HS070

Land at North West Chelmsford
Hearing Statement prepared on behalf of Dandara Eastern
October 2026

BIDWELLS

CHELMSFORD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION: HEARING STATEMENT PREPARED ON BEHALF OF DANDARA EASTERN (REPRESENTATION NUMBER: 1326599)

MATTER 6 ISSUE 1

Quality Assurance

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Bidwells on behalf of Dandara Eastern in support of Land at North West Chelmsford (hereafter "the site"). Dandara has promoted the site through each of the previous Local Plan consultation stages. Dandara controls the whole site demarked with the red line boundary plan shown in their Regulation 19 representations[1]. Part of the site was allocated as Strategic Growth Site 18a (SGS18a) for the delivery of 100 new homes in the Regulation 19 Additional Sites Focused Consultation Document.

1.2 The purpose of Dandara's involvement in the Examination is to demonstrate the deliverability of SGS18a and to highlight the availability of further development parcels that could come forward at North West Chelmsford in line with the Local Plan's Spatial Strategy to meet housing needs if required.

1.3 This Hearing Statement responds to:

- Matter 6: Site Selection
  - Issue 1: Site Allocations
    - Questions 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7 and 6.8
  - Site Specific Questions: Growth Area 1 – Central and Urban Chelmsford
    - Location 18 – North West Chelmsford – Strategic Growth Site Policy 18a – Questions f, g, h

1.4 The following updates to Dandara's technical evidence are appended to this Statement to inform the examination:

- A Vision Document Addendum – to refine the proposals presented in the Vision Document at the Regulation 19 Additional Sites Consultation stage, including revised capacity estimates and more detail on development parcels/phases that can come forward within Dandara's holding to meet housing needs when required.
- A Transport Strategy and a Transport Technical Note, which demonstrate how the constituent development parcels within the site would be accessed and served by sustainable transport modes.
- An Education Needs Assessment and Addendum, which confirms how SGS18a and wider development options would be served by local education provision.
- A Heritage Statement, to provide an early assessment of the heritage impacts of the development proposals for SGS18a.

[1] *Dandara Limited Regulation 19 Local Plan Representations (March 2025): Appendix 1, Figure 2, page 5*

2.0 Response to Matter 6, Issue 1

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

2.1 Yes, Dandara supports the preparation of proportionate masterplans and planning briefs as a means of coordinating the delivery of sustainable development. In relation to SGS18a the Masterplan/Development Framework process commenced in February 2026 and is now well advanced, enabling Dandara and the Council to reach broad agreement around the scale and capacity of development, developable areas and infrastructure requirements.

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

2.2 The site does not currently benefit from planning permission and no development has commenced. However, the master planning process for the site commenced in February 2026 with engagement with the Council through a Route 2 Masterplan / Development Framework process. The draft masterplan is now at an advanced stage and close to agreement, and a planning application is intended to be submitted in 2027, with delivery commencing in 2029.

2.3 Since submission of the Plan, changes have been the refinement of the masterplan and supporting technical evidence. This has not altered the overarching vision or design principles but has confirmed the site's constraints, infrastructure requirements and capacity to accommodate approximately 160 dwellings. This is a significant increase compared with the 100 dwellings estimated by SGS18a.

2.4 Accordingly, no modification is required in response to the site's planning status. However, **the capacity identified in Policy SGS18a should be modified from "around 100" to "around 160 new homes"** to reflect the evidence emerging from the masterplanning process.

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

2.5 The capacity identified in SGS18a appears to have been a conservative estimate made by the Council before the masterplanning process had commenced.

2.6 Dandara's proposed capacity of approximately 160 dwellings is based on an advanced stage of masterplan, informed by site-specific technical evidence that has tested the site's development potential against its constraints, opportunities and infrastructure requirements. It also follows extensive pre-application engagement with the Council through the Masterplan/Development Framework process.

