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Date	Friday, 27 September 2013
Please ask for	Matthew Winslow
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Ref	13/MJW/DTC/Brent/2

Dear Sir or Madam,

CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO BRENTWOOD BOROUGH DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

I am writing in respect of Brentwood Borough's Draft Local Plan published for consultation on the 24th July 2013. This letter sets out the response of Basildon Borough Council.

In accordance with the NPPF, Basildon Borough Council believes that the Brentwood Local Plan has not been positively prepared as it does not meet its objectively assessed development requirements. It is not justified as it is not based on a proportionate evidence base, nor is it effective as it requires sites outside the plan period to deliver the development needs and only limited cross boundary engagement has occurred to date. Consequently, the plan is not consistent with national policy or legislation and Basildon Borough Council raises objections against the following areas:

1. Objectively Assessed Need
2. Green Belt
3. Crossrail;
4. Duty to Co-operate; and
5. Gypsies and Traveller Provision

1. Objectively Assessed Need

The Brentwood Local Plan does not meet its objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing as required by the NPPF.

Policy S2 identifies that the objectively assessed need for Brentwood Borough as 331-373 dwellings per annum or 4,950-5,600 dwellings over the plan period 2015-2030. However, the Local Plan proposes to make provision for just 200 dwellings per annum between 2015 and 2020 and 250 dwellings per annum between 2020 and 2030, or 3,500 homes in total over the plan period. There is therefore a shortfall of between 1,450 and 2,100 homes over the plan period which is not provided for within the Brentwood Local Plan and there is an expectation in the NPPF that in such an instance, the Council would have to demonstrate that in doing so, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or specific policies in the NPPF.

The proposed delivery of 3,500 dwellings over the plan period in Brentwood Borough would also not support the adequate provision of affordable housing that the Borough requires, nor would it provide the level of homes required to support its local economy.

The justification for not meeting the full objectively assessed housing needs is not regarded as sufficient. As most of the key evidence is noted as being 'forthcoming' and the Sustainability Appraisal was not completed before the Local Plan was published for consultation, it is questionable as to how these could have been used to formulate the Local Plan's strategy to ensure it is robust and positively prepared. The plan is therefore not in conformity with the NPPF, which states that it should be based on a proportionate, robust evidence base and the justification to Policy S2 does not provide a robust and legitimate reason why Brentwood Borough Council has not sought to meet its objectively assessed need within its boundaries.

Basildon Borough Council also raises concerns that the evidence presented does not even support the delivery of Policy S2 and consequently its reduced housing target of 3,500 homes. Policy DM23 provides a list of sites over 10 dwellings. The total units that could be built on these sites are 2,591. The shortfall of approx 1,000 dwellings is to be provided from sites under 10 dwellings or from unforeseen sites, referred to as 'windfall'. Appendix 2 of the Brentwood Local Plan sets out a more detailed list of the proposed sites, including sites under 10 dwellings. For a number of sites, the landownership is stated as 'not known'. Basildon Borough Council would therefore question the deliverability of these sites in compliance with the NPPF and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Guidance.

Appendix 3 identifies Brentwood Borough's housing trajectory. The housing trajectory includes sites that have built from 2012. The plan period for the Brentwood Local Plan is stated as being 2015-2030, therefore Basildon Borough Council would question why the Plan is relying on the delivery of sites from outside the plan period (2012-2014) to help meet the delivery of 3,500 dwellings that are supposed to be delivered within it.

2. Green Belt

Paragraph 83 - 85 of the NPPF identifies that Local Planning Authorities should establish Green Belt boundaries that ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements. Brentwood's Local Plan states that the Green Belt is a major constraint and uses this as the justification for not meeting its objectively assessed housing needs. However, the Local Plan has not been informed by a comprehensive review of the Green Belt, which could identify opportunities for more sustainable patterns of development, as well as establish robust and permanent boundaries for the longer term.

It is therefore recommended that a comprehensive review of Brentwood's Green Belt boundaries should be carried out, rather than relying on the broad conclusions drawn from

the sub-regional “Heart of Essex Economic Futures” study as the basis for the spatial strategy and the conclusion that the objectively assessed needs cannot be met.

Consequently, Basildon Borough Council would strongly object to Brentwood Borough Council’s Preferred Options approach. Brentwood Borough is not unique in its circumstances to being largely constrained by Green Belt. Basildon Borough Council does not feel it is reasonable for Basildon Borough to accommodate some or all of Brentwood’s unmet housing needs, when it faces similar environmental and Green Belt constraints.

