



Brentwood Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Local Plan Review Consultation Response

Land to the south of Lodge Close, Hutton

**Prepared on behalf of Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance
March 2019**

Site Name:	Land to the south of Lodge Close
Client Name:	Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance
Type of Report:	Local Plan Representation
Prepared by:	Rory Baker - Graduate Planner
Approved by:	Hayley Morley – Associate Director
Date:	March 2019

COPYRIGHT © STRUTT & PARKER. This publication is the sole property of Strutt & Parker and must not be copied, reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, either in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of Strutt & Parker. The information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources generally regarded to be reliable. However, no representation is made, or warranty given, in respect of the accuracy of this information. We would like to be informed of any inaccuracies so that we may correct them. Strutt & Parker does not accept any liability in negligence or otherwise for any loss or damage suffered by any party resulting from reliance on this publication.

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction.....4
2.0 Plan Period.....5
3.0 Total housing requirement6
4.0 Five-year housing land supply and housing requirement.....8
5.0 Proposed approach to Hutton11
6.0 The Site.....13
7.0 Conclusion.....17

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Site Location Plan

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 These representations on the Brentwood Borough Proposed Submission Local Plan (February 2019) (PSLP) are submitted by Strutt and Parker on behalf of Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance (CDBF) and in relation to land to the south of Lodge Close, Hutton.
- 1.2 Land to the south of Lodge Close, Hutton ('the Site') has previously been promoted as part of the Council's plan-making process, site reference 033.
- 1.3 The site has been actively promoted by CDBF throughout the plan-making process. Previous representations have been made at various stages of the Local Plan, including in relation to call for sites exercises and consultations on iterations of the Local Plan.
- 1.4 CDBF as the freehold owner of the site are actively promoting the Site for residential allocation in the Council's new Local Plan.
- 1.5 A location plan for the site is provided as **Appendix A**.

2.0 Plan Period

- 2.1 The proposed period runs until 2033. Assuming – optimistically – adoption in 2019 this means that the Local Plan will address development needs for a maximum of 14 years. The NPPF (paragraph 22) is clear that strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum of 15 years.
- 2.2 This deficiency in the PSLP is of particular relevance given that the Borough is predominantly Green Belt, and failure to ensure that development needs are planned for over a sufficient period of time would likely result in an early review of the Green Belt being required – contrary to the NPPF (paragraph 136); and undermining one of the two essential characteristics of the Green Belt: its permanence (NPPF, paragraph 133).

3.0 Commentary on the Total Housing Requirement

- 3.1 At paragraph 4.13 of the PSLP, it states that the Borough's housing requirement it plans for is 350 dwellings per annum. At paragraph 4.12, it states that this figure has been calculated using the Standard Method (as per the NPPF and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance [PPG]).
- 3.2 However, this does not appear to be the case having regard to updated guidance. The PPG now confirms that 2014-based subnational household projections should be used to calculate the housing requirement using the Standard Method.¹
- 3.3 The relevant subnational population projections indicate an average annual increase of 293.2 households in the Borough between 2019 and 2029. The latest (2017) ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings for the Borough published by the ONS is 11.23. Once the Standard Method is applied using these figures this result in a requirement of 452 dwellings per annum.
- 3.4 The Local Plan is required to meet this need as a minimum (NPPF paragraph 35); and with sufficient flexibility to be able to respond to rapid change (NPPF paragraph 11). In addition, the Local Plan is required to ensure that the revised Green Belt can endure beyond the plan period (NPPF paragraph 136), i.e. in amending the Green Belt boundary, the Local Plan should account for development needs beyond 2033 (or, more appropriately, a revised later end to the plan period, which will ensure strategic policies will cover at least 15 years).
- 3.5 A further factor is the need to consider unmet needs of neighbouring authorities (NPPF paragraph 35). In this respect, we note in particular that Epping Forest District Council is at an advanced stage in the preparation of a Local Plan (at the time of writing it is currently being examined) which proposes to deliver 11,400 dwellings between 2011 and 2033 (518 dwellings per annum), against a requirement (based on the Standard Method) of 944 dwellings per annum. We are not aware of Brentwood Borough Council having objected to this approach, but neither is there any indication that the PSLP addresses any of this unmet need.
- 3.6 The PSLP considers it appropriate to apply a 20% uplift to the identified housing target of 350 dwellings per annum, resulting in a proposed target of 456 dwellings per annum.

