

12/03/2018

Planning Policy Team
Brentwood Borough Council
Town Hall
Brentwood
Essex, CM15 8AY
Sent by Email

Dear Sir/Madam,

Brentwood Draft Local Plan – Preferred Site Allocations (January 2018)

Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes are pleased to submit joint representations in respect of their land interests to the West of Basildon. This includes a portion of the proposed Dunton Hills Garden Village allocation (site reference 200)¹. **Appendix 1** includes a site location plan showing Crest Nicholson's and Bellway Homes' land interests within the allocation.

Our clients strongly supports Brentwood Borough Council's ("**BBC**") proposal for the allocation of Dunton Hills Garden Village and its proposed removal from the Green Belt. The allocation and adjoining land within Basildon Borough Council (site reference H10), represents one of the most sustainable locations for new housing growth in South Essex, to help meet local housing needs. This demonstrates that BBC is attempting to plan positively for development as per the objectives contained in the National Planning Policy Framework ("**NPPF**").

Although we support many aspects of the plan there unfortunately remain some areas where its soundness is questionable. In order to support BBC in preparing a sound plan we set out in our representations a series of comments and suggestions that help to address the areas of concern and specifically bring the Draft Local Plan ("**the Draft Plan**") into alignment with paragraph 17 (third bullet point), paragraph 157 (first bullet point) and paragraph 182 of the NPPF ('positively prepared').

In addition, at present we consider the duty to cooperate process to be incomplete and so will need further work in areas we have highlighted below. Further, the Draft Plan will require updating to reflect ongoing duty to cooperate discussions and Government's consultation proposals, as set out in 'Draft National Planning Policy Framework'² ("**the draft NPPF**"). The representations are ordered by the following themes:

- 1) Local Housing Needs - the Draft Plan does not fully account for the shortfall/backlog of past housing delivery within the text. In addition, the next iteration of the plan should revise the housing target to reflect the most up to date evidence on affordability and household projections. The plan would be made more flexible with an increased buffer of allocated sites.

¹ Page 91, Brentwood Draft Local Plan – Preferred Site Allocations (January 2018)

² National Planning Policy Framework Draft text for consultation (MHCLG, March 2018)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685289/Draft_revised_National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

- 2) The Duty to Cooperate - there is insufficient evidence of meaningful duty to cooperate discussions and no clear mechanism set out as to how the South Essex authorities shall consider and apportion the unmet needs of their partners. There are also unresolved matters related to the location of Dunton Hills Garden Village and its relationship to the west of Basildon.
- 3) Deliverability of the Draft Plan – the stated delivery rates for Dunton Hills Garden Village are overly ambitious, especially if there were to be an over reliance on one developer. BBC should ensure the next iteration of the plan keeps the allocation flexible and open to delivery on the eastern side of site 200.
- 4) Green Belt – the removal of Parcel 17 from the Green Belt is supported, however, it is considered that the assessment of Parcel 17 overstates the lands contribution to a number of the Green Belt ‘purposes’.

1. Local Housing Needs

The Draft Plan’s housing target has been revised upwards since the previous iteration, reflecting the updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (“**SHMA**”)³ and a new Objectively Assessed Housing Need (“**OAHN**”) figure of ~380 dwellings per annum (which equates to 7,600 dwellings across the plan period 2013-33). This is a total increase of 360 units (over the plan period) from the previous iteration of the Draft Plan (2016). BBC state that the increase in OAHN is driven principally by market signals, suggesting an upward adjustment is necessary to address local housing affordability issues (paragraph 51).

Figure 8 of the Draft Plan (page 25) states that the proposed allocations could be capable of delivering 6,154 units up to 2033. Allocations plus completions, commitments and a windfall assumption are anticipated to deliver an overall total of 8,263 units up to 2033. Based upon recorded net completions⁴ there is an existing backlog of 993 homes⁵. Should the plan be adopted in 2019 the backlog is likely to exceed 1,000 units, resulting in a five year housing land requirement of approximately ~3,500 units (assuming a 20% buffer due to cumulative completions being below the cumulative requirement for the past decade)⁶. Low delivery rates since 2013 means that BBC’s five year housing land supply is becoming increasingly challenging to deliver. Based on low past delivery rates and a new OAHN of 380 units per annum, the five year housing land supply shall increase by ~500 units, above what was adjudged to be required in the most recently published ‘*Five Year Housing Land Supply Requirement 2016-2021*’ (November 2016)⁷. This shortfall/backlog of homes from 2013 should be set out in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan. Past performance suggests that BBC should be taking a cautious approach within the Local Plan and should over allocate sufficient sites in order to help address the low levels of delivery experienced in recent years. It would be prudent to allow for a buffer of sites in excess of the OAHN. At present the Draft Plan only plans for ~9% increase above the figure of 7,600 units. A buffer of 20% would be prudent in the circumstances. Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes, working in partnership, can help to accelerate delivery for BBC.

