

Home Builders Federation

ID: 1159875

Matter 6d

CHELMSFORD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**Matter 6d – Housing Provision Affordable housing**

Main issue – *Whether the approach towards the provision of affordable housing is sound*

41. Are the requirements for affordable housing set out in Policy HO2(A) justified, effective and consistent with national policy? In particular:

- a. Does the evidence support a requirement for 35% affordable housing for all new residential development that meets the criteria in the policy? On what basis has the figure of 35% been chosen and does the evidence support a lower figure of 23% or 30%?

No. As we set out in our representation, the Council's evidence would suggest that a 35% housing requirement will deliver more affordable housing than the Council has identified as being required in its strategic housing market assessment. The policy requirement in policy HO2 should seek to meet the level of affordable housing needs for the plan period and not over deliver against this requirement. If the plan is delivered as set out in the Local Plan the Council will deliver over 220 dpa (a little over 5,000 homes in total) considerably more than the 179 dpa (4,117 homes in total) the Council states is required in paragraph 8.10 of the Local Plan. For the period 2017/18 to 2035/36 delivery of affordable housing is expected to be even higher at around 236 dpa. Our estimate of expected delivery is derived from the:

- Local Plan Housing Trajectory which sets out on page 282 that 9,085 new homes will be delivered on homes allocated in the local plan of over 10 units (excluding windfall). The Council's affordable housing policy would see the delivery of 3,180 homes on the basis of these sites alone.
- Document EB069 which shows that 1,304 affordable homes will be delivered between 2017/18 and 2021/22 on sites with planning permission or a submitted application.
- AMR 2016/17 (EB060) which on page 28 shows that 591 affordable homes were delivered between 2013/14 and 2016/17.



This estimate of the total number of affordable homes that will be delivered is also a minimum given that it does not consider any larger windfalls that may come forward during the plan period which would also deliver affordable homes.

We would therefore recommend that the affordable housing requirement be reduced from 35% to 25%.

- b. Are the criteria for considering the suitability of affordable housing within schemes clear and justified?

No comment

- c. Paragraph 8.13 states that the Council may consider a financial contribution in lieu of on-site affordable housing provision in certain circumstances and reference is made to the Planning Obligations SPD 2018 (EB133). Should this approach be set out in the policy? Is it clear how and where off-site affordable homes will be delivered and what mechanism will be used to determine the commuted sum levels?

As set out below it is important that the policy establishes that the Council will seek to amend its policy requirements where they make development unviable. The inclusion of the Council's approach with regard to viability should be included in the policy to ensure there is sufficient clarity for the decision maker and applicant.

- d. Has the impact of affordable housing on the viability of schemes been assessed? Is there sufficient flexibility in circumstances where there may be a lack of viability to deliver all the affordable housing within a scheme?

We would suggest that the policy includes a statement that the affordable housing requirement will be subject to viability. Paragraph 173 of the NPPF requires the careful attention be given to viability in terms of both plan-making and decision-taking. This is reiterated in paragraph 10-016-20140306 of Planning Practice Guidance which states:

“... where the deliverability of the development may be compromised by the scale of planning obligations and other costs, a viability assessment may be necessary. This should be informed by the particular circumstances of the site and proposed development in question.”

As such where a development is made unviable by the affordable the plan must be clear that the level of affordable housing, and other contributions will be open to negotiation in order to make that site viable. This ensure that plan is consistent with national policy and guidance and provides the necessary flexibility to ensure that it will not compromise delivery of new development facing additional and unforeseen costs. We would therefore recommend that the opening sentence of HO2 be amended to read:

*“The Council will require, **where viable**, the provision of ...”*

42. Is the rural exception sites part B of Policy HO2 justified and effective? Does the evidence support such sites only within 'Designated Rural Areas' or should it apply to the 'Rural Area' as defined in Strategic Policy S13? Is it compliant with paragraph 54 of the Framework?

No comment

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