¹ Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 2a-004-20190220

- 3.7 The PSLP's rationale for this buffer is somewhat unclear: it states at Figure 4.1 that the buffer allows for an additional housing land supply to be maintained in the Borough throughout the plan period; but states at footnote 2 that the housing supply buffer serves to safeguard against any potential uplift to the standard methodology for calculating housing need, pending the outcome of the Government's 'Technical consultation on updates to national planning policy and guidance'.
- 3.8 In any case, the uplift means that the proposed annual housing target in the PSLP is only fractionally above the minimum housing requirement derived from the Standard Method, and does not provide any flexibility to ensure needs are met; does not ensure the Green Belt will endure beyond the plan period; and does not account for unmet need in neighbouring authorities.
- 3.9 Further to our comments in respect of the plan period, and the PSLP's failure to ensure strategic policies are in place to cover at least 15 years from adoption, as an absolute minimum the PSLP must be amended to ensure an additional year's worth of housing need can be accommodated. Given likely timescales for adoption of the Local Plan, we suggest a plan period to 2035 should be treated as a minimum, and an additional two years' worth of development needs to that which the PSLP currently seeks to address should be planned for.
- 3.10 Whilst we suggest 2035 should be treated as the earliest end to the plan period, it should also be recognised that the authority is predominantly Green Belt. The NPPF requires this Local Plan to ensure the Green Belt will endure beyond the plan period. As such, we suggest the PSLP that even if the plan period is extended until 2035, policies should account for potential development needs beyond this period.

4.0 Five-year housing land supply and housing trajectory

- 4.1 The Council is required to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply at any point in the plan period².
- 4.2 In terms of the five-year housing requirement, the NPPF (paragraph 73) confirms a 20% buffer should be applied to the initial calculation in the event the results of the Housing Delivery Test show that delivery has fallen below 85% of the requirement. The PPG confirms the requirement to apply such a buffer in such circumstances also applies where the Local Planning Authority are seeking to confirm their five-year housing land supply through a recently adopted Local Plan.³
- 4.3 The 2018 Housing Delivery Test measurement for Brentwood Borough shows that only 51% of the Borough's housing requirements were met over the last three years; well below the figure required to avoid a 20% buffer having to be applied.
- 4.4 The Borough's most recent reported five-year housing land supply (Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement as at 31 March 2018 (November 2018) ('HLSS')) is 4.1 years.
- 4.5 However, this is predicated on a requirement which, when considered in relation to the latest guidance, understates need; and a supply which, again when considered in relation to latest guidance, overstates supply. As such, the actual housing land supply is considerably less.
- 4.6 Looking at this in detail, the HLSS considers an annual need of 343 dwellings, resulting in a total requirement once the 20% has been applied of 2,058 dwellings. However, applying the latest guidance and the Standard Method, the Borough's housing requirement is 452 dwellings per annum. Applying the 20% buffer, this results in a five-year requirement of 2,712 dwellings.
- 4.7 In terms of supply, the HLSS includes sites without detailed planning permission and without evidence such sites will be delivered within five years. As per the NPPF, such sites cannot be considerable deliverable for the purposes of the five-year housing land supply. Table 1 of the HLSS suggests that at *least* 1,042 dwellings in the reported supply

² Paragraph: 038 Reference ID: 3-038-20180913

³ Paragraph: 037 Reference ID: 3-037-20180913

did not have planning permission. Once these are removed from the supply calculation, the five-year supply comprises 653 dwellings. It is unclear if and how many of the dwellings categorised as having extant planning permission are on major sites which only benefit from outline permission. Such sites would also have to be discounted. As such, the figure of 653 dwellings may overstate housing supply.

- 4.8 A five-year supply of 653 dwellings compared to a requirement of 2,712 represents a 1.2-year housing land supply.
- 4.9 The acute housing land supply shortage underlines the importance of allocating sites through the Local Plan which can deliver early in the plan period, and the need to avoid over reliance on large strategic sites which inevitably take a considerable time to bring forward.
- 4.10 The housing trajectory provided as Appendix 1 to the PSLP projects that it will enable completion of 2,305 dwellings between 2019/20 and 2023/24 (or, to be precise, it projects 2,305.1 dwellings).
- 4.11 Having regard to the Standard Method and the need to apply a 20% buffer to the housing requirement, the total five-year requirement for the Borough is 2,712 dwellings. Therefore, even before critical review of the supply, the PSLP will not provide a five-year supply of housing.
- 4.12 Furthermore, and in respect of the projected supply, we are concerned to note that Dunton Hills Garden Village is projected to delivery housing completions from 2022/23, i.e. falling within the first five years of the plan.
- 4.13 Dunton Hills Garden Village is a proposed major strategic development, intended to provide 4,000 dwellings, 5.5 hectares of employment land, two new primary schools, secondary school, new village shopping centre, new transport infrastructure, and new community and health infrastructure. Delivery will require the coordination and input of multiple landowners, developers, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders.
- 4.14 The site has yet to even be allocated. Once allocated, the PSLP proposes a masterplan and design guidance will be required to be prepared. Following this, an outline application will need to be prepared, submitted, and determined; followed by reserved matters. It will also be necessary to discharge all planning conditions and S106 obligations. All of this before development has even begun.

