
Examination of East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Single Issue Review

Matters Statement

Main Matter 2: Housing Provision Questions 16-20

Representations on behalf of
L&Q Estates Limited and Hill Residential Limited

October 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Matters Statement has been prepared by Barton Willmore, now Stantec, on behalf of L&Q Estates and Hill Residential in response to Matter 2 and directly in response to questions 16-20 raised by the Inspector in the Matters, Issues and Questions consultation closing 28 October 2022.

- 1.2 These representations follow our previous comments submitted to the Regulation 18 Issues and Options in December 2020, Regulation 18 Preferred Options in February 2022 and Regulation 19 Proposed Submission in May 2022.

2.0 QUESTION 16: IS THE EXPLANATORY TEXT SET OUT IN PARAGRAPH 3.2.5 OF THE PLAN RELATING TO OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED NEED AND THE STANDARD METHOD CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY AS EXPRESSED IN THE NPPF?

2.1 The proposed revised text at paragraph 3.2.5 of the Local Plan states that:

“Government has removed the requirement for a local planning authority to establish an ‘objectively assessed need’ for housing, and instead put in place a national standard method to determine a ‘local housing need’. Applying that, it is determined that the local housing need for East Cambridgeshire is 5,398 dwellings. Following consultation and testing of this figure, it has been determined that 5,398 also becomes the housing requirement for East Cambridgeshire, for the period 2022-31 (i.e. no adjustment was necessary in translating the identified housing need into the housing requirement figure).”

2.2 The text presented here is inconsistent with Paragraphs 11b, 23 and 35 of the NPPF which require Local Plans and strategic policies to provide for *objectively assessed needs* for housing. Footnote 21 of Paragraph 35 advises that housing needs should be assessed using a clear and justified method, as set out in paragraph 60. Paragraph 60 goes on to say that to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, sufficient amount and variety of land should come forward where it is needed and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. It is therefore incorrect to simply refer to the standard method as a replacement for objectively assessed need. The standard method identifies the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for; it does not produce a housing requirement figure as advised by Paragraph 002 of NPPG.

2.3 Paragraph 3.2.5 of the proposed Local Plan goes on to say:

“In order to complete the housing requirement for the full plan period 2011-2031, the housing requirement for 2011-2022 is, in accordance with national guidance, determined as being the housing delivered in that

period. [3,018 + 2021/22 completions – figure to be included prior to plan adoption] (net) homes were delivered in East Cambridgeshire between 2011-22, therefore that becomes the housing requirement for that same period. Overall, therefore, the total housing requirement for the plan period, as updated by the single issue review of the Local Plan which concluded in 2023, is xxxx* new dwellings for the plan period 2011-31.”

- 2.4 This text is clearly inconsistent with the NPPF and the existing Local Plan. Local Plans must, as a minimum, seek to meet objectively assessed need to ensure they are ‘positively prepared’ in accordance with Paragraph 35 of the NPPF. The objectively assessed need in East Cambridgeshire for the period 2011-2022 is 6,325 homes based on the objectively assessed need of 575dpa at the time, not the housing delivery figure of 3,018 + 2021/22 completions which is far lower. Neither affordability adjustment nor the standard method change what is the past “need”. Whilst the affordability adjustment in the standard method aims to take into account past under-delivery it does this over a future 15 year plan period and does not consider the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.

3.0 QUESTION 17: WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED NEED (OAN) FOR HOUSING FOR THE FIRST PART OF THE PLAN PERIOD 2011 TO 2022?

- 3.1 Paragraph 3.2.5 of the adopted Local Plan 2015 confirms that the identified housing need for East Cambridgeshire was 13,000 between 2011-2031 based on the SHMA (2013). Under the duty to cooperate the District Council reached agreement with other Cambridgeshire authorities to deliver a total of 11,500 dwellings between 2011-2031. This resulted in an annual requirement of 575dpa, as adopted under the Plan 2015. Therefore, the OAN for the period 2011-2022 is **6,325** dwellings.

4.0 QUESTION 18: WHAT IS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR BASING THE FIRST PART OF THE DWELLING REQUIREMENT UPON COMPLETIONS TO DATE IN THE PLAN PERIOD?