2.7 The technical evidence presented in the Transport Strategy has assessed that 160 dwellings can be safely accommodated within the existing road network without significant interventions. The evidence shows that both the Chignal Road/A1060 Roxwell Road junction and the Patching Hall Lane/B1008 Broomfield Road junction have spare capacity. Development of this scale would have a minimal impact on the junctions, with little change in their reserve capacity once the forecast traffic flows associated with the draft allocation are added. Furthermore, there remains spare capacity for further development on the wider site.

2.8 Additionally, a supporting Education Needs Assessment estimates that approximately 160 dwellings would generate 47 primary and 31 secondary pupils. It identifies 103 available primary places and 1,848 available secondary places within the relevant planning groups and concludes that the additional demand can be accommodated without further education infrastructure beyond that already planned. Again, there remains capacity for further development on the wider site

2.9 This evidence-led approach demonstrates that the site can accommodate additional housing while appropriately addressing infrastructure, design and open-space requirements. Increasing the capacity would make more effective use of the allocated land and optimise the site's potential, consistent with paragraphs 124, 129 and 135(e) of the NPPF (2024).

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

2.10 A planning application for the site is expected in 2027, with housing delivery commencing in 2028. Given its capacity of approximately 160 dwellings and limited reliance on major enabling infrastructure, the site is capable of being delivered quickly.

2.11 The draft Plan anticipates delivery of the site between 2028/29 and 2029/30. The site can come forward quickly, taking account of the limited upfront infrastructure required and Dandara's intention to submit a planning application as soon as possible, but due to the additional capacity now identified, it is likely that delivery will be spread over three years rather than two. This is likely to commence in 2029/30 due to the need to obtain reserved matters consent and discharge conditions following outline planning permission. Pre-application discussions with Chelmsford City Council have already will been taken forward so that a planning application be submitted in the first half of 2027.

2.12 The site will be an important source of housing delivery within the first five years of the Plan period following adoption, which is particularly relevant given the reliance on Hammonds Farm and other large allocations.

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

2.13 Based on the outcomes of Dandara's masterplanning, assessment and pre-application engagement work, **we are seeking an amendment to SGS18a to increase its indicative capacity from "around 100 new homes" to "around 160 new homes".**

2.14 As set out in response to Question 6.4, the emerging masterplan and site-specific technical evidence demonstrate that this increased capacity can be accommodated while providing for all other policy requirements, including landscape, drainage, infrastructure, access and open space.

2.15 The modification would be consistent with paragraphs 124 and 129 of the 2024 NPPF, which support the effective and efficient use of land, having regard to infrastructure capacity, sustainable transport, local character and design.

2.16 Dandara considers the modification necessary to reflect evidence of the site's true capacity and to optimise the use of allocated land. It will ensure that the policy is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Site Specific Questions – Location 18 – North West Chelmsford (Strategic Growth Site Policy 18a)

f. What is the likely impact of the proposed allocation on the following factors:

- **Rural landscape character, agricultural land and heritage assets**
- **Biodiversity and green infrastructure**
- **The strategic and local highway network**
- **Other infrastructure including public transport, education, health, utilities and recreation**
- **Flood risk and prevention**
- **Air quality, light and noise pollution**

Dandara's Regulation 19 representations were supported by a range of technical information that included a Vision and Delivery Statement, Transport Strategy, Flood Risk and Drainage Management Plan, Archaeological Desk Based Assessment and Drone Survey, Heritage Assessment, Ecological Desk Based Assessment and a Minerals Resource Assessment. These assessments focused on Dandara's wider landholding. They have since been supplemented by an updated Vision Document and masterplan submitted at the Additional Sites consultation stage and the evidence presented alongside this Hearing Statement. The responses below draw upon this and other relevant evidence published by the Council.

Rural landscape character, agricultural land and heritage assets

2.17 The allocation comprises approximately 8.6 hectares of agricultural land adjoining the existing urban edge of Chelmsford. Development would alter the character and use of the site; however, it would form a contained extension to the settlement within a landscape-led masterplan that provides substantial green infrastructure. It would be seen in the immediate setting of the recent residential developments to the south and be separated from the wider rural area by woodland and existing built development at Broomwood Manor and Priors.

