CHELMSFORD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

MATTER 6

HEARING STATEMENT
On behalf of
(1) LITTLE BADDOW PARISH COUNCIL
(2) BOREHAM PARISH COUNCIL
(3) DANBURY PARISH COUNCIL
(4) SANDON PARISH COUNCIL

[Regulation 19 Reference: Person ID 1360095; Site 16A Comment IDs PSQ25-6174, PSQ25-6176 and PSQ25-6177]

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This Hearing Statement is submitted on behalf of Little Baddow, Boreham, Danbury and Sandon Parish Councils ("**Parish Councils**"). The Parish Councils objected at the Regulation 19 stage through a representation prepared by Walsingham Planning (March 2025) ("**the Reg.19 Response**"), accompanied by technical notes from Stomor. They objected to Strategic Policies S6 and S7 and Strategic Growth Site Policies 16a and 16b. The Parish Councils' case is that the allocation of Hammonds Farm (SGS16a) ("**the site**") makes the Plan unsound. Measured against §35 of the NPPF (2023), it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy. This statement concentrates on SGS16a. The adjoining employment allocation next to A12 Junction 18 (SGS16b) is addressed only where it adds to the impacts of SGS16a, chiefly on the A414 and Junction 18.

2. Since the Reg.19 stage, the case for the allocation of SGS16a has significantly worsened. The A12 widening scheme, promoted through a DCO, has been cancelled. Further highways evidence on this change from John Russell Transport Planning is set out at Section B of the Parish Councils' Matter 4 Hearing Statement (referred to below as "JRTP§")

B. SITE ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION

6.1 What was the Council's approach to site assessment and selection? What was the process and what factors were taken into account? What evidence is the Council relying on?

3. The Council's Hearing Statement for the Examination of the Draft Local Plan (November 2018) explained that:[1]

> *"This option would involve the creation of a new settlement that is detached from the existing urban area, accessibility to key services, facilities and employment opportunities would be reduced. It would also be a very car reliant scheme…The site is located within the Lower Chelmer Valley which has a landscape character that has a high sensitivity to change with significant portions of land within the floodplain. The site is severed by the A12, Maldon Road and the A414, all of which are close to capacity and experience congestion and delays to traffic. Development could lead to an increase in car/traffic movements to those facilities in the city centre. Development would not respect the existing pattern of existing settlements or locate development at well-connected locations"*

4. The site was therefore discounted as a reasonable alternative. The fundamental physical constraints identified previously remain. The Council's own Sustainable Accessibility Mapping and Appraisal (July 2022) ranked a new settlement at Hammonds Farm (Option E) as the least sustainable and least accessible of the five spatial approaches [**T003**, p.14]. Growth in urban areas (Option B) was the most sustainable.

5. The Council now says that the site has a *"good level"* of sustainable accessibility [**T006-A**, pp.16-17]. However, this is expressly *"subject to the provision of local amenities and sustainable travel infrastructure by developers"*. The claimed sustainability of the site is dependent upon extensive infrastructure that has yet to be demonstrated as deliverable, funded and capable of achieving the outcomes assumed by the council. By treating the site in this way, the Council has failed to assess it on a level playing field with other sites. This inconsistency is readily apparent from the Integrated Impact Assessment ("**IIA**") Addendum, which rejected further large strategic sites because their transport and other infrastructure requirements were "*unproven*" and their deliverability could not be relied upon. It also found that they performed poorly on transport because they were housing-led developments without established sustainable infrastructure connections, relying on the private car at least in the short and medium term [**SD009**]. Each of those criticisms applies with at least equal force to Hammonds Farm. It is a large, housing-led site with no existing sustainable infrastructure. Its strategic transport requirements are unproven now that the A12 scheme has been cancelled. The Council has not explained why the same

[1] https://documents.notohammondsfarm.co.uk/op/op.ViewOnline.php?documentid=723&version=1

reasoning does not apply to it. A selection process that applies different standards to comparable sites is not justified.

