

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

MATTER 5. Housing Land Supply

Inspector's Key Issues and Questions in bold text.

The following Hearing Statement is made for and on behalf of the Home Builders Federation (HBF) in regard to the North West Leicestershire Local Plan. This Statement responds to selected questions set out in the Inspectors Matters & Issues document. The following answers should be read in conjunction with our representations to the Local Plan pre submission consultation ended on 15th August 2016.

5a. Are the housing sites with planning permission nominated in Policy H1 deliverable in terms of national policy and guidance and as indicated in the Housing Trajectory? [BP/04 as updated from October 2016, HO/05-06]

The HBF do not comment on the merits or otherwise of individual sites. However any Policy H1 site included in the Council's housing trajectory should conform with the deliverability criteria set out in Footnote 11 of the NPPF (para 47).

5b. Are the housing sites with resolutions to approve nominated in Policy H2 deliverable in terms of national policy and guidance and as indicated in the Housing Trajectory? [BP/04]

The HBF do not comment on the merits or otherwise of individual sites. However any Policy H2 site included in the Council's housing trajectory should conform with the deliverability criteria set out in Footnote 11 of the NPPF (para 47).

5c. Should the housing sites with resolutions to approve nominated in Policy H2 be formally allocated in the Plan? [BP/04]

Housing sites identified in Policy H2 should be allocated.

5d. Are the housing sites allocated by Policy H3a-c justified and deliverable in terms of national policy and guidance and as indicated in the Housing Trajectory? [BP/04]

The HBF do not comment on the merits or otherwise of individual sites. However any Policy H3 site included in the Council's housing trajectory should conform with the deliverability criteria set out in Footnote 11 of the NPPF (para 47).

5e. Does the Housing Trajectory demonstrate realistically that the housing development for which the Plan provides will come forward within the Plan period? [BP/04]

The Council's assumptions on lead-in times and delivery rates of sites set out in the housing trajectory should be realistic based on evidence supported by the parties responsible for housing delivery and sense checked by the Council based on local knowledge and historical empirical data.

The HBF is concerned that the Council's overall HLS for the plan period provides no headroom so there is no contingency to respond to changing circumstances. Indeed the Council's latest evidence (EX17 & EX19) illustrate a worsening position with the HLS in the revised trajectory reduced from 10,769 dwellings to 10,592 dwellings against a housing requirement of 10,400 dwellings representing a contingency of only 192 dwellings or 1.8%. The HBF would recommend as large a contingency as possible preferably at least 20% especially given that the housing requirement is a minimum not a maximum figure. A DCLG presentation slide from the HBF Planning Conference in September 2015 illustrated an identified 10 – 20% non-implementation gap together with a 15 – 20% lapse rate and confirmed "*the need to plan for permissions on more units than the housing start / completions ambition*". The Local Plans Expert Group (LPEG) Report also recommends that "*the NPPF makes clear that local plans should be required not only to demonstrate a five year land supply but also focus on ensuring a more effective supply of developable land for the medium to long term (over the whole plan period), plus make provision for, and provide a mechanism for the release of, developable Reserve Sites equivalent to 20% of their housing requirement, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the NPPF*" (para 11.4 of the LPEG Report).

The HBF's concern about the Plan's lack of flexibility is further expatiated by designations such as Areas of Separation proposed under Policy EN5 which will constrain the future growth of Coalville identified at the top of the settlement hierarchy as the principal town in Policy S2 and therefore identified as the most sustainable location for development in the District. Such constraint is inconsistent with national policy to boost housing supply and impedes the Council's ability to provide a contingency to overall HLS to meet a minimum housing requirement with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change and to demonstrate a 5 YHLS on adoption and rolling forward over the plan period.

Although the Council is proposing a Local Plan review mechanism in Policy S1 the HBF would also recommend consideration of a reserved sites policy.

5f. Is it robustly demonstrated that the Plan can deliver a Five Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) throughout the Plan period, calculated in accordance with national policy and guidance, taking account of past delivery performance and applying the appropriate five or twenty per cent supply buffer. [BP/04]

At the time of the pre submission consultation the Council had not demonstrated 5 YHLS calculated in accordance with the NPPF and NPPG on adoption of the Plan and rolling forward throughout the plan period. The HBF's own calculation set out in our representation to the pre submission consultation (which is not repeated here) showed only 4.6 years supply. This representation was submitted without analysis of the Council's HLS and therefore without prejudice to any comments made by other parties on the deliverability of specific sites in the Councils housing trajectory. Indeed in answering Questions 5a, 5b, 5d and 5e other parties may be able to demonstrate that the Councils assumptions about individual sites contained the HLS are not robust thereby reducing both the Council's overall HLS as set out in the trajectory and the Council's 5 YHLS even further below 5 years on adoption and rolling forward. Without certainty about the 5 YHLS on adoption the Plan is not sound because it is not positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy. Indeed without a 5 YHLS on adoption all housing policies contained in the Plan would be instantly out of date as set out in the NPPF (para 49).

In the Council's latest evidence (EX22) at 1st October 2016 the Council calculates its 5 YHLS as 5.4 years based on the HBF's preferred method of calculation for the Sedgfield approach to recouping shortfalls and 20% buffer applied to both the annualised requirement and shortfall. As the previous HBF calculation and the Council's new evidence use different base dates there are a number of significant changes in the numbers with completions increasing from 1,706 dwellings to 2,690 dwellings, the shortfall decreasing from 375 dwellings to 170 dwellings and the supply taken from the revised trajectory increasing from 3,295 dwellings to 3,591 dwellings. As previously stated the HBF do not comment on the merits or otherwise of individual sites therefore our commentary on the Council's latest 5 YHLS calculation and revised trajectory is submitted without prejudice to comments made by other parties on the deliverability of specific sites. Indeed other parties may still be able to demonstrate that the Council's latest evidence is not robust thereby potentially reducing the Council's 5 YHLS below 5 years on adoption as previously calculated by the HBF.

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