Land to the south of Lodge Close, Hutton

As such, it is totally unrealistic to project that 100 homes will be completed at Dunton Hills Garden Village as early as 2022/23. This does not in itself mean that Dunton Hills Garden Village proposals cannot form part of a sound Local Plan, but it does mean that additional smaller sites capable of providing homes in the early years of the plan period also need to be allocated in order to ensure the Local Plan is sound.

5.0 Proposed Approach to Hutton

- 5.1 Hutton is the second largest settlement in the Borough.
- 5.2 In 2011, the town had a population of 15,578 and a total of 6,564 dwellings (Census 2011). It is a large, established community and a local centre which benefits from a range of services, facilities, access to public transport, and employment opportunities.
- 5.3 Hutton is situated approximately 30 kilometres from Central London, 12 kilometres from Chelmsford and in a position well related to regional and national infrastructure. Hutton lies in close proximity to Brentwood and Shenfield on the A12 corridor.
- 5.4 Hutton has strong service and education provision. The settlement benefits from excellent access to Shenfield High Street on the Hutton Road which adjoins Rayleigh Road and runs centrally through the settlement on an east-west axis. The High Street provides a variety of services, shops and businesses.
- 5.5 The PSLP sets out the Borough's settlement hierarchy. Hutton is identified as Category 1 – Main Town.
- 5.6 It is clearly a sustainable location to which a proportion of the Borough's housing need should be directed. In addition, as an established community, it is important that the Local Plan manages the growth of the settlement to ensure the vitality of the community is sustained or enhanced.
- 5.7 However, notwithstanding the above, the PSLP proposes to direct no housing growth to Hutton. This contrasts sharply with the proposed approach to the other settlements identified as Category 1 – Main Towns. It is also notable that a considerable amount of growth is being directed to settlements below Hutton within the settlement hierarchy.
- 5.8 The PSLP fails to support the sustainable growth of Hutton. The proposal to direct none of the Borough's housing need to Hutton is unjustified, and inconsistent with national policy.
- 5.9 To ensure the Local Plan is sound, paragraph 2.10 and the associated Table should be amended to ensure that Hutton delivers a scale of growth appropriate to its position

Land to the south of Lodge Close, Hutton

within the hierarchy as a Category 1 Settlement. At present, Hutton will deliver fewer homes than any of the Category 2 Settlements.

6.0 The Site

- 6.1 The site, as shown on the plan provided in Appendix A measures approximately 1.3 hectare. The Council have defined the net developable area of the site at 1.18 hectare, with an indicative yield of 35 dwellings. The site principally comprises open pastoral grassland of low landscape value.
- 6.2 The site is roughly rectangular in shape, is well contained by thick trees and hedgerow and is constrained by development to the north and west, and Hutton Village to the east and south.
- 6.3 The site is on land currently allocated as Green Belt in the Bentwood Replacement Local Plan (2005), but is situated immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of Hutton.
- 6.4 Within previous submissions to the Council, we have set out the sustainability of land south of Lodge Close, Hutton for residential development, and an overview of these is provided again here, as follows.
- 6.5 There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic; social and environmental.
- 6.6 In terms of economic impact, there is an inherent link between providing homes and the creation of jobs. Benefits of the site's development include additional local expenditure in and around Hutton from the additional residents. The intention for the land south of Lodge Close, Hutton is to provide homes for people working in and around the Hutton area, assisting in local economic development.
- 6.7 Development of the site will reduce pressure to accommodate development on potentially more environmentally sensitive sites.
- 6.8 In respect of social impacts, the land south of Lodge Close, Hutton is very well connected to local service provision with the majority of Hutton and Shenfield's services within a 2km radius of the site. In addition, the site benefits from excellent public transport links. The provision of homes to meet housing needs will have very significant social sustainability benefits.

- 6.9 Notably, the Council's evidence base supports the view that the site is suitable and achievable for development, as confirmed through the assessment of the Site within the Brentwood Borough Council Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (October 2018) (HEELA). We would however disagree with the assessment of the Site's availability as a reason for the Site being discounted. The findings suggest that the Site is 'unavailable' due to a lack of active promotion from the landowner; the site has been promoted through previous consultations of the Local Plan review process at Call for Sites and Preferred Options. The site is therefore available for development.
- 6.10 The proposals map should be modified to remove Site 033 from the Green Belt and identified for the delivery of residential development.