- 4.1 The justification put forward by the Council is clearly inconsistent with the NPPF and the adopted Local Plan 2015. Local Plans must, as a minimum, seek to meet objectively assessed need to ensure they are 'positively prepared' in accordance with Paragraph 35 of the NPPF. The objectively assessed need in East Cambridgeshire for the period 2011-2022 is 6,325 homes based on the objectively assessed need of 575dpa at the time, not the housing delivery figure of 3,018+2021/22 completions which is far lower. Whilst the affordability adjustment in the standard method aims to take into account past under-delivery it does this over a future 15 year plan period and does not consider the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.
- 4.2 The standard method does not change what was the need looking back. It identifies what the need is going forward, taking into account under delivery. That is because the NPPF requires plans to look forward and meet needs. The only reason that ECDC is in this position is because it is not following the clear requirement of the NPPF and PPG to look forward at least 15 years from adoption. Indeed, it is rather bizarre that with less than 2 months left of 2022, ECDC is producing a plan to cover the years 2011 to 2022, and a plan which has fewer years left in it than have passed.

5.0 QUESTION 19: DOES THE PLAN AS PROPOSED AS A MINIMUM, PROVIDE FOR OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED NEEDS FOR HOUSING FOR THE PERIOD 2011 TO 2022, AND IS THE PROPOSED APPROACH SET OUT IN THE PLAN CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY?

- 5.1 The proposed Plan does not provide for objectively assessed needs for the period 2011-2022, as the housing requirement figure now proposed for this period reflects actual housing delivery rates rather than the agreed and adopted OAN of the 2015 Local Plan. The level of housing delivered during 2011-2021 was 2,732 under the OAN. This highlights a significant shortfall in housing delivery which is not representative of the housing requirement for the area.
- 5.2 Paragraphs 11b, 23 and 35 of the NPPF requires Local Plans and strategic policies to provide for *objectively assessed needs* for housing. The proposed Plan does not provide for objectively assessed needs for housing for the period 2011-2022 and is therefore inconsistent with the NPPF and unsound.

6.0 QUESTION 20: GIVEN THAT THE BASE DATE OF THE PLAN HAS NOT BEEN CHANGED TO THAT OF THE STANDARD METHOD CALCULATION, WHICH IS PROPOSED TO BE APPLIED OVER THE REMAINING PART OF THE PLAN PERIOD, SHOULD PAST UNDER DELIVERY OF HOUSING IN THE PLAN PERIOD TO DATE (MEASURED AGAINST THE ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN) BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ESTABLISHING THE HOUSING REQUIREMENT FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE PLAN PERIOD IN THE AMENDED POLICY GROWTH1 (SEE PPG PARAGRAPH: 011 REFERENCE ID: 2A-011-20190220)?

- 6.1 Under the current plan, there has to date been historic under delivery of around 2,732 homes between 2011 and 2021. The true under delivery for the plan period will be greater when 2021/22 completions are taken into account. Whilst the Standard Method takes past under delivery into account, it does that over a 15 year period. A plan which only looks eight years ahead will not account for the totality of historic under delivery and hence simply using the standard method will not meet housing needs and cannot therefore be sound.
- 6.2 The level of housing delivered during 2011-2021 was 2,732 under the OAN. This highlights a significant shortfall in housing delivery which is not representative of the housing requirement for the area.
- 6.3 Affordable housing delivery over the last ten years has only averaged 16% and by its own admission the Council acknowledges in its response to the Inspector's initial questions (Question 7) that a higher supply of 819 homes would meet the affordable housing need of 254dpa (equating to 31%). This, together with our own evidence of housing need appended to our Main Matter 1 Statement, gives indisputable reason for the plan to take into account past under delivery of housing in establishing the housing requirement for the remainder of the plan period.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 This Statement has been produced on behalf of L&Q Estates and Hill Residential, in response to Main Matter 2 and directly in response to questions 16-20. We have the following key points to make:

- The proposed Plan does not provide for objectively assessed needs for the period 2011-2022, as the housing requirement figure now proposed for this period reflects actual housing delivery rates rather than the agreed and adopted OAN of the 2015 Local Plan.
- This proposed Local Plan SIR is clearly inconsistent with the NPPF and the existing Local Plan. Local Plans must, as a minimum, seek to meet objectively assessed need to ensure they are 'positively prepared' in accordance with Paragraph 35 of the NPPF. The objectively assessed need in East Cambridgeshire for the period 2011-2022 is 6,325 homes based on the objectively assessed need of 575dpa at the time, not the housing delivery figure of 3,018 + 2021/22 completions which is far lower. This highlights a significant shortfall in housing delivery which is not representative of the housing requirement for the area.
- A plan which only looks eight years ahead will not account for the totality of historic under delivery and hence simply using the standard method will not meet housing needs and cannot therefore be sound.
- Affordable housing delivery over the last ten years has only averaged 16% and by its own admission the Council acknowledges in its response to the Inspector's initial questions (Question 7) that a higher supply of 819 homes would meet the affordable housing need of 254dpa (equating to 31%). This, together with our own evidence of housing need, gives indisputable reason for the plan to take into account past under delivery of housing in establishing the housing requirement for the remainder of the plan period.

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