge in the next few years but under-delivery persisted in South Cambridgeshire, when there are two local plans with two separate housing requirements. The long term and persistent under-delivery

of housing in South Cambridgeshire would indicate that it will be years and possibly a decade or more before anything other than a 20% buffer could reasonably be applied. The delivery of developments on the edge of the City may mean that 5% buffer could be applied earlier in Cambridge. It would be inconsistent with a joint housing trajectory to apply a different buffer to Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and it would rather defeat the logic of a joint trajectory to do so.

- 2.13 We doubt whether the consequences of the joint housing trajectory have been fully understood by either Council in terms of what action each could take when a housing land supply shortfall occurs. In our opinion, and as set out in our representations, the over-reliance on new settlements within South Cambridgeshire will inevitably lead to a housing shortfall because such developments are often subject to delays, are more complex and require the funding of significant infrastructure prior to the delivery of housing, are subject to protracted negotiation on the delivery of community infrastructure and affordable housing provision, and are more susceptible during an economic downturn. If the joint housing trajectory is adopted, the policies related to the supply of housing within Draft CLP2014 must also be considered out of date if the housing land supply position falls below 5 years because of delays to the delivery of new settlements in South Cambridgeshire; this is a realistic scenario based on the past delivery of existing planned new settlements. In these circumstances, the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in Paragraph 14 of the NPPF would apply to development proposals, and as a consequence all unprotected land and land where development restrictions are related to housing supply could be subject to applications for residential development; regardless of whether sufficient housing is actually being delivered in Cambridge.
- 2.15 There is a political dimension to decision-making under the joint housing trajectory. Cambridge City Council is a Labour majority administration, whereas South Cambridgeshire has a Conservative majority. It is not clear what planning decisions would be made by either administration in circumstances where a housing land supply shortfall exists against a joint housing trajectory, but not within the housing target of the Councils own adopted Local Plan. In our opinion this would almost certainly lead to inconsistent decisions being made, and a greater political input to planning decisions than would otherwise occur. The Planning Committee at South Cambridgeshire District Council does not approve many of the planning applications for residential development that have been submitted on housing land supply grounds, despite officer recommendations that planning permission should be granted; what would it do in circumstances where it might need to approve an application for residential development because of a housing shortfall in Cambridge? We predict that the joint housing

trajectory would lead to undue political influence on decision-making with applicants having to resort to the appeals process.

PM1B.4

The Memorandum of Understanding (RD/Strat/350) indicated that, as part of the City Deal arrangements, the Councils have agreed to prepare a joint Local Plan and Transport Strategy starting in 2019. Should this commitment be expressly included in the Local Plans?

- 2.16 There would be no harm in this statement being made; however, it does not mean that the current emerging plans should not deal adequately with housing trajectories and overall assessed levels of need. A joint Local Plan will in time address many issues across the wider sub-region but will take time and political support to get right. In the interim, it is crucial that two sound Local Plans are adopted, based on NPPF advice that will significantly boost the delivery of new housing in the area.