6. Separately, the Council also ruled out all Green Belt and Green Wedge sites in principle without any assessment [**SD008**, §6.4.30]. It has not carried out a Green Belt Review. Land between the southern edge of Chelmsford and the A12 may contribute little to the Green Belt purposes and would likely be far more sustainable than the site. However, no comparison has ever been undertaken.

7. Accordingly, the Council's approach to site assessment and selection is fundamentally flawed (see also the Parish Councils' Matter 1 Statement).

C. ISSUE 1 – SITE ALLOCATIONS: GENERAL SITE ALLOCATION MATTERS

6.2 Is the approach of requiring masterplans/planning briefs an effective mechanism to secure sustainable development across the plan area?

8. Masterplans are not a substitute for the evidence needed to show that the allocation is justified and deliverable in the first place. That evidence is sorely lacking.

6.3 What is the current planning status of the site (eg masterplans, permissions, completions)? Have there been any changes since the Plan was submitted for examination and if so, are any modifications needed?

9. See question (b) below. The material change since submission is the cancellation of the A12 widening scheme, which requires the deletion of SGS16a: see question (l).

6.4 For the housing sites, what is the basis for the proposed capacity?

10. SGS16a provides for around 3,000 homes in the period to 2041, with a further 1,500 homes after 2041. The capacity depends on the transport evidence. That evidence assumes very low car trip rates and a 60% share of active and sustainable travel. Those assumptions are wholly unrealistic for the reasons set out in the Stomor Transport Technical Note ("**TTN**"). The site's highway capacity has therefore not been shown. See questions (c) and (g).

6.5 For the sites which include non-residential uses, what is the basis for the scale and type/mix of employment and other uses proposed? Is it justified?

11. SGS16a provides around 43,000 sqm of employment floorspace. The Plan's employment land requirement is over-inflated and departs from the Council's own evidence base

without justification [Reg.19, §§4.3, 4.13-4.15, 4.49]. That scale of employment at Hammonds Farm is therefore not justified. Its traffic effect is increased by the further strategic employment allocation proposed next door at SGS16b, which takes access from the same stretch of the A414.

6.6 Are the development requirements clear, and are any further safeguards or mitigation measures necessary to achieve an acceptable form of development?

12. The requirements in Policy 16a are numerous, but many are expressed as aspirations rather than defined, costed and deliverable measures. Examples are the Bus Based Rapid Transit, the bridge over the A12 to connect "*close to*" Sandon Park and Ride, and the 60% share of active and sustainable travel [Reg.19, §2.118]. The requirement for "*necessary improvements*" to Junctions 18 and 19 of the A12 does not identify what those improvements are, who will fund them or when they will be delivered. The submissions are developed under question (i).

6.7 What is the expected timescale and rate of development for the housing sites and is this realistic?

13. The Plan expects SGS16a to be delivered between 2030 and 2048 [Reg.19, §2.138]. That is not realistic. Delivery depends upon unresolved strategic highway capacity and mitigation at Junctions 18 and 19 and on the A12 mainline. The current T006 modelling assigns approximately 70% of Hammonds Farm residential traffic via the A414/Junction 18, and JRTP identifies the potential for greater reliance on Junction 18 following cancellation of the A12 scheme (Matter 4 JRTP §§8–10). Further modelling and mitigation requirements remain outstanding. The submissions are developed under question (k).

6.8 Are any modifications to the site policy needed for soundness?

14. Yes. For the reasons given under question (l), Policy 16a should be deleted.

D. LOCATION 16 – EAST CHELMSFORD: SGS 16A (EAST CHELMSFORD GARDEN COMMUNITY, HAMMONDS FARM) AND SGS 16B (LAND ADJACENT TO A12 JUNCTION 18 EMPLOYMENT AREA)

(a) How were sites 16a and 16b selected? What alternatives were considered?

15. The selection of SGS16a is not justified. The Parish Councils rely on their submissions under question 6.1.

16. In addition, the IIA tested an alternative (Option 2c). This would place 3,000 homes and 43,000 sqm of employment floorspace on parcels in West and North West Chelmsford. Those parcels adjoin the urban area and the allocation at SGS2. They have existing bus routes and direct walking and cycling links to the city centre along Roxwell Road [Reg.19, §§4.25-4.35]. In the SHELAA the plots within Option 2c all score much higher than the site, reflecting far fewer sustainability constraints [Reg.19, §4.33].