⁴ See Housing Delivery 2016/17 (Dec 2017); and Five Year Housing Supply 2016-2021 (Nov 2016). Accessed at: <http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/index.php?cid=880>

⁵ 380 (OAHN per annum) * 4 years (2013 to 2017) = 1520
1520 less 527 (completions 2013 to 2017) = 993

⁶ 2570 (cumulative requirement 2007/8 to 2016/17) Less 1921 (net completions 2007/8 to 2016/17) = -649 deficit

⁷ Table 3 Brentwood Monitoring Report Five Year Housing Supply. Accessed at: <http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/pdf/30122016154154u.pdf>

BBC acknowledge in the Draft Plan (paragraph 43) that the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (“**MHCLG**”) had consulted upon a new standardised approach for calculating the local housing need (*‘Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places’*⁸). Since publication of the Draft Plan, MHCLG published the draft NPPF and proposed updates to the Planning Practice Guidance (“**PPG**”).

BBC state that the Draft Plan includes allocations capable of delivering in excess of 380 units per annum (paragraphs 42, 43, 44, and 51); therefore the Draft Plan builds in sufficient flexibility to reflect any changes to national policy. The Draft Plan states that:

*“consideration is being given as to whether the delivery of Dunton Hills Garden Village could be accelerated to increase its dwelling yield within the plan period. Dunton Hills has capacity to deliver 2,500 dwellings within the plan period, but has a possible total dwelling yield in excess of 3,500 dwellings. This is at least another 1,000 dwellings beyond the end of the plan period to 2033. This work is linked to site masterplanning, consideration of various modern methods of construction, early upfront infrastructure delivery and a clear delivery plan with comprehensive site phasing.”*¹²

The Draft Plan (Figure 1) anticipates publication of the Proposed Submission⁹ in late Summer/Autumn 2018. The draft NPPF and ‘National Planning Policy Framework Consultation proposals’¹⁰ set out implementation and transitional arrangements. The draft NPPF (paragraph 209) and the accompanying proposals document (pages 24-25) state that the policies in the previous Framework will apply for the purpose of examining plans, where those plans are submitted within a 6 month transition period (after the date of the final NPPF’s publication). In these cases the examination will take no account of the new NPPF. Therefore the local housing need standard methodology would not need to be relied upon by BBC, provided the Local Plan is submitted before the expiration of the proposed 6 month transition period. Paragraph 67 of the Draft Plan says that if the standardised method indicates a need for Brentwood to deliver a capped figure of 454 dwellings per annum this would translate to ~9,080 dwellings across the plan period (2013-2033), equivalent to 1,480 additional dwellings.

The draft NPPF includes an amended ‘positively prepared’ and ‘effective’ soundness tests, including the introduction of Statements of Common Ground (“**SOCG**”). These changes are proposed to take immediate effect following publication of the NPPF (summer 2018). As such BBC will be required to prepare a SOCG evidencing duty to cooperate discussions with its neighbours. According to the draft NPPF (paragraph 36(a) & (c)) the submitted Local Plan must:

- provide a strategy which will, as a minimum, meet as much as possible of the area’s objectively assessed needs (particularly for housing, using a clear and justified method to identify needs);

⁸ Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places (DCLG, September 2017) Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>

⁹ Consulted upon pursuant to regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

¹⁰ National Planning Policy Framework Consultation proposals (March 2018). Accessed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685288/NPPF_Consultation.pdf

- be informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development; and
- be deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground

As a consequence, the Draft Local Plan should be revisited on the basis that: (1) the current OAHN will need to be updated following publication of the latest 2017 affordability ratio data and 2016 Sub-National Population Projections (“**SNPP**”); (2) Duty to Cooperate discussions need to be urgently revisited with the other South Essex Local Planning Authorities (“**LPAs**”) to ascertain where unmet need from those neighbouring authorities will be accommodated and if some will be within BBC’s administrative area which will mean an increase in housing numbers beyond that which is identified in the SHMA; and (3) it is unlikely that any unmet needs or increases to OAHN could be accommodated at Dunton Hills Garden Village on its own. In addition, Dunton Hills Garden Village would need to exceed the average annual build out rates of any strategic site delivered nationally over the past two decades to deliver in excess of 2,500 units in the plan period.