3. Crossrail

Crossrail is a new 118km high frequency, strategic and more sustainable mode of transport infrastructure that will enhance London’s transport network and make cross-region journeys quicker and easier. It will connect 37 stations, through the centre of London in an east-west route, linking Brentwood and Shenfield to Heathrow Airport and Maidenhead. It is due to open in 2018, three years into the plan-period.

Brentwood and Shenfield are located within the North-East Section of the Crossrail route, with Shenfield representing one of its eastern termini. They will both benefit from station improvements that will create additional capacity as well as specific service improvements such as new and more frequent trains (12 Crossrail trains per hour in peak time), journeys to parts of the City, West End and West London without the need to change trains and improved links to Heathrow Airport.

The only recognition of the opportunity that Crossrail could bring to the Borough within the Brentwood Local Plan is a proposed ‘Park and Walk’ scheme. The social and economic opportunities do not appear to have been fully explored or capitalised on as a way to address the Borough’s growth pressures. Limited growth is proposed in Shenfield, when in reality, Crossrail improvements in Shenfield are likely to make the area more accessible and attractive as a place to live and work, meaning it could therefore support additional jobs and homes to help Brentwood Borough meet more of its objectively assessed needs.

It is therefore recommended that the social and economic benefits and strategic importance of the Crossrail scheme on Brentwood Borough should be explored in greater depth, in the context of how it could help the Borough meet its objectively assessed needs; Basildon Borough Council therefore questions whether the Local Plan is the most appropriate strategy for the Borough, considering alternatives.

4. The Duty to Co-operate

The Brentwood Local Plan emphasises that it will explore options with neighbouring authorities to meet its unmet housing need.

Paragraph 179 of the NPPF advises that Local Planning Authorities should work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries

are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans. Such joint working should enable authorities to meet development requirements which cannot be wholly met within their own areas. They should also seek to meet housing needs within their own Housing Market Area, which often includes more than one Borough/District.

Paragraph 2.21 of the Brentwood Local Plan mentions that Brentwood Borough Council is exploring options for neighbouring authorities to meet the unmet need, in compliance with the Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF. Brentwood Borough Council held one “Duty to Cooperate Workshop” at the end of July 2013; the same month the consultation on the Local Plan commenced. Basildon Borough Council does not consider there to have been adequate prior engagement to the Local Plan being formulated. It questions whether any options have been explored or agreements reached to accommodate unmet needs outside the Brentwood Borough and for this reason considers the Local Plan to be unlawful and unsound given the impact it could have on neighbouring areas.

In addition, Basildon Borough is not within the same Strategic Housing Market Area as Brentwood Borough. Basildon Borough Council would therefore recommend that Brentwood’s own Strategic Housing Market Areas be explored first to accommodate unmet need, in line with the NPPF. Subsequently, Basildon Borough Council strongly objects to accommodating Brentwood’s unmet needs and therefore Brentwood Borough Council’s preferred approach.

5. Gypsy and Traveller Provision

Authorised Gypsy and Traveller Sites within the Brentwood Borough currently provide for about 30 pitches, although two thirds of these only have temporary permission. In Policy DM28, the Brentwood Local Plan has identified a need for an additional 24 permanent pitches up to 2021, and a further 10 up to 2030, bringing the total number of permanent pitches to 34. These figures are based on a 3% annual compound increase, an approach that was used in the (now revoked) East of England Plan.

It is noted that the Brentwood’s Draft Local Plan’s strategy to meet immediate need would consist allocating a number of existing temporary sites for permanent use and then guiding the future remaining provision as part of a mixed use enlargement of West Horndon.

In principle, Basildon Borough Council supports the steps being taken by Brentwood Borough Council in proactively meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers as part of its Local Plan, but questions whether the Policy is flexible enough to meet future needs given that the Essex-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is currently being updated and that the figures may therefore change beyond the extra 14 currently estimated, particularly when neighbouring area’s needs and ability to provide are considered.

Basildon Borough Council will continue to work with Local Planning Authorities throughout Essex to secure the delivery of additional provision for Gypsies and Travellers outside the Basildon Borough in order to meet unmet needs.

I trust this response is of assistance to the Borough Council and highlights the importance of considering the wider implications of the Local Plan. I can confirm that Basildon Borough Council would be please to engage with you further in order to address any of the issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A large, bold, black letter 'W' that serves as a stylized signature for Matthew Winslow.

Matthew Winslow
Planning Policy Manager