(b) What is the planning status of both sites, including progress with masterplans and required infrastructure?

17. Hammonds Farm has no approved masterplan. National Highways' position is that further detailed modelling is needed at the planning application stage to identify suitable mitigation and to confirm the site's access arrangements. Further design work is also needed to show that the mitigation and access arrangements are deliverable [SOCG033-A, p.4]. The Council's evidence identifies Junction 18 as the principal route to the Strategic Road Network, with further modelling also outstanding there (JRTP §§10-14).

18. The outline application on SGS16b (ref. 24/01768/OUT) shows the practical difficulty of crossing the A12 on foot or by bike near Junction 18. Its Transport Assessment would require pedestrians and cyclists to cross three busy slip roads without signals to reach the proposed bridge [Reg.19, §§3.30-3.34]. The same constraint affects the south-western edge of Hammonds Farm.

(c) What is the basis for the site capacities and supporting development requirements set out in policies 16a and 16b?

19. Site capacity derives largely from transport modelling based on unrealistic and flawed assumptions: see below.

(e) What would be the impact of development of sites 16a and 16b on the strategic and local highway network, including public transport and active travel? How was this assessed? What mitigation measures would be needed to support development, and how would they be funded and delivered?

20. The Parish Councils rely on the Stomor TTN and the JRTP evidence in Matter 4 for the full highway impacts. The key points are as follows.

21. The Council relies on VISUM strategic modelling. It is built on 2019 surveys taken before Covid and is not calibrated to turning movements at junctions [Stomor TTN, §§4.2.2–4.2.3; 4.4.21]. It stops at 2041, so it leaves out the further 1,500 homes [Stomor TTN, §4.4.2]. Its

trip rates are cut by 30%, which double-counts [Reg 19]. National Highways also says the base model understates congestion on the A12 mainline [JRTP §14]. Taken together these shortcomings materially undermine confidence in the modelling outputs and resulting conclusions.

22. Junction 18 is over capacity in 2041 even without the Plan [Stomor TTN, §4.4.4]. Development traffic from 16a and 16b makes the A414 queues significantly longer [Stomor TTN, §4.4.6]. Junction 17 is over capacity on all arms, and there is no plan scheme to fix it [**SD003**, p. 355]. Traffic is displaced onto rural routes through Danbury, Sandon and Little Baddow [Stomor TTN, §§2.3.20; 4.4.9].

23. The A12 widening scheme was cancelled in July 2025. The interim Junction 19 package mainly serves North East Chelmsford [JRTP §7]. Any further works are unconfirmed and unfunded [JRTP §9]. The bridge and bus link only overcome the severance caused by the A12 – they are the minimum necessary to deal with the site's limitations; they are not benefits of the scheme [JRTP §4].

24. The April 2026 Statement of Common Ground between Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council and National Highways accepts that further modelling and design work is needed to establish whether Hammonds Farm requires additional mitigation and to confirm its access arrangements. Its main access to the Strategic Road Network is expected to be at Junction 18, where modelling is also outstanding [**SOCG033-A**]. Possible further mitigation, including widening the A12 southbound off-slip at Junction 19, has not been shown to be confirmed, funded or sufficient [JRTP §9].

25. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF (2023) provides that development should be refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. A plan should not allocate a site of this scale unless the evidence shows that those outcomes can be avoided. Here it does not [Stomor TTN, §§5.2.5-5.2.6].

(f) To facilitate development of sites 16a and 16b, will further mitigation be required at Junction 19 of the A12, over and above that already being progressed in association with the North East Chelmsford Garden Community?

26. Yes. The Council's Focussed Consultation document [**SD002**, §1.12] states that the full Junction 19 improvements in the A12 scheme are required as a minimum to deliver the

strategic growth in the Plan. That scheme has been cancelled. The interim Junction 19 scheme (§1.13) was agreed to enable North East Chelmsford to continue. It provides no benefit to Hammonds Farm [JRTP §7].