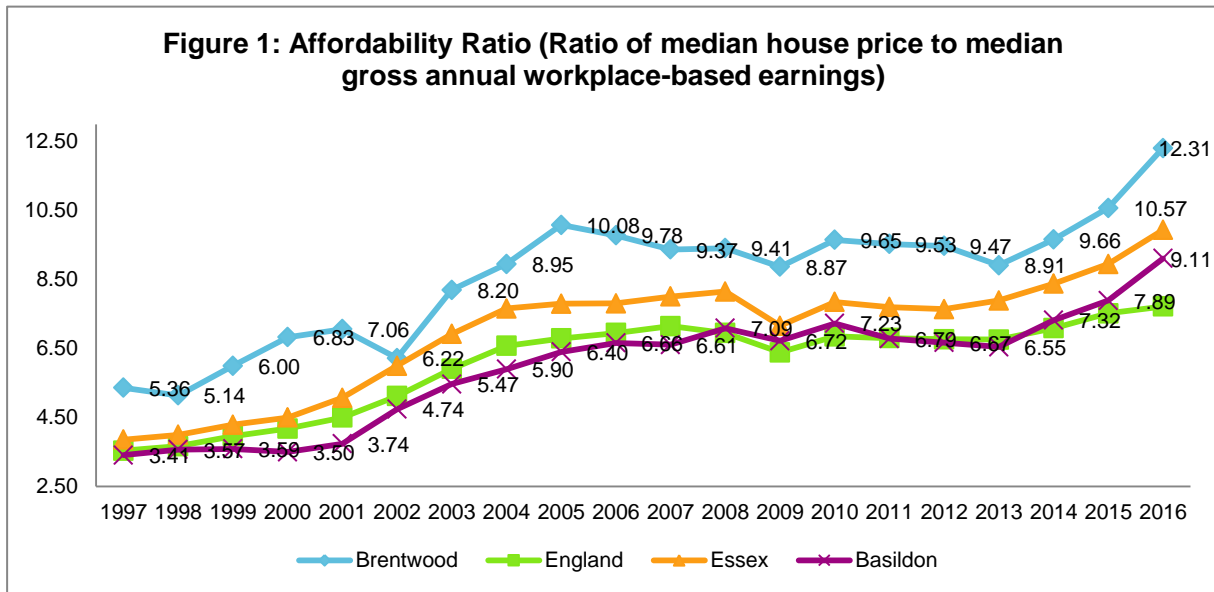
The ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings is published annually by the Office for National Statistics; the next release is scheduled for April 2018. This is an essential piece of data which the new standard methodology is set to rely upon and key market signal indicator (which has, in part, led to upward adjustments in the OAHN in the Draft Plan). In addition, the SHMA (page 38) explicitly states that the OAHN should be reviewed once the 2016 SNPP are published and *‘the scale of the market signal adjustment re-assessed using the most recent data available’*. It would be prudent for the Regulation 19 version of the plan to be published after these two key data releases and in light of the proposals contained within the draft NPPF.

It will be necessary for all South Essex LPAs to revisit their emerging Local Plan housing targets (using the latest available data) to accord with the revisions to the tests of soundness, the introduction of SOCG and proposed transitional arrangements. The Government considers that a period of two years from the date of submission gives sufficient time for a local plan to be adopted using the assessment of local housing need. This should ensure that plans are up to date¹¹. Therefore BBC are only permitted to ignore new data sources once the Local Plan has been submitted. In this situation, the requirement in the NPPF paragraph 158 (as well as the draft NPPF paragraph 33) to use the most up-to-date evidence would necessitate that the local housing need is revisited. In the absence of a suitable update to local housing need, the Local Plan will fail to use the most up-to-date evidence, thereby failing to apply NPPF paragraph 158.

An analysis of the affordability ratio from 1997 to 2017 (**Figure 1** overleaf) illustrates that affordability has worsened in Brentwood, peaking at 12.31 in 2016. Brentwood’s affordability ratio has remained above the England and Essex average for the past two decades. In recent years, Basildon has also risen above the England average. Both LPAs have a role to

¹¹ Government response to the Planning for the right homes in the right places consultation - A summary of consultation responses and the Government’s view on the way forward (MHCLG, March 2018). Accessed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685293/Government_response_to_Planning_for_the_right_homes_in_the_right_places_consultation.pdf

play in improving access to housing within the South Essex region and this further illustrates the importance of Green Belt release south of the A127.



As part of the production of a SOCG(s) BBC should be engaging LPAs that have recently adopted plans. On the basis of the draft NPPF, BBC’s duty to cooperate discussions with its South Essex neighbours will be in the context of MHCLG’s housing need standard methodology. MHCLG’s housing need consultation data table (September 2017)¹² shows many of the South Essex LPAs will see increases to their ‘minimum’ number of homes needed (see **Appendix 2**). Figure 18 in the Draft Plan shows that Brentwood’s Functional Economic Market Area (“**FEMA**”) includes Epping Forest and the London Borough of Havering who will also experience a significant increase (being 15% for each LPA). Recent Basildon Council meetings’ minutes suggest the next iteration of their Local Plan may not allocate sufficient sites to meet Basildon’s local housing needs, although we note that Basildon are reviewing their position further since these meetings¹³.

The Housing White Paper (February 2017) and NPPF (paragraph 47) both seek to boost significantly the supply of housing. The draft NPPF (chapter 5) proposes to continue this policy and strengthen it through SOCG and the standard methodology for housing need. However, the Draft Plan includes a housing target prepared on the basis of only a SHMA for the Brentwood Housing Market Area and with no allowance for any unmet need (whether arising from the increased numbers occurring as a result of the standard methodology or not) from adjoining authorities to help boost housing supply and there is no evidence of meaningful Duty to Cooperate discussions being held with Brentwood’s neighbours on the topic of unmet housing needs.

