HS045

Chelmsford Local Plan Examination

Matter 3 Hearing Statement
Strategic Priorities, Development Requirements and Spatial Principles

Land East of Boreham, Chelmsford
for Wates Developments

20 October 2026

PID Number: 1329392

Turley

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Client
Wates Developments

Our reference
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1. Spatial Principles (Issue 2)

Question 3.3 - Does the policy provide the right approach to the distribution of development?

1.1 **Yes**. Wates supports Strategic Policy 1 on the basis that the spatial principles of the emerging Local Plan have been tested and result in an appropriate distribution of new growth that will help shape the delivery of sustainable development. Wates also considers that the Spatial Strategy and related site selections have been made in accordance with the Spatial Principles, thereby resulting in a sound plan that has been generally prepared on a robust framework.

1.2 In addition to this support, Wates have consistently also made the point in our previous representations that there are potential opportunities to look more closely at Boreham in accordance with the existing spatial strategy, to help facilitate additional sustainable development. In particular, by giving greater weight to the role and function of the Key Service Settlements within the existing spatial framework.

1.3 In this regard, Boreham, is an established Key Service Settlement (KSS) at the higher end of the settlement hierarchy. The Site promoted by Wates has been previously identified in our Regulation 18, 19 and Reg 19 (additional sites) submissions and is accessible to all Boreham village centre facilities by active travel modes. This is confirmed by the council's most recent SHELAA assessment of the promoted site (25SHELAA4) which is discussed further at Paragraph 3.8 of this Statement.

1.4 The total promoted site area is 43.058 hectares (ha) and comprises two conjoined land parcels, separately controlled by Wates and Gladman Developments Ltd (Gladman). The land parcel under the control of Wates (CFS 52) lies to the south of the B1137 and is identified as Briars Farm, Main Road, Boreham in the SHELAA. The land parcel under the control of Gladman (CFS 145) lies East of Orchard Way and is identified in the SHELAA as Land East of Plantation Road.

1.5 Within the context of the existing proposed spatial distribution, this combined site would provide a well-located and deliverable opportunity to further support the future wider growth of Chelmsford, at an existing highly sustainable (second tier) settlement. Boreham is also a broad location which is unconstrained by Green Belt and the long term protection of the Green Belt remains a key strategic priority for the Council.

2. Whether the Plan makes adequate provision for housing (Issue 3)

Question 3.12 - Are there any risks to the delivery of housing as a result of the supply buffer?

2.1 The council has previously used a identified housing buffer as a practical way to meet the uplift in the Standard Method. At the Regulation 18 stage the council consulted upon a version of the plan with a very strong 20% supply buffer, albeit the relevant Housing Delivery Test did not imply such a requirement. This indicated that there was sufficient evidence to justify a spatial strategy predicated on the scale of development proposed.

2.2 The Council now has a significantly increased housing requirement of 1,210 dpa, which has reduced the operative supply buffer to 8.4% after taking into account the Additional Sites consultation. Wates notes that some sites have been added to strengthen the five-year supply position in consideration of delivery delays to three of the major strategic sites in the adopted Local Plan, which will help to increase flexibility and resilience.

2.3 The current buffer has therefore been increased from 1.4% to 8.4% which is considered to be generally suitable for its purpose and there is no clear reason at this time to suggest that housing delivery cannot be maintained on this basis.

2.4 In this regard we reiterate that such an opportunity to sustainably expand the existing buffer exists at the Site proposed by Wates on land East of Boreham, as set out in our previous representations, which are available to the Inspector. Whilst we recognise the rationale for the use of the current 8.4% buffer, there would be no penalty to the council for any potential over-supply of new homes should this buffer be increased to say 10%.

Question 3.13 - Are there particular constraints to identifying additional sites within the Plan period in the event of housing and employment development not coming forward as envisaged?

2.5 **No** – Whilst the IIA tested a higher growth option and considered this option to perform more poorly than other options, in relation to resource use and highway capacity, this would not constrain the identification of additional sites within the Plan period, when assessed at the site-specific level and on their own particular merits.

2.6 In this regard, Wates considers that Boreham warrants further attention as a strategic growth location as it provides a very good range of key services commensurate with a larger (second tier) settlement. This makes Boreham highly suitable for a larger scale of strategic residential growth than the very limited housing allocation currently proposed in the submitted Local Plan. These services include a primary school, local employment, convenience shopping, community facilities and good accessibility to public transport.

2.7 The existing village facilities which are accessible from Land East of Boreham by active travel modes include the Laurels Surgery, Boreham Primary School, a Post Office and a local food store. A full list of accessible facilities is set out in our previous representations which are available to the Inspector, which includes a Vision Document.