2.18 The development would result in the loss of agricultural land, but the site is already severed from the wider agricultural holding by Woodhall Hill, Hollow Lane, the grounds of Broomwood Manor and Priors and associated woodland. It is therefore difficult to farm using modern machinery and well placed to accommodate an extension to Chelmsford's urban area.

2.19 There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within the site. The Heritage Statement appended to this Hearing Statement identifies that only low level residual harm will arise from the SGS18a proposals to Grade II* Chobbings Farmhouse and associated Grade II Barn and Granary, and to locally listed Broomwood Manor, principally from the development of agricultural land within their wider rural settings. No harm is identified to the Grade II listed Priors. Through the masterplanning process we have worked closely with the council to ensure that the scheme is sensitive to the heritage assets and allows for appropriate buffers and viewing corridors to mitigate any potential harm.

2.20 These effects are capable of being limited through a landscape-led masterplan, including retention of existing vegetation, strengthened planting along the north-western and south-western boundaries, landscaped separation and careful control of development location, scale and height.

Biodiversity and green infrastructure

2.21 An ecological assessment of the site identifies the wider site as predominantly arable and of low baseline ecological value, with no large areas of priority habitat within its boundary. The principal features of ecological value are the existing hedgerows, trees, grassland, ponds, ditches, watercourse and adjoining woodland.

2.22 While some harm to biodiversity could occur, these effects are capable of being addressed through the retention and connection of higher-value habitats, sensitive lighting and the creation of a green infrastructure network incorporating native planting, habitat corridors and biodiversity-led SuDS.

2.23 The appraisal concludes that achieving 10% Biodiversity Net Gain would be possible given the low-value arable baseline. Accordingly, subject to updated ecological surveys and a scheme-specific statutory biodiversity metric at planning application stage, the allocation provides an opportunity to achieve an enhancement in biodiversity and ecological connectivity. Species surveys commenced earlier in the year in anticipation of a planning submission next year.

The strategic and local highway network

2.24 The allocation would generate additional movements on the local and strategic highway network. However, an update to the Transport Strategy demonstrates that safe and suitable access can be achieved from Chignal Road, with pedestrian and cycle connections to Hollow Lane linking to existing public rights of way and nearby bus services.

2.25 As confirmed in response to 6.4, the Transport Strategy shows that the key junctions nearby have spare capacity and development of this scale would have a minimal impact.

2.26 Furthermore, there remains spare capacity for further development on the wider site if required. The Transport Technical Note confirms that Development Parcel 2 presented in the Vision Document Addendum (comprising around 200 dwellings) could also be delivered without requiring significant interventions at local junctions, assuming no modal shift. The same is true of Parcel 3a, comprising circa 164 homes, assuming that a minimal modal shift of 6% away from the 'business as usual' scenario can be achieved for the development, or there is a 5% modal shift generally in background traffic over time. Further phases can be delivered if greater modal shifts can be achieved or further highway interventions are made.

Other infrastructure including public transport, education, health, utilities and recreation

2.27 The allocation would increase demand for public transport, education, healthcare, utilities and recreational facilities. However, the site is accessible to existing C2 and C3 bus services, and an accompanying Transport Strategy identifies walking and cycling connections to nearby stops, with potential to extend the C2 service into the wider masterplan area, subject to operator agreement. Financial contributions can be made through S106 and CIL where needed to account of the impacts of the development.

2.28 160 dwellings would generate an approximate 47 primary and 31 secondary pupils. An Education Needs Assessment supporting the allocation identifies existing surpluses of 103 primary and 1,848 secondary places and concludes that the development would not require additional school provision beyond that already planned.

2.29 Furthermore, an Education Needs Assessment for the wider strategic masterplan demonstrates that up to 340 dwellings, inclusive of SGS18a, could be accommodated within existing and committed education provision. This broadly equates to the delivery of Parcels 1 and 2 in the Vision Document Addendum enclosed.