¹² Accessed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644783/Housing_Need_Consultation_Data_Table.xlsx

¹³ 13th of February 2018 Infrastructure, Growth and Development Committee Meeting
 16th of January 2018 Infrastructure, Growth and Development Committee Meeting
 7th of December 2017 Infrastructure, Growth and Development Committee Meeting
 5th of December 2017 Infrastructure, Growth and Development Committee Meeting

2. The Duty to Cooperate

The duty to cooperate places a legal duty on BBC to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. The draft NPPF includes proposals for amended soundness tests and the introduction of SOCG to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working.

BBC has recently (January 2018) helped to establish the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (“**ASELA**”)¹⁴, to progress the strategic long term ambitions of the region up to 2050. The ASELA have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (“**MoU**”) and in a letter sent to Sajid Javid (dated 29th January 2018)¹⁵ the ASELA state that their local plans will be: *“delivered in a joined up approach...Our focus is on ensuring the delivery of more than 90,000 homes over the next 20 years across South Essex in the shortest possible time with the necessary infrastructure”*. However, there is no mechanism within the MoU that describes how the ASELA will deal with the unmet needs of their partners (or the ASELA’s neighbours) should upward adjustments result from the latest published evidence or forthcoming standard methodology for local housing need (as set out in the draft NPPF and PPG).

The figure of ‘more than 90,000 homes’ is assumed to be drawn from the MHCLG’s housing need consultation data table. Based on the indicative assessment of housing need using the proposed standard method, 2016 to 2026 (dwellings per annum), the ASELA would have a minimum local housing need requirement of 89,080 units. In advance of the affordability ratio data release in April 2018 and 2016 SNPP in May – June, **Appendix 2** demonstrates that the region is expected to see a small decrease of local housing need in the South Essex LPAs, but Brentwood and Basildon are set to experience increases (as would all other LPAs besides Thurrock and Castle Point). At present, the Draft Plan does not: (1) address the unmet needs of its partners within the ASELA: or (2) set out an agreed mechanism for redistribution.

In February 2018, MHCLG announced that the ASELA would receive £871,000 under the Joint Working stream of the Planning Delivery Fund¹⁶. The funding shall be used to help create a joint statutory strategic plan in support of the emerging South Essex 2050 vision. BBC’s 10th January 2018 Cabinet report¹⁷ (paragraph 3.7) describes the outputs as a joint “place-based” vision, together with the growth and strategies necessary to support this, and the infrastructure required. Paragraph 3.8 states that the shared mutual ambitions for South Essex will be achieved on the basis of a “no border” approach to collaboration and joint working. Paragraph 3.20 of the Cabinet report states that the MoU can be updated to reflect this approach and a SOCG *‘can describe the strategic cross-boundary matters to be addressed, the means by which the analysis and distribution of growth can be agreed and*

¹⁴ The ASELA is formed of: Basildon Borough Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Essex County Council, Rochford District Council, Southend on Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council

¹⁵ Accessed at: <http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/pdf/01022018162639000000.pdf>

¹⁶ Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-money-to-build-homes-stalled-by-planning>

¹⁷ South Essex 2050 Cabinet Report 10 January 2018. Accessed at: <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/s14206/South%20Essex%202050.pdf>

the priorities for infrastructure investment, and the risk to delivery of growth if that investment is not made available.'

Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for the MHCLG stressed that the local housing need numbers are a 'starting point' for: '*an honest appraisal of how many homes an area needs, but it should not be mistaken for a hard and fast target. There will be places where constraints, such as areas of outstanding natural beauty or national parks, mean that there is not enough space to meet local need. Other areas may find that they have more than enough room, and they may be willing and able to take on unmet need from neighbouring authorities. Such cooperation between authorities is something that I want to see a lot more of.*'¹⁸

The minimum local housing need figure should then be adjusted to reflect, amongst other factors, growth strategies and strategic level infrastructure improvements. For example, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan and any relevant outputs from the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission and ASELA joint vision and plan. The working and governance arrangements to support preparation of the joint plan were scheduled to be agreed by the end of February 2018, with a provisional timetable for the plan, evidence base requirements and other key information to be set out in a draft SOCG by the end of March. Related to this, all LPAs within the ASELA will update their Local Development Scheme with details of the joint plan process and timetable and how the individual local plans relate to this, by the end of April 2018. On this basis it will be necessary for the ASELA to review the figure of '90,000 homes' in light of the draft NPPF and most up to date evidence. Unmet needs for all the ASELA should be urgently revisited with Duty to Cooperate discussions conducted in the context of:

- the most up to date local housing need numbers reflecting the soon to be published 2017 affordability ratios and 2016 SNPP household projections;
- the ambitious economic growth plans of the South East LEP SEP and forthcoming Thames Estuary vision and delivery plan for South Essex up to 2050; and
- consideration of local affordable housing needs and market signals within the Brentwood and South Essex Housing Market Areas e.g. worsening affordability, concealed households etc.

