

**LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
CAMBRIDGE CITY AND SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**MATTER 8
HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AND DELIVERY**

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**on behalf of:
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The following Statement is prepared on behalf of Pigeon Land and Lands Improvement Holdings Ltd. It should be read in conjunction with previously submitted representations (CCC 5102 and SCDC 20801) and their accompanying planning reports.

2 MATTER 8A “ARE THE HOUSING TRAJECTORIES REALISTIC; WILL THEY DELIVER THE NUMBER OF NEW HOMES EXPECTED WITHIN THE PLAN PERIOD?”

2.1 *(i) “Are the expectations for existing permissions and new allocations reasonable? Is there too much reliance on new settlements and will this prejudice the delivery of new housing in the plan period?”*

2.2 The earlier representations identified concerns over the housing land supply and delivery assumptions made by CCC and SCDC in their respective Local Plans and summarised in:

- Cambridge Local Plan, paragraphs 2.43–2.48, Table 2.3 and Figure 2.2;
- South Cambs Local Plan, Policy S6, Policy S/12(s) paragraphs 2.61–2.67, Figure 3.

2.3 Further detail of the Councils’ expectations on supply are contained within the housing trajectory assumptions contained within CCC’s AMR 2013 (RD/AD/350) and AMR 2014 update (RD/AD/360) and SCDC’s AMR (RE/AD/270 and RD/AD/370).

2.4 I provide further update and explanation of the housing land supply and delivery assumptions in the appendix attached to this Statement. The appendix is prepared by the leading Cambridge based residential development surveyors and estate agency, Bidwells.

Cambridge City Local Plan

2.5 The earlier representations to the Submission Plan made reference to the Council’s expectations of delivery on individual sites. We challenge these individual site delivery expectations and conclude that when taken together they severely over-estimate the expectation of housing delivery from allocated sites without planning permission and from new Local Plan allocations.

2.6 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing land and advises that Local Planning Authorities should:

“Identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6–10 and, where possible, for years 11–15.”

The footnote to this advice explains that:

“To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.”

- 2.7 Paragraphs 3.1-3.5 and Table 3 of the attached appendix explain the concerns about the availability and deliverability of ten existing allocated sites without planning permission and their ability to deliver 706 dwellings during the plan period. The CCLP relies upon 721 dwellings being delivered from this source as confirmed in Table 2.3 of the CCLP.
- 2.8 Table 4 of the appendix explains the concern about the availability and deliverability of eight new Local Plan allocation sites to deliver a total of 870 dwellings in the plan period. CCLP relies upon 1,904 dwellings being delivered from this source as confirmed in Table 2.3 of the CCLP.
- 2.9 There is a clear doubt that the Plan has a reasonable prospect of delivering a large proportion of dwellings from these two sources and in total would under-provide 1,576 dwellings in the plan period.

South Cambs District Local Plan

- 2.10 The SCDLP places considerable reliance on a small number of out-of-town strategic new settlement sites to deliver the necessary new housing in the plan period. In my view the large strategic new settlement allocations will fail to deliver homes within the ambitious trajectory detailed in Figure 3 of the Plan. This likely failure is born out by extensive experience of past lead in, delivery rate, market demand and viability issues related to similar proposals throughout the UK and Cambridgeshire.
- 2.11 The attached appendix explains the concerns and likely consequences.

Lead In Times

- 2.12 We conclude that the lead in times identified in the SCDLP appear to be largely reasonable although there will be concerns about delivery for as long as there continues to exist uncertainties over infrastructure provision (see Matter 5 and 7). It is also worth noting that the viability of these sites may also face uncertainty in a changing market throughout the plan period.
- 2.13 In assessing our view on any supply shortfall we have not amended the commencement date of delivery in Figure 3 of the SCDLP.

Delivery Rates

- 2.14 The appendix at paragraphs 4.11-4.18 explains why there are genuine and clearly evidence based concerns over the delivery rates assumed by SCDL. Even accepting the Council's lead in times for each of the out-of-town strategic sites, a more realistic delivery rate of 250 dwellings per annum on Northstowe, Waterbeach and Cambourne West / Bourn Airfield (combined) would reduce the supply in the plan period by 2,550 dwellings.