2.30 Development beyond this level would require the primary-school planned on the West Chelmsford development site to the south (Warren Farm) to be delivered first.

2.31 The masterplan will provide open space, walking routes and recreational opportunities and links to the extensive public footpath network in the wider area.

2.32 Healthcare and utility impacts are to be confirmed within the application stage. Accordingly, no overriding infrastructure constraint to the allocation, or to further appropriately phased growth within the wider site, has been identified.

Flood risk and prevention

2.33 The allocated site is not as materially constrained by fluvial flood risk. The site is entirely located within Flood Zone 1. There are limited areas of surface water risk around the perimeter of the site, reflective of existing drainage features which would be managed through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

2.34 Within the wider masterplan area, Flood Zones 2 and 3 are contained along the western boundary, associated with the tributary of the River Can and local watercourses. The strategic masterplan has been refined so that development parcels are located outside Flood Zones 2 and 3, in accordance with the Chelmsford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Land within the floodplain would form part of the green infrastructure network, providing opportunities for drainage, biodiversity, recreation and active travel.

Air quality, light and noise pollution

2.35 There is no evidence available that air quality, noise or light pollution would prevent development of the site. These matters are capable of being addressed through detailed design and appropriate planning conditions.

g. What mitigation measures would be necessary to ensure a sustainable form of development, and are they clearly set out?

2.36 Growth Site Policy 18a identifies extensive mitigation measures required by policy and we believe they are clearly set out.

2.37 Mitigation measures required to ensure a sustainable form of development include:

- Safe vehicular access from Chignal Road;

- Active travel provision, including pedestrian and cycle connections to Woodhall Hill and towards Mashbury Road, where there are existing public rights of way;
- Landscaping and reinforcement of the site boundaries, including the establishment of a frontage to Hollow Lane;
- Retention and enhancement of existing trees and hedgerows;
- Public open space and play provision;
- Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Sustainable flood-risk management and SuDS;
- Preservation of the settings of the listed buildings at Chobbings Farm and nearby non-designated heritage assets;
- Mineral Resource Assessment; and
- Archaeological Assessment.

2.38 The policy identifies the principal outcomes required but should retain sufficient flexibility for the detailed form and scale of the mitigation to be established through the development management process.

h. What are the main infrastructure requirements for the site, how were they identified, and how and when will they be delivered?

2.39 The site is less dependent on infrastructure interventions that many others. The principal transport requirements are a safe vehicular access from Woodhall Hill, pedestrian and cycle connections to surrounding neighbourhoods, appropriate crossings and access to existing bus services. These requirements were identified through site appraisal, consultation with Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council and the in the accompanying Transport Strategy. The Transport Strategy confirms that 160 dwellings can be accommodated without significant highway intervention. The new access, crossings and essential active-travel connections will be delivered before occupation, with wider crossing, public-rights-of-way, wayfinding and sustainable transport measures secured through conditions or planning obligations.

2.40 Later phases could extend this movement framework through further pedestrian, cycle and public-rights-of-way connections, infrastructure delivered alongside each phase. The principal transport requirements are clearly identified and capable of coordinated, phased delivery.

2.41 Non-transport infrastructure requirements may comprise contributions towards enhanced sport, leisure and recreation provision; education and early-years contributions; and community infrastructure, including healthcare where required. These requirements have been identified through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Additional Sites evidence and engagement with the relevant infrastructure providers.

2.42 The April 2026 Statement of Common Ground recognises that formal sports provision may be delivered through an appropriate financial contribution rather than on-site provision. A similarly flexible approach should apply to education and community infrastructure, with the form, scale and timing of provision determined through the planning application and secured by condition or planning obligation.

2.43 Accordingly, the principal infrastructure requirements have been identified and can be delivered flexibly in step with development, through on-site provision or proportionate financial contributions secured at appropriate occupation thresholds.

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