BBC and Basildon should additionally address specific unresolved matters related to the location of Dunton Hills Garden Village and its relationship to the west of Basildon. Further duty to cooperate work is required to resolve the potential impacts of the allocation and its relationship with site H10 in Basildon. Uncertainty on this matter could result in an unwarranted strategic gap proposal. This in turn could unnecessarily reduce the number of new homes that can be accommodated on both allocated sites (site 200 and H10) and affect each LPAs housing supply position.

¹⁸ Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/local-housing-need>

3. Deliverability of the Draft Plan

New settlements are a central component of Government's housing strategy, paragraph 52 of the NPPF recognises that:

'The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through new settlements that follow the principles of Garden Cities...local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development.'

Government support for the creation of new large-scale, free standing settlements (like at Welwyn and Letchworth); this is set to continue through the draft NPPF (paragraph 73). Dunton Hills Garden Village offers a sustainable proposition for the delivery of at least 2,500 new homes in alignment with the vision and objectives of the Draft Plan. Development based on garden village principles will help to provide a variety of products appealing to a wider market, including affordable housing (in accordance with affordable housing policies).

The allocation, depicted on page 91 of the Draft Plan, is for the entirety of the Dunton Hills Garden Village which is expected to eventually yield a total of 4,000 units. This approach is fully supported and demonstrates a positive approach to planning for the long term. Such approaches are common elsewhere, for example, the East Herts District Plan¹⁹ allocates the entirety of a strategic urban extension to Harlow (~10,000 units) to provide additional flexibility for potential accelerated delivery during the plan period (Policy GA1 The Gilston Area), with 3,000 units expected to come forward in the plan period.

However, at a delivery rate of ~250 units per annum based on a ten year construction period (page 91 cites delivery will be in years 5-15 i.e. 2018 - 2033), the average annual delivery rate required of Dunton Hills Garden Village over the plan period would need to keep pace with the fastest build out rates ever recorded nationally over the past two decades (to deliver in excess of 2,500 units during the plan period). Published data²⁰ and analysis of recent authorities monitoring reports for East Devon and Milton Keynes show that Cranbrook (~275 units pa) and the Eastern Expansion Area Milton Keynes (~268 units pa) have delivered the highest average annual delivery rates of any strategic sites in England. Both sites had significant public sector involvement and funding.

The Draft Plan promises to include a housing trajectory in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan. Monitoring evidence confirms that BBC has obtained an average housing completion rate of circa 132 dwellings per annum across the whole Borough. This means a tripling of the annual delivery rate of new homes will be required to deliver the Draft Plan. In addition, Dunton Hills Garden Village will need to provide the equivalent of double the

¹⁹ *'Flexibility could also be provided by accelerating the delivery of homes at the Gilston Area, thereby providing a greater amount of development within the Plan period. The potential to achieve this will be considered through joint work in relation to the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town'*. Accessed at:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/mainmodifications>

²⁰ Urban Extensions - Assessment of Delivery Rates (Savills, October 2014) Accessed at:

<http://www.barrattdevelopments.co.uk/~media/Files/B/Barratt-Developments/materials-and-downloads/savills-delivery-rates-urban-extensions-report.pdf>

A Report into the Delivery of Urban Extensions (Hourigan Connolly, February 2014) Accessed at:

<http://info.ambervalley.gov.uk/docarc/docviewer.aspx?docquid=2a7a7fa9904041b48dea86a7a11cdab6>

Start to Finish. How Quickly do Large-Scale Housing Sites Deliver? (Lichfields, November 2016) Accessed at:

<http://lichfields.uk/media/1728/start-to-finish.pdf>

Borough's historic build out over a ten year period alone. This appears to be an unrealistic assumption. BBC should consult further upon the deliverability of their preferred sites in advance of the formal Proposed Submission (Regulation 19), targeted towards the development industry and main developers and landowners responsible for the bulk of the housing pipeline. Figure 7 (page 23) envisages that stage 5 of the site assessment process shall incorporate a whole plan viability study. Analysis of neighbouring Basildon's emerging Local Plan, illustrates unresolved issues for Dunton Hills Garden Village related to its relationship with the west of Basildon. Important site-specific evidence, supplied by the promoters of Dunton Hills Garden Village, should be made available to inform stage 5 of the site assessment process and so that consultees can consider the robustness of the deliverability assumptions. Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes look forward to being involved at this stage. This approach accords with the PPG and *'Viability Testing Local Plans'* (LHDG, 2012) which propound active and early involvement of the development industry.

