

Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD



Independent Examination

Housing Trajectory

Published 23 August 2007

HD/CFD/SRS4

Subject Response Statement 2

Housing Trajectory

I Introduction

- 1.1 This Subject Response Statement has been prepared as part of a series of statements to provide additional information on a range of themes that have been raised by objectors in their Amplified Statements, specifically in relation to Week 1 of the Examination. They serve to provide additional information on a specific subject area and are cross-referenced within the Council's individual responses to amplified statements.
- 1.2 A series of Subject Response Statements have been prepared including the following subjects:
- The Green Belt
 - Housing Trajectory
 - Sustainability Appraisal
 - Infrastructure Delivery/Standard Charges
 - Conformity with Regional Spatial Strategy
- 1.3 This paper considers the deliverability of housing in Chelmsford and outlines how Chelmsford Borough Council have produced a Housing Trajectory that is in conformity with national Government guidance.

2 Summary of Main Issues

- 2.1 The main issues raised within the Amplified Statements relating to the Housing Trajectory are as follows:
- The Borough Council does not display a sufficient land supply to meet the proposed reviewed Regional Spatial Strategy target of 16000 new homes in the plan period 2001-2021.
 - The Borough Council is not in conformity with Government guidance and policy, notably PPS3.
 - The Housing Trajectory is dependent on the delivery of Windfall Sites.
 - The Housing Trajectory is heavily dependent on 'Brownfield' land and does not allocate enough 'Greenfield' land release.
 - The Housing Trajectory is not flexible enough to demonstrate it can deliver homes in the event of delays in infrastructure delivery.
 - Recent annual completion rates have been low and there is insufficient evidence to suggest this trend can be reversed.

3 Context

- 3.1 Since the submission of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Document in November 2006, the Housing Trajectory that was published in Appendix B of the document has been subject to regular updates.

- 3.2 These changes have been made as part the continuous monitoring work that is in place and have also been in response to recently published Government guidance, notably PPS3. The Housing Trajectory has now been updated to a baseline date of 31st March 2007 and this has enabled the Council to fully reflect the requirements of PPS3 and also incorporate the emerging revised RSS housing target (16000 new dwellings between 2001 and 2021). Information is clearly displayed in a consistent and reliable way in accordance with the guidance produced following PPS3. The updated Housing Trajectory is also based upon independently verified data provided by Essex County Council and covers the plan period 2001-2021.
- 3.3 These updates have consistently confirmed that the Borough Council has allocated sufficient land that can meet the delivery of regional housing targets (Chelmsford Housing Trajectory Totals 2007).

4 Land Supply

- 4.1 One of the main objectives of the update was to demonstrate that Chelmsford can deliver a flexible and responsive 5 year land supply of large sites considered to be available, suitable and achievable. The Borough Council was aware that that sites used in this land supply had to meet these criteria in order to be valid and therefore considered each site individually accordingly in order to be consistent. It is relevant to note that Chelmsford Borough Council considers large sites to be defined as those that are 12 dwellings and above, not 10 dwellings and above. Beyond the first 5-year land supply, Chelmsford Borough Council has also demonstrated site delivery over the plan period 2001-2021 within the Site Phasing accompaniment of the Housing Trajectory (Chelmsford Site Phasing – All Large Sites Land Supply 2007). These are based on conservative estimates of site capacity and it is expected that on-site delivery will be much higher.

5 Windfall Sites

- 5.1 Windfall sites are excluded completely from contributing to the Housing Trajectory in order to comply with PPS3. Previously, windfalls had been modestly projected to contribute 616 homes towards Chelmsford's housing provision. Chelmsford can still meet the minimum RSS target of 16,000 new homes by 2021 without any windfall sites. However, windfalls are still likely to come forward in the remaining plan period and will undoubtedly continue to contribute towards Chelmsford's overall housing supply.

6 Urban Capacity Study

- 6.1 Chelmsford Borough Council commissioned Halcrow to refresh the existing Urban Capacity Study in order to keep it up to date, and this was published in July 2007. As a result of this, an additional net 'best fit' of 437 additional dwellings have been added to the 2004 figure. This increase in provision has been a result of revised best-fit capacities for a number of sites as well as the addition and removal of some sites. The estimates contained within the Urban Capacity Study are again conservative and it is likely that on-site delivery will be greater than what is currently forecast (Revised Urban Capacity Study Refresh – Halcrow Group July 2007) (Ref.BD/CFD/094).

7 Brownfield Sites

- 7.1 The Borough Council does not accept that the Housing Trajectory has an over reliance on 'brownfield' sites and can demonstrate that a mixture of dwelling sizes, types and tenures can be provided on previously developed land within the Borough and thus encouraging urban renaissance. Many of the sites allocated in the Housing Trajectory are 'brownfield' and this is in line with the Council's general position of promoting 'brownfield' sites ahead of releasing 'greenfield' land, in accordance with paragraph 36 of PPS3. Approximately 26% of the Borough's proposed RSS target of 16,000 dwellings will be provided on 'greenfield' land.

8 Flexibility

- 8.1 The Chelmsford Borough Council Core Strategy is not dependent on infrastructure delivery. It seeks to integrate future housing and employment growth with infrastructure delivery. Essex County Council have identified that a substantial amount of housing delivery can occur in Chelmsford before infrastructure improvements are considered necessary. The Borough Council intends to introduce Standard Charges as a means of securing future infrastructure delivery through developer contributions (Chelmsford LDF Background Topic Paper 5 – Infrastructure and Standard Charges). The new approach is considered to be more pro-active and could potentially secure earlier infrastructure delivery in the Borough. The Borough Council is confident that this new approach will secure the required infrastructure delivery over the plan period.
- 8.2 The Borough Council is also in a position where it has flexibility in the way the proposed 'greenfield' land release is delivered. The Borough Council has the option to bring one of the sites forward earlier than planned as well as the ability to increase land release to enable accommodation of up to 5000 dwellings.

9 Annual Completions

- 9.1 Recent annual completions have been lower than the target mean average RSS delivery rate of 800 homes per annum. The period of 2002-2004 was when a lot of 'greenfield' allocations were coming forward in the Borough and this coincided with other builds identified in the local plan. Chelmsford is currently recovering from this intense period of build rates and is about to enter another period of large annual completions. The further release of 'greenfield' land in the future will also assist in significantly increasing annual completion rates commencing 2011 onwards.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The evidence produced as a result of this update and other supporting documents strengthens the Council's case that it has a robust and reliable Housing Trajectory. The changes that have been made to the Housing Trajectory since the publication of the Core Strategy have ensured that it complies fully with the latest Government guidance. The Borough Council does not believe that it needs to consider further spatial options in order to accommodate the increased housing target contained in the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Draft East of England Plan.

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Planning Policy
Chelmsford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Duke Street
Chelmsford
CMI IJE



Telephone 01245 606330
Fax 01245 606642
ldf@chelmsford.gov.uk
www.chelmsford.gov.uk



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