27. The position of North East Chelmsford is materially different from Hammonds Farm. Development at Beaulieu is already under way. It was allocated through the adopted Core Strategy, and its railway station has been built. An interim Junction 19 scheme is a realistic way of letting an established programme continue. Hammonds Farm is a wholly new allocation. It has not been shown that it could be accommodated within any interim highway solution.

28. It is essentially common ground that further mitigation will be required [**SOCG033-A**, p.4], but that mitigation is undefined, unplanned and unfunded. This is fatal to the allocation.

(g) For site 16a, what is the basis for the requirement to enable a 60% share in active and sustainable travel? Is that realistic? What would be the implications of not achieving the 60% share?

29. This is not an evidence-based or realistic requirement. Nationally, only about 35% of trips outside London are made by active travel or public transport. In Chelmsford, 54% of people drive to work and only 5% go by bus [Stomor TTN, §§3.3.5–3.3.6]. Nothing suggests Hammonds Farm residents would behave differently [Stomor TTN, §3.3.7]. Only the south-west corner of the site is within a 20-minute walk of Sandon Park and Ride [Stomor TTN, §3.2.6]. A combined cycle and bus journey would not appeal to most people [Stomor TTN, §3.2.11]. The bridge over the A12 is likely to serve mainly as a bus link and will not encourage significant walking or cycling trips [Stomor TTN, §3.2.12]. The roads into Chelmsford are at or near capacity. A continuous Bus Rapid Transit service to the city centre is therefore "*highly unlikely*" to be achievable [Stomor TTN, §3.3.3] and the requirement to provide an unimpeded route has been abandoned [**SD003**, p. 132].

30. If the target cannot be shown to be realistic, the conclusion that the impact would not be severe falls away. The allocation would then be inconsistent with §115 of the NPPF (2023), and would not be justified [Reg.19, §2.123].

(h) What would be the impact of development on sites 16a and 16b on the following: agricultural land, rural landscape character and heritage assets; biodiversity and green infrastructure; flood risk and prevention; air quality, light and noise pollution; and other infrastructure including education, health, utilities and recreation? How were the above impacts assessed, and what evidence is the Council relying on?

31. The impacts would be significant and, in several respects, cannot be adequately mitigated. Each is contrary to national policy.

32. **Landscape.** The 2017 Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment gives Hammonds Farm "high" landscape sensitivity and only "low to medium" capacity. It records that development would be conspicuous, intrusive and difficult to mitigate [Reg.19, §§2.3–2.7].

33. **Heritage.** The site affects listed buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, Protected Lanes and archaeology. The Council's Heritage Assessment identifies "*considerable*" harm to the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area [**PL007**, pp.15-16]. The Junction 19 route and river bridge would form one of the principal accesses serving a development of 3,000 homes and 43,000 sqm of employment through that landscape [Reg.19, §§2.18–2.48].

34. **Biodiversity.** The agreed modification to the Garden Community BNG requirement caps anything over and above the 20% target at what is reasonably practical and deliverable onsite, with any shortfall above the mandatory 10% not required through off-site units or statutory credits [**SOCG046**]. That reduces the ecological safeguard previously relied upon to justify the allocation.

35. **Flood risk.** The Updated Sequential and Exception Tests records 8.6% of the site in Flood Zone 2 and 7.2% in Flood Zone 3 (excluding the Country Park area of the site) [**CC021**]. In the reservoir "wet day" scenario flooding from Hanningfield would cover most of the site apart from higher ground in the south-west and land east of Sandon Brook. The Council accepts that reservoir failure may put lives at risk and require warning and evacuation arrangements. Groundwater is also at or close to the surface in the north-west.

36. The sequential test does not transparently compare Hammonds Farm against reasonable alternatives such as West and North West Chelmsford or compare reservoir risk between sites. The Submission Topic Paper Spatial Strategy and Strategic Sites identifies significant negative effects from flood risk, heritage and landscape [**TP010**, §4.58], while the IIA gives strategic options a neutral flood-risk score because impacts can subsequently be

addressed through sequential and exception testing [**IIA007**, p.197]. Each exercise effectively relies upon the other rather than undertaking the comparison, which represents a failure of sequential testing.