Based upon a 50% net to gross ratio for the development (Gross Area (ha): 257 / Developable Area (ha): 128.5), BBC should adopt a flexible approach to the eventual allocation policy that can, if required, utilise land outside of CEG's control thus increasing the potential for multiple developers to operate on-site at any one time. This would help BBC in their aim to deliver in excess of 2,500 units between now and 2033. The presumption in favour of sustainable development in the NPPF (paragraph 14) requires that Local Plans *'meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change'*. The Local Plan should over allocate sites to ensure a buffer is included and site policy should remain flexible to enable the maximum number of outlets to be active throughout the plan period.

Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes are well positioned to provide a secure pipeline of housing land. Large-scale greenfield sites come forward more quickly than large-scale brownfield sites²¹. Recent research on build out rates suggests: *'A key metric for build rates on sites is the number of sales outlets. Different housebuilders will differentiate through types or size of accommodation and their brands and pricing, appealing to different customer types. In this regard, it is widely recognised that a site may increase its absorption rate through an increased number of outlets.'*²²

Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes landholdings could supply new high-quality homes on site 200, helping to provide a balanced mix of housing types and tenures in order to meet local housing needs including affordable housing. Working in partnership, Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes can help BBC to accelerate delivery. With two established and experienced housebuilders active on-site on the eastern part of site 200 this would help to provide a variety of products (types and size of accommodation) and brands and pricing, appealing to a wide range of potential purchasers and renters (mitigating market absorption risk). Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes have jointly commissioned AECOM, Vectos and David Jarvis Associates to provide a comprehensive concept plan to help determine an appropriate urban design, landscape and access response for their land (site reference 200 in Brentwood and H10 in Basildon).

²¹ Start to Finish. How Quickly do Large-Scale Housing Sites Deliver? (Lichfields, November 2016) Accessed at: <http://lichfields.uk/media/1728/start-to-finish.pdf>

²² Ibid

4. Green Belt

Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes endorse the Draft Plan's proposal to remove Dunton Hills Garden Village from the Green Belt (Parcel 17 Dunton within the Green Belt Study²³). The contents of paragraphs 83 and 84 of the NPPF are relevant in this instance: '*Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances*'; and those alterations should encourage '*sustainable patterns of development*'. The lack of any objective Green Belt review since the 1950s means that today London's Green Belt is in some instances failing to meet the scale and needs of the 21st Century. Much of it still provides significant ecological, environmental, visual and amenity function, but there are other areas that, subject to review and consultation, may assist in achieving sustainable growth where land no longer supports the purposes of Green Belt or need not remain open. The question of whether circumstances are exceptional requires an exercise of planning judgment. Plan makers have a statutory duty contained in Section 39 of the PACP 2004 that applies to officers, Members and Inspectors (a duty to the achievement of sustainable development).

It is clear from the Draft Plan, Sustainability Appraisal, Site Selection Methodology and site assessment process that BBC has exhausted all non-Green Belt options for meeting local housing needs and exceptional circumstances exist to remove Parcel 17 Dunton from the Green Belt. The land supply constraints in South Essex are particularly pronounced which has implications for housing and economic growth, affordability and infrastructure provision. The Draft Plan's proposals for Dunton Hills Garden Village is consistent with the spatial strategy and is made with due consideration to relevant evidence.

BBC has followed a sequential approach by identifying suitable sites adjoining the Brentwood urban area first, followed by the village service centre in Ingatestone and then the edge of larger villages. This is in line with the Draft Plan's spatial strategy to enable a focus of development in the transport corridors supported by sustainable growth in the larger villages. In addition to identifying suitable Green Belt urban extensions the opportunity to achieve a sustainable strategic release of land has been recognised in the spatial strategy. On this basis, three strategic sites were identified which included Dunton Hills Garden Village - which provides an opportunity to create large scale comprehensive development that could support the provision of significant infrastructure improvements. In this way, the approach adopted by BBC is consistent with extant national policy and the draft NPPF. Failure to release land for development could worsen affordability and lead to increased pressure on existing settlements resulting in unsustainable forms of development and poor service provision. Failure to review and amend the Green Belt would be inconsistent with the ALESA 2050 growth aims and MoU, the LEP SEP and forthcoming Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission objectives.

A detailed assessment for Parcel 17 is included within the appendices of the Green Belt Study (Appendix L5). It is Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes' view that elements of the appraisal overstate Parcel 17's contribution to the Green Belt purposes and the parcel's overall assessment based upon the stated assessment criteria (Tables 2 – 6).

For purpose 1, to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, the assessment found that the parcel was '**Not Contained**'. This appears inconsistent with the commentary on

²³ Green Belt Study (Crestwood Environmental Ltd, January 2018) Accessed at: <http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/index.php?cid=966>

Parcel 17 that says it benefits from 'reasonably strong boundaries comprising the A128, rail line and A127'. The appraisal highlights two 'boundary' criteria boxes: 'weak/degraded/unclear'; and 'Strong/Definite'. This appears anomalous, as A-roads and a railway line can only sensibly be considered as strong boundaries not just 'reasonably strong' (and certainly not weak/unclear). To conclude that the parcel is "Not Contained" is evidently wrong. There is limited potential for unrestricted countryside encroachment due to the strong defensible boundaries identified. Development of Dunton Hills Garden Village and H10 (within Basildon) cannot be deemed 'sprawl' with policies that envisage a comprehensive redevelopment, not merely ribbon development along the A127. The defensible physical boundaries offer significant scope for containment and compact development. The appraisal for purpose 1 should, as a minimum, be rescored as '**Partially Contained**'.