Affordable Housing

- 2.15 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires provision of sufficient and available land supply to meet the full objectively assessed housing need. This includes affordable housing. Due to additional costs in delivering out-of-town strategic / new settlement sites, their vulnerability to changing market conditions, their lesser value than fringe sites and, in poor market conditions, their more limited demand, these sites often fail to deliver policy compliant levels of affordable housing (reference paragraphs 4.19-4.28 of the appendix).
- 2.16 Based on the delivery concerns listed in paragraphs 2.7, 2.8 and 2.14 above the Councils' own trajectories for the Cambridge HMA will suffer a shortfall of 4,126 homes. The gap between supply and need will be even greater when assessed against GL Hearn's objective assessment of housing need figure of 46,500 homes.
- 2.17 ***(ii) "Is there sufficient flexibility to deal with changing circumstances and / or uncertainty over when allocations will come forward for development?"***
- 2.18 No. Neither plans contain adequate or convincing flexibility to deal with changing circumstances and / or uncertainty over the delivery of the anticipated housing trajectories. They fail to meet the requirements of paragraph 14 of the NPPF for plans to "meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change."
- 2.19 SCDC contend in paragraph 2.66 of the Local Plan that it has:
"... included a good deal of flexibility ... capable of responding to rapid change with a number of sites that could be brought forward in the plan period if needed, including a new village at Bourn Airfield..."
- 2.20 It further contends in paragraph 2.69 that in such circumstances:
"The Council will be proactive in using its powers to respond to changing circumstances ..."
- SCDC cite use of CPO powers, review of land allocations or policies in the Local Plan and the use of windfall sites.
- 2.21 Any delays in the delivery of strategic sites or city based sites referred to in paragraphs 3.1-3.5 of the appendix are most likely to be caused by issues beyond the control of the local planning authority. Issues of delivery rates, infrastructure provision, market conditions and land assembly are unlikely to be resolved by the use of CPO powers or reviews to land allocation policies.
- 3 MATTER 8B "WILL THE PLANS ENSURE A ROLLING FIVE YEAR SUPPLY OF SPECIFIC DELIVERABLE SITES IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 47 OF THE FRAMEWORK?"**
- 3.1 ***(iii) "Does the Memorandum of Understanding reflect an acceptance that, individually, the two Plans will not provide a rolling five year supply across the plan period? If so, will the planned***

MMs, which would rely on a combined housing trajectory for Greater Cambridge, ensure compliance with paragraph 47 of the Framework? Bearing in mind the Inspector’s rejection of this approach in the Waterbeach appeals, are the Councils able to draw my attention to any cases where such an approach has been supported (other than where joint plans have been prepared)? Would it be a better approach, if supported by the evidence, to have a “stepped approach”, for example West Lancashire Local Plan, who identified the five year housing land supply for each Council on an individual basis.”

- 3.2 Both Council AMR’s confirm that neither can demonstrate a rolling five year supply throughout the plan period. SCDC fail in the current five year period and CC fail in the latter stages of the plan period.
- 3.3 The requirements of the housing market in Cambridge, as described in Matter 3, demand an orthodox solution to the provision of a five year housing supply and not one which is borne out of emerging convenience in an environment where a five year deficit has been demonstrated to exist.
- 3.4 There are situations where a combined assessment and solution would be possible but this can only be genuinely and robustly justified where joint plans have been prepared and where evidence and consultation regimes have been properly and positively co-ordinated from the beginning of the Local Plan process. The Greater Norwich Partnership area is an example of what would have been necessary for such a co-ordinated approach. Three Councils elected to prepare a joint plan and appointed a joint body (Greater Norwich Development Partnership) to prepare the evidence base. Unlike, in the case of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, all the necessary evidence and assessment under the Sustainability Appraisal, Transport Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plans were considered and justified and not retro-fitted to a particular strategy. See case explained in Matters 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7.
- 3.5 As stated in paragraph 181 of the NPPF:
“Co-operation should be a continuous process of engagement from initial thinking through to implementation ... “
- 3.6 The planned MMs (Appendix 3 of the Council’s Statement to Matter 1) merely seek to confirm a position which is unacceptable and not in compliance with NPPF or NPPG advice. They would not, therefore, ensure compliance with paragraph 47 of the NPPF.
- 3.7 While I am uncomfortable that the West Lancashire approach satisfactorily complies with guidance, I concede that it could, in certain circumstances, represent a satisfactory solution. However, those circumstances would be very specific, as indeed they were in the West Lancashire case. The Inspector accepted the Council’s case that it would be difficult to achieve the annual target in the early part of the plan period given the continuing effects of the post-2008 recession and the likelihood that a reduced demand for housing compared with the pre-2008 period would continue.