37. The exception test similarly identifies broad sustainability benefits but leaves lifetime safety and detailed flood-risk assessment to a future FRA [**CC021**, pp.4–5].

38. The multi-modal River Chelmer bridge is essential infrastructure in Flood Zone 3. Whether it can be constructed without obstructing floodplain flows, increasing risk elsewhere or compromising safe access goes directly to the feasibility of the allocation and should be demonstrated before adoption. The Junction 19 access depends on that bridge. If it cannot be delivered safely, the intended access strategy would be materially compromised, with even greater reliance likely to fall on the A414 and Junction 18 (JRTP §4).

(i) Are the essential site specific requirements and mitigation measures justified, and will they, along with other policies in the plan, be effective in achieving sustainable development on the sites? Can they be viably provided?

39. No. The key requirements are not fully defined, firmly costed or funded. The Infrastructure SOCG with Wates and ECC (October 2026) [**SOCG049-A**] now lists the interventions. But its costs are "*high-level, indicative*" and "*not fixed*" [**SOCG049-A**, §4.3]. Several critical items are uncosted. The multi-modal bridge over the River Chelmer through Flood Zone 3 is "*TBC*" [**SOCG049-A**, App 2, item 14]. So are the local road improvements, ranked "*Critical*" [**SOCG049-A**, App 2, item 11]. Wates disputes the "*Critical*" flood resilience item and the stewardship costs [**SOCG049-A**, §2.5]. On funding, SOCG049-A says only that "*consideration will be given*" to ring-fencing CIL, and only if the scheme later proves unviable [**SOCG049-A**, §5.3].

(j) What would be the effect of development of sites 16a and 16b on national policy requirements to ensure a long term supply of minerals?

40. Hammonds Farm lies within a Minerals Safeguarding Area under the Essex Minerals Local Plan. Paragraphs 215 to 218 of the NPPF (2023) require mineral resources to be safeguarded against needless sterilisation. The Council has confirmed that the site contains a workable mineral resource that would be sterilised by development and leaves it to the developer to show that the need for the development outweighs its sterilisation

[**SD003**, p.131]. That question should be answered before allocation, not at the application stage.

(k) Is delivery of site 16a, including the required infrastructure and mitigation, achievable within the timescales envisaged in the Plan? How will the timely provision of infrastructure be ensured?

41. No. Delivery is planned to start in 2030 [Reg.19, §2.138]. It depends on strategic highway capacity and mitigation at Junctions 18 and 19 and on the A12 mainline, which have not been demonstrated to be confirmed, sufficient, funded and deliverable for Hammonds Farm. There is a serious risk that the site will not come forward at the scale or within the timescales assumed. That would put the housing requirement at risk and undermine the spatial strategy. The Plan is not effective.

42. The Council has already accepted that strategic sites cannot be relied on for early delivery. In the IIA Addendum it noted that three strategic sites in the Plan have stalled or been significantly delayed [**SD009**, §2.3.1]. It rejected further strategic sites partly because of their longer lead-in times [**SD009**, §2.3.14]. Hammonds Farm is the largest strategic site in the Plan, and it has no secured strategic highway solution.

43. The promoter's Statement of Common Ground now puts the first completions in 2031, with 120 homes. It then assumes 250 homes a year, rising to 330 a year by 2040, to reach 3,000 homes by 2041 [**SOCG046**, §2.2]. To meet that date, the access junction, the Junction 19 link and river bridge, the A12 crossing and the first stage of the bus network would all need to be designed, consented and funded within about four years. None has yet reached that stage. The Statement nevertheless says there are "*no over-riding issues and constraints*" to delivery [**SOCG046**, §2.3]. That assertion is not supported by any evidence.

(l) Are any modifications to the policies for sites 16a and 16b needed to ensure an acceptable form of development is achieved?

44. The problems identified are not matters of detail that can be cured by modifying the policy wording. They go to whether Hammonds Farm is suitable, sustainable and deliverable. The Parish Councils therefore ask that Policy 16a be deleted.

BEN FULLBROOK

LANDMARK CHAMBERS

21 October 2026

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