For purpose 2, to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, the assessment found that Parcel 17 represents an '**Important Countryside Gap**'. Whilst Parcel 17 is a large area of land, its' development will not risk the coalescence of Basildon and West Horndon due to the strong boundaries and on-site physical constraints. As such there is scope for significant development in this location. A reduction in the gap between West Horndon and Basildon would not compromise the openness of the remaining Green Belt between the two towns. There are features which would continue to perform the separating role e.g. A128.

For purpose 3, to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, the assessment found that Parcel 17 is '**Functional Countryside**'. The word encroachment implies intrusion; therefore the assessment should consider whether the land is: (1) countryside in character; and (2) whether it loses its countryside character with development of the parcel. The eastern edge of Parcel 17 is urban fringe and adjacent to the built up areas of Basildon and so has a more urban feel. The Oxford English Dictionary defines countryside as "the land and scenery of a rural area". The Countryside and Rights of Way ("**CRoW**") Act 2000 provides a definition of 'open country' as - "Land which is wholly or predominantly mountain, moor, heath or down". This also includes woodland, land around rivers/canals and foreshore. Natural England maintains a national map 'open access land' which includes 'open country' and none of Parcel 17 falls under the provisions of the CRoW Act. Nor can it be said that Parcel 17 is wholly rural in character. A large proportion of Parcel 17 was a Golf Course and there are various clusters of buildings within Brentwood and Basildon, including hotels and a nursery that form part of Parcel 17. Parcel 17 should be rescored as '**Mixed Functions within Countryside**'.

For purpose 4, to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns, the assessment found that Parcel 17 has '**Limited Relationship with Historic Town**', this is agreed. The overall parcel assessment scores Parcel 17 as performing a Moderate – High Green Belt function. However, based on the above arguments Parcel 17 should be rescored as 'Moderate' owing to the fact that it only fulfils Green Belt purposes to some degree (i.e. all Green Belt Purposes would be assessed to a Moderate level except purpose 4 which is low). Notwithstanding these detailed points, it is clear that Parcel 17 does not provide a Moderate-High or High contribution to the Green Belt and it is therefore right that BBC has considered this parcel for removal.

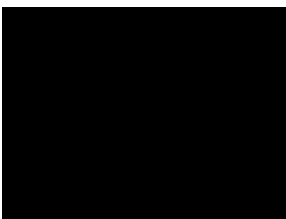
BBC's Green Belt assessment for Parcel 17 appears to be inconsistent with Basildon's Draft Green Belt assessment for H10 (parcels 66 and 67)²⁴ - see Table 1 below (this includes an amended colour coding to reflect BBC's approach to the RAG scoring to allow comparison). Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes would strongly question whether Parcels 17, 66 or 67 perform anything more than a partial (non-critical) contribution to the Green Belt and are highly suitable locations for growth.

Table 1 Green Belt Study Assessments Comparison

	Purpose 1 (sprawl)	Purpose 2 (towns merging)	Purpose 3 (countryside)	Purpose 4 (historic towns)	Overall Score
Brentwood 17	Not Contained	Important Countryside Gap	Functional Countryside	Limited Relationship with Historic Town	Moderate - High
Basildon 66	Partial Contribution	Does Not Contribute	Partial Contribution	Does Not Contribute	Partly contributes to the function of at least one Green Belt purpose but does not strongly contribute to a purpose
Basildon 67	NR - Area is not relevant to this purpose	Does Not Contribute	Contributes	Does Not Contribute	Contributes to the function of at least one Green Belt purpose

Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes would be pleased to discuss these representations in greater detail in advance of the Regulation 19 consultation.