- 3.8 These are very different circumstances to those which exist in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire where all the indications are that there is substantial demand and pressure for housing. Unlike West Lancashire, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire have an existing and continuing pressure from affordability issues and employment demand. Consequences of adopting an approach contrived for reasons of only procedural convenience would fail to meet the objectively assessed housing and employment needs of the area.
- 3.9 The aim of the NPPF is to boost significantly the supply of housing with a particular focus on the first five years of the plan period. A “stepped approach” would fail to achieve this aim.
- 3.10 (iv) “Does the evidence on past delivery justify the use of a 5%, rather than 20%, buffer?”**
- 3.11 No. Representation 20801/59716 explains our view that the evidence on past delivery in South Cambridgeshire justifies the use of a 20% buffer. Table 3 accompanying the earlier representations confirms a shortfall of 4,097 dwellings during the period 2001 / 02 and 2010 / 11 (judged against the requirements of the Structure Plan). SCDC’s figures contained in Table 3 of RD/TOP/050 identify a shortfall of 2,990 in the period 1999 / 00 and 2012 / 13 (judged against a lower requirement figure).
- 3.12 On the Councils’ own figure there has been underprovision for ten of the last 14 years. According to SCDC’s assessment in RD/TOP/050, undersupply has been largely a function of the recession.
- 3.13 While I accept that the recession may have had a part to play, in South Cambridgeshire it has been more a function of ill-conceived and non-deliverable allocations in Northstowe and Cambridge East and over optimistic delivery expectations.
- 3.14 (v) *“Is there compelling evidence with reference to historic delivery rates and expected future trends, as required by paragraph 48 of the Framework, that windfalls will contribute to the five year supply?”*
- 3.15 SCDC contend that experience demonstrates an average of c200 dwellings per year. They are confident that this would continue. Although the Council does not appear to have relied on windfall sites to meet its identified housing requirement it does form an essential element of the plan’s flexibility to make up any shortfall (paragraph 2.66 SCDLP). Indeed the housing trajectory at Figure 4.8 of RD/AD/370 assumes a total of 2,600 dwellings from such a source between 2011 and 2031.
- 3.16 Given the existing substantial shortfall of supply, even on the Council’s own housing need assessment and the consequent likelihood that windfall sites will be called upon in the first five years to ‘repair’ that shortfall, it is important to see compelling evidence that such sites will continue to provide a consistently reliable source of supply in accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF.
- 3.17 (v) “Is there compelling evidence with reference to historic delivery rates and expected future trends, as required by paragraph 48 of the Framework, that windfalls will contribute to the five year supply? For SCLP, are paragraphs 2.65 and 2.66 consistent with part 2 of Policy S/12?”**

- 3.18 In the case of South Cambs district, no. Given the Local Plan's reliance on the ability of windfall sites to contribute to the flexibility required to make up any shortfall (paragraph 2.66 SCDLP) it is particularly important that the evidence to support the delivery of windfall sites is compelling in accordance with paragraph 48 of the Framework.
- 3.19 The Council has relied largely on historic data to support their view that an average of 200 homes per annum will be delivered from windfall sites. In my view, this is less than compelling given that even in the most productive years quoted (excluding one exceptional year) the average only just met the 200 total.
- 3.20 The role of windfall sites is not made clear in paragraphs 2.65 and 2.66 of Policy S/12. We can, therefore, only conclude that there is inconsistency about whether windfalls are part of the five year supply or part of the solution to 'repair' any shortfall.
- 3.21 ***(vi) "For each Council, what, if any, is the shortfall in delivery from the early years of the plan period which needs to be accounted for and can this be made up in the first five years, which is the preferred method in PPG7. If not, what are the local circumstances which justify using a longer period (i.e. not the economic recession)?"***
- 3.22 The Councils' own assessments of their five year land supplies are contained in the respective AMRs (RD/AD/360 and RD/AD/370). South Cambs have undersupplied by 977 units. CCC is in surplus by 32 homes. There is no evidence to confirm that this shortfall can be made up in the first five years.
- 3.23 There are no local circumstances that would justify using a longer period than five years.
- 3.24 ***(vii) "How will the extra 1,000 new homes on rural exception sites to be delivered as part of the City Deal be reflected in the housing trajectory / five year housing land supply?"***
- 3.25 According to SCDC's 2014 AMR (RD/AD/370) the estimated 1,000 homes on rural exception sites are not included in the trajectory. It is appropriate to exclude these due to the considerable uncertainty of provision.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND SOUNDNESS

- 4.1 The Plans are unsound because they fail to identify realistic housing trajectories. This is due to:
- a) over-optimistic expectations on the availability and deliverability of sites in Cambridge;
 - b) over-optimistic delivery rate assumptions for the proposed new settlement sites;
 - c) consequent likely failure to meet the full objectively assessed housing need, including for affordable housing;
- 4.2 The Plan further fails to:
- d) contain sufficient flexibility to deal with changing circumstances;

e) ensure a rolling five year supply of specific deliverable sites;

f) comply with paragraphs 47 and 48 of the Framework.

4.3 The Plan will need to identify sufficient additional and available land to meet the full objectively assessed housing need for the plan period and specifically for the first five years. These additional sites should be new sites in order to provide the appropriate choice, flexibility, competition in the market place and greatest chance of delivery. Extending or increasing the densities of current allocations or relying on windfall sites would not resolve the problems of delivery.