

Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan – Examination January 2015

Chichester District Council Response to Examiner’s Request (22 December 2014) re Crownhall Estates representations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The resubmission stage of the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan was held between 23 October and 4 December 2014. During that period Planit Consulting submitted representations to the Council on behalf of Crownhall Estates. These representations were extensive and included a joint legal opinion.
- 1.2 Following the close of the resubmission period, the Examiner, Janet Cheesley, confirmed to the Council that she was prepared to allow the Council to respond to the points raised in the legal opinion accompanying the representations submitted by Planit Consulting, particularly with regard to objectively assessed needs in relation to the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.3 This statement forms the Council’s response along with the legal advice dated 27 January 2015. Matters relating to the site selection methodology have not been addressed by this statement as this process was undertaken by the Parish.

2. Housing Figures

- 2.1 The Council’s most recent assessment of objectively assessed housing needs (OAN) identifies a requirement for 560-575 homes per year for Chichester District¹. Based on past rates of delivery, the Council has assumed that around 70 homes per year can be expected to come forward in the National Park area, leaving a residual housing requirement for up to 505 homes per year in the Chichester Local Plan area.

¹ Figures taken from Review of Objectively Assessed Housing Need in light of 2012-based Subnational Population Projections (GL Hearn, August 2014)

- 2.2 It should be emphasised that these OAN estimates are based on demographic projections (population change, migration and household formation rates) for Chichester District as a whole. The OAN figures cannot be readily disaggregated to the level of individual parishes or settlements, or to sub-areas of the district such as the North of the Plan area.
- 2.3 In preparing the Local Plan, the Council sought to accommodate the identified OAN as far as possible, taking account of the various constraints affecting the Plan area. The Planning Minister recently stated, in a letter to the chief executive of PINS, that housing needs assessment (SHMAs) should not be considered as a straightforward "proxy" for a final homes target. The Minister stated that Councils should *"take adequate time to consider whether environmental and policy constraints, such as green belt, will affect the final housing requirement"*.²
- 2.4 The housing numbers proposed for the different parishes reflected the settlement hierarchy identified in the Plan, taking account of the characteristics of different settlements, their range of local facilities (and accessibility to facilities elsewhere), potential constraints (environmental and infrastructure) and land availability which may affect their future growth. The SHLAA was one of the key inputs, however the availability of SHLAA sites did not determine the precise housing numbers proposed in the Plan, but was used more generally as a guide, indicating whether the housing numbers proposed were likely to be identifiable.
- 2.5 Parishes such as Loxwood that include larger Service Villages with a reasonable range of everyday facilities (e.g. post office/convenience store, primary school, community hall) were generally given an indicative figure of 50 dwellings in the South of the Plan area and 60 dwellings in the North of Plan area (reflecting fewer settlements and more limited housing opportunities in the North).

² Planning for Housing Standard Note SN/SC/3741, 31 December 2014 (House of Commons Library)

- 2.6 The Local Plan Key Policies Pre-Submission document which was submitted for examination in May 2014 provided for 6,973 homes (410 homes per year). Following the Inspector's comments at the Local Plan examination, the Council undertook a re-assessment of the evidence supporting the Local Plan. Based on this, the Council is now proposing modifications to the Local Plan which would increase the housing provision to 7,388 homes (435 homes per year).
- 2.7 The Council's re-assessment included a review of SHLAA sites to assess whether there was potential for increasing the Plan housing numbers. However, in the north of the Plan area, the level of housing proposed in the Plan already exceeded the total from potential SHLAA sites
- 2.8 Policy 4 of the draft Plan sets out the intended broad distribution of housing across different parts of the Plan area. This indicates that the North of the Plan area is expected to provide around 339 new homes. This figure reflected the projected housing delivery for the North of the Plan area at April 2012 (the base date used for the Local Plan housing figures).
- 2.9 Policy 5 makes provision for around 200 of this total to be provided on parish housing sites to be allocated in neighbourhood plans (or through a Site Allocations DPD). The remaining 139 homes are expected to come forward on windfall housing sites (including outstanding planning permissions). This figure was made up of 19 dwellings projected from planning permissions outstanding at 1 April 2012 and a further 120 dwellings projected to come forward on small windfall sites of less than 6 dwellings. The small sites windfall allowance was based on past housing completion rates and is explained in more detail in the Council's Housing Implementation Strategy (paragraphs 3.15–3.20). The Local Plan includes no specific allowance for windfall sites of 6 or more dwellings, although these will potentially come

forward, as demonstrated by the recent permission granted on appeal for 10 mobile homes at Greenways Nursery, Wisborough Green³.

2.10 The latest estimate for projected housing delivery in the North of the Plan area is shown below. The figures are taken from the updated Table 7.1 as presented in the Local Plan Key Policies Pre-Submission Proposed Modifications (January 2015). This shows that the currently projected delivery in the North of the Plan area falls 24 dwellings short of the indicative 339 homes identified in Policy 4. However, projected housing supply in the Plan area as a whole is now projected to exceed the Plan target by 403 dwellings.

	<i>North of Plan Area</i>	<i>Plan Area total</i>
Local Plan housing target		
Total Housing Provision 2012-2029	339	7,388
less Homes built 2012-2014	8	509
Remaining Local Plan housing requirement 2014-2029	331	6,879
Housing land supply		
<i>Existing housing commitments & windfall allowance</i>		
Planning permissions & identified housing sites	122	3,107
Small sites windfall allowance	87	584
Total yield from existing sources	209	3,691
<i>Remaining housing to be provided through the Local Plan</i>		
Large strategic allocations	0	2,750
Allocations at settlement hubs	0	360
Parish housing sites	98	481

³ Appeal Ref: APP/L3815/C/14/2215278

Total Strategic & Parish Housing	98	3,591
Total Projected Housing Supply 2014-2029	307	7,282
Housing Supply compared to Local Plan target	-24	+403

2.11 In this context, the Council considers that the small shortfall in projected supply in the North of the Plan area is not a major cause for concern. It is inevitable that the level of windfall housing will vary from year to year and the 339 dwellings is only an approximate figure. The recent permission granted at Greenways Nursery, Wisborough Green demonstrates that windfall sites will come forward over and above the Local Plan allowance (which relates to sites of less than 6 dwellings). Furthermore, there is scope for additional housing not identified in neighbourhood plans to come forward from other sources such as rural exception sites.

2.12 Similarly the parish housing numbers specified in Local Plan Policy 5 are indicative figures that can potentially be exceeded. For example, the Kirdford Neighbourhood Plan (which was formally 'made' in July 2014) includes policies that are worded to provide a minimum of 60 homes, allowing scope to exceed the Local Plan parish housing numbers on allocated sites. Policy 1 in the draft Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan is also worded to provide for a minimum of 60 houses within the (proposed) settlement boundary.

3. Conclusion

3.1 For the reasons set out above, the Council remains confident that a total of around 339 homes will be delivered in the North of the Plan area over the period to 2029, through a combination of sites in adopted and merging neighbourhood plans and windfall developments. Whilst accepting that the site promoted by Crownhall Estates would boost the identified housing supply, the Council believes the site is not required to meet the Local Plan housing provision as currently proposed.

3.2 Even if was, the relevance of that to the whether the Examiner is entitled to conclude that the basic conditions are met has to be considered on the correct basis as detailed in the legal advice accompanying these representations.