Yours faithfully,

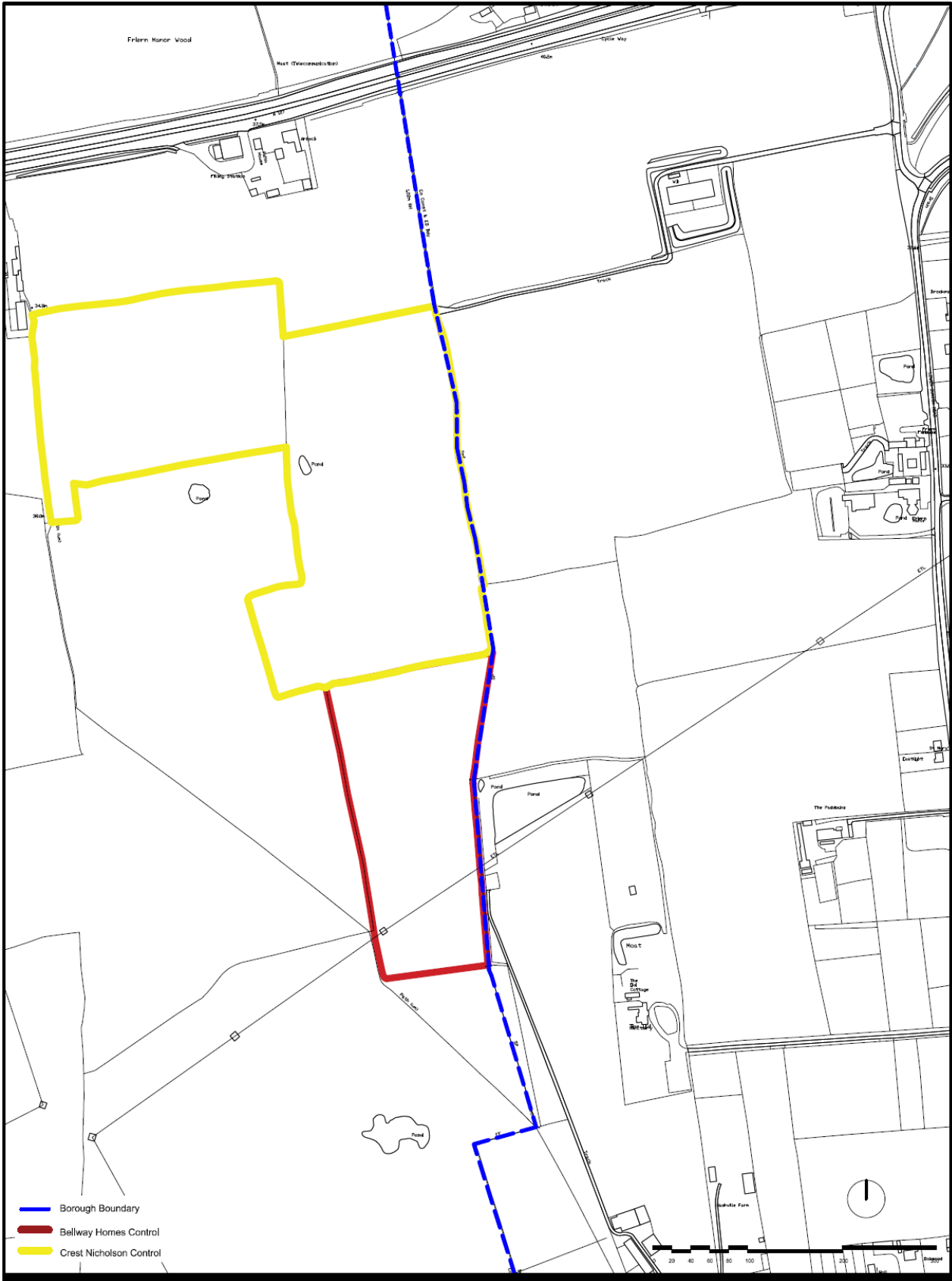


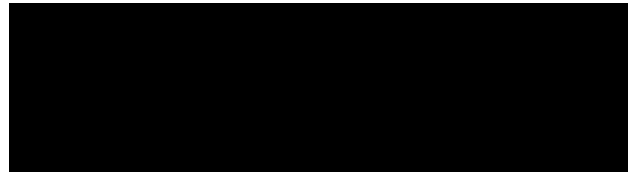
David Carlisle
Associate

²⁴ See Enclosure 30 'Draft Basildon Green Belt Review 2017' that accompanied the Basildon Growth and Development Committee 07/12/2017. Accessed at: <http://www.basildonmeetings.info/documents/s91251/Enc.%2030%20Draft%20Basildon%20Green%20Belt%20Review%202017.pdf>



Appendix 1: Crest Nicholson and Bellway Homes' land interests (Site 200)





Appendix 2 – AECOM analysis of MHCLG standard methodology data table*

	Indicative assessment of housing need based on proposed formula, 2016 to 2026 (dwellings per annum)	Current OAHN (dwellings per annum)	% change	Green Belt, National Parks, AONB or SSSI
Brentwood FEMA				
Brentwood	454	362	20%	90%
Basildon	1,024	986	4%	63%
Chelmsford	980	805	18%	39%
Thurrock	1,158	1,381	-19%	72%
Epping Forest	923	514	44%	94%
LB Havering	1,821	1,366	25%	56%
TOTAL	6,360	5414	15%	-
South Essex 2050 (ASELA)				
Brentwood	454	362	20%	90%
Basildon	1,024	986	4%	63%
Castle Point	342	410	-20%	55%
Rochford	362	331	9%	76%
Southend-on-Sea	1,114	1,072	4%	15%
Thurrock	1,158	1,381	-19%	72%
TOTAL	4,454	4542	-2%	-

*Where a range for OAHN was highlighted in an existing SHMA we have adopted the highest figure