2.8 Our previous representations have highlighted that the Chelmsford Garden Community (CGC) at Beaulieu Park, will be accessible via upgraded active travel links, which can be provided as part of the strategic residential development proposed East of Boreham. CGC offers a wide range of accessible local facilities, amenities, employment, leisure, and recreation opportunities to support a strategic level of growth at the Site. Importantly, this includes a newly opened railway station, mobility hubs, sports hubs primary and secondary schools.

2.9 The combined strategic site proposal will have excellent connections to Chelmsford City centre as well as the public transport infrastructure and other facilities provided at Beaulieu Park. In addition to providing up to 1,000 new market and affordable homes, the Site provides other public benefits and new community infrastructure, comprising a 2-form entry primary school, a mixed-use local centre, and publicly accessible open space and allotments. Further details are set out in the Vision Document submitted at the Regulation 19 stage.

2.10 The combined Site is available, developable and deliverable as it is unconstrained and so can be delivered within a rapid timeframe, in a sustainable location in close proximity to a new train station, with access to London. In addition, the Site lies proximate to the nearby Hammonds Farm strategic allocation and so development East of Boreham can additionally assist in providing further infrastructure contributions to support future infrastructure delivery at the Hammonds Farm Site.

2.11 In conclusion to this question, the answer is that Land East of Boreham therefore represents an ideal opportunity site, should the Inspector be minded to wish to see the existing buffer increased beyond 8.4%.

3. The Spatial Strategy (Site Issue 4)

Strategic Policy S7

The overriding strategy in the Plan is to first make use of previously developed land within Chelmsford Urban Area and then to allocate land for development in:

a. Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs)

b. two new garden communities, underpinned by Garden City Principles

c. expansion of existing established employment sites.

Question 3.17 - Is this approach justified, soundly based and consistent with national policy?

3.1 **Yes** – Wates supports the spatial strategy of the Plan and considers that it will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as it is likely to meet the needs identified by the Council. Wates also considers that the Local Plan and spatial strategy comply with the soundness tests in paragraph 35 of the December 2023 NPPF.

3.2 For the reasons stated above, if the Inspector considers that the Plan could benefit from additional site allocations, then sustainable sites in second tier settlements are available, including the Wates site on land East of Boreham. These second tier site opportunities warrant further consideration in such a scenario, as they would add additional resilience to the Plan, to counter any longer term macro-economic uncertainties.

3.3 Paragraph 74 of the 2023 NPPF states that the supply of larger numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns. The approach taken by the Council under Policy S7 is therefore consistent with national policy. Similarly, a significant extension of the KSS of Boreham, as proposed by Wates, if adopted as part of this Plan, would also be soundly based and consistent with national policy.

Question 3.19 - What alternative approaches were tested in the preparation of the Plan?

3.4 Boreham, as a KSS, is ranked as being a suitable and sustainable location for strategic employment growth, but has not been selected for strategic allocation, the effect of which, is a low allocation of new housing in a highly sustainable settlement location, which is a potentially missed opportunity.

3.5 This could also create an anomaly where there is a misalignment between local housing and employment provision in the Boreham area, given the proposed allocation of strategic employment growth nearby, which potentially could attract workers from further afield. This could however be suitably mitigated if a complementary strategic scale of residential growth was also proposed on land East of Boreham.

3.6 Wates notes that a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) update was undertaken in Spring 2026. Whilst previous iterations of the SHELAA had evaluated the constituent promoted land parcels (CFS52 and CFS145) in isolation, the Council's latest SHELAA Assessment (Part 6 of 9) now evaluates the promoted 40.03ha site as a single entity under reference **25SHELAA4**, and awards the combined site a unanimous Green RAG rating, with a total score of 113.

3.7 For ease of reference, the Site Performance Summary for Land East of Plantation Road, Boreham can be found at page 401 of the document. 6-site-performance-summaries.pdf

3.8 The performance summary for the combined proposal site, as set out in all our previous representations, is significant in that the highest possible score (5) was awarded against 16 individual criteria, including for assessments such as proximity to retail services and employment, public transport, PROW and cycling connectivity, neighbouring constraints vehicular access, flood risk and the proximity to key services. In terms of suitability, availability and achievability, all three criteria were thus positively ranked as 'Green'.

3.9 The Council's assessment confirms the site's suitability and the critical mass required to absorb and self-generate crucial local infrastructure within the boundary of the site. Notably, in the form of a new primary school, expansive active travel links to the village core, and space to meet or exceed statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) targets.

3.10 An additional site option has therefore been tested (the unified sites CFS52 and CFS145) and by the Council's own technical metrics this site has been deemed to be completely sustainable.

3.11 Therefore, if the inspector were to conclude that the Plan should consider additional allocations, then site reference 25SHELAA4 is an obvious candidate site for further consideration. This is reinforced by the potential of the combined site to provide contributions to assist with future infrastructure delivery at the nearby Hammonds Farm allocation, as set out at paragraph 2.10 above.

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