Strategic Environment Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal (SEA/SA)

- 6.11 The Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) requires SA/SEA to *inter alia* set out the reasons of preferred alternatives, and the rejection of others, be made set out.
- 6.12 In addition, the Planning Practice Guidance⁴ makes clear that the strategic environmental assessment should outline the reasons the alternatives were selected, the reasons the rejected options were not taken forward and the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives.
- 6.13 Sustainability appraisal of the PSLP has been published: The Sustainability Appraisal of the Brentwood Local Plan January 2019 (the SA).
- 6.14 Site 033 has been wholly discounted, failing to progress to 'shortlisted omission sites' nor the final shortlist. The SA explains that a number of sites were identified through the HELAA that were considered developable or deliverable, but are nevertheless not proposed to be allocated in the PSLP.
- 6.15 The SA does not provide a justified reason for the rejection of the site.

⁴ Paragraph: 038 Reference ID: 11-038-20150209

- 6.16 We seek modifications to refine the Site Appraisal Criteria contained in the SA of the Brentwood Local Plan, prepared by AECOM. The decision process for utilising the RAG scoring is unclear in regards to the weighting given to the overall scores, and how this results in a site being considered suitable for allocation or unsuitable. The criteria set out in Appendix B Table 3 must adopt a more refined approach to its scoring in order to be of use in the identification of which sites and more or less sustainable.
- 6.17 Criteria 7, 8, 9 should take account of the capacity of existing facilities and the scale of a proposed site, as this will affect the ability to provide additional facilities, or to support existing facilities.
- 6.18 Criteria 10, 12, 13, 15 each assume that closer proximity of a site will have a negative effect on the criteria, when this is not necessarily the case. Criteria 17 should not be included in the SA as the notes for this criteria (p.96) confirm the Agricultural Land Classification Maps are of a poor resolution. It is recommended that a more refined scoring system is required to improve the utility of the SA to the identification of sustainable sites.
- 6.19 A more refined scoring system would more accurately reflect the sustainability of any potential allocation. Further, greater transparency is required in relation to how the individual RAG scores have been used to reach a decision to allocate or omit sites.

Green Belt

- 6.20 A Part 3 Green Belt Appraisal (dated 31st January 2019) has been published by the Council. This considered specific sites, albeit in limited detail. Site 033 has been discounted, with the assessment explaining:

'based on the progressive findings of the HELAA and wider evidence base, a selective approach to the assessment of additional has been undertaken. Overall, Sites (located within the Green Belt) which have been discounted for other environmental or strategic reasons (i.e. too small to form a strategic allocation), were not considered for further assessment.'

- 6.21 Whilst the assessment has justified Site 033 (and other sites) being omitted from the assessment, the study assesses the significance of each site's contribution to four of the

five purposes of the Green Belt, with an understanding the fifth purpose is implemented as an integral part of the Brentwood Local Plan.

- 6.22 As such, previous findings contained in the HEELA and environmental / strategic constraints, unless explicitly relating to the four purposes of the Green Belt, should not be used for justifying site omission.
- 6.23 With regards to Site 033, this is especially pertinent when considering the ambiguity of weight given to various SA scores (i.e. distance to GP and interaction with the Conservation Area) and the inaccuracy of availability in the HEELA (2018).
- 6.24 Even were it appropriate to use such criteria to discount sites from a Green Belt assessment, the criteria itself in the case of the above has proven inaccurate, overly simplistic and therefore unreliable. As such we recommend the site is assessed within the Council's Part 3 Green Belt assessment as a suitable, deliverable and available site.
- 6.25 As an overarching point, we are concerned with the simplistic approach that appears to have been taken in considering the contribution sites make to the purposes of the Green Belt. We would therefore recommend that the Council provide a far more detailed and robust review of sites' contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt as part of the plan-making process.
- 6.26 As part of any residential allocation, we would look to undertake further technical evidence to support the site's release from the Green Belt.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The site is considered, suitable, available, achievable for development in accordance with the PSLP's aspirations for sustainable growth.
- 7.2 The reasons given for the rejection of the site are spurious and based on erroneous conclusions.
- 7.3 The rejection of site 033 is unjustified, and overlooks an opportunity to correct other soundness deficiencies of the Local Plan, including in relation to the overall quantum of housing proposed and the lack of support for any growth of Hutton.
- 7.4 The allocation of Site 033 for development will assist in curing defects of the Local Plan, enabling it to be a sound plan.

Appendices

Appendix A – Land south of Lodge Close Site Location Plan

