

MATTER 3: HOUSING NEED

**North Essex Authorities Shared Strategic (Section 1) Plan –
Further Hearing Sessions**

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF L&Q, CIRRUS LAND LIMITED, AND
GATEWAY 120**

December 2019

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Q1. Is there evidence to demonstrate that there been a meaningful change since June 2018 in the situation regarding housing need in North Essex, particularly in respect of: a) published population and household projections? b) the impact of UPC on population and household projections, especially in Tendring District? c) market signals and affordability?6

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of L&Q, Cirrus Land Limited, and Gateway 120, who together form the West Tey Partners behind the majority landholdings within the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community (CBBGC).
- 1.2 This Statement is made following the re-opening of the Examination into the North Essex Authorities ('NEAs' or 'the Councils') Shared Strategic (Section 1) Plan. We note and approve of the scope of examination hearings as detailed by yourself in the 'Matters, Issues and Questions'. This Statement covers those questions posed within Matter 3 – Housing Need.
- 1.3 The West Tey Partners have been active participants throughout the Examination of the Section 1 Plan, working with the NEAs where appropriate to demonstrate the deliverability of CBBGC in line with the principles established by the North Essex Garden Community Charter, reflected in draft policy, and echoed throughout our promotion of the site.
- 1.4 In promoting West Tey, we appreciate that this land does not comprise the entirety of the 'Area of Search' included within the Plan for a new garden community. Furthermore, whilst our capacity study work has shown land being promoted capable of accommodating approximately 17,000 homes as part of a comprehensive new community in line with the principles set by the NEAs, it does not amount to the full 24,000 homes stated as the top-end of draft policy.
- 1.5 Accordingly, what we are promoting has, in places, differences to that put forward by the NEAs. Despite this, it remains true that the proposals promoted by the West Tey Partners would deliver a garden community within the development parameters, and to the quality of that sort in draft policy.
- 1.6 Where amendments have been proposed to policy, this is to ensure accordance with national policy and provide sufficient comfort that should critical infrastructure not be delivered, the proposed garden community remains to a sustainable scale.
- 1.7 We continue to work productively with the NEAs and NEGC Ltd to bring forward a new garden community at West Tey.

2 HOUSING NEED

Q1. Is there evidence to demonstrate that there been a meaningful change since June 2018 in the situation regarding housing need in North Essex, particularly in respect of: a) published population and household projections? b) the impact of UPC on population and household projections, especially in Tendring District? c) market signals and affordability?

- 2.1 The NEA's evidence utilised 2014-based household projections as a baseline for calculating objectively assessed housing need for the Plan-area. Since the last round of Examination in Public (EiP) hearings, and the conclusions reached by the Inspector in relation to housing need¹, ONS has published updated projections, as well as mid-year population estimates².
- 2.2 Much has been made of the appropriateness of the methodology imposed by ONS in both its population and household projections since taking responsibility for their production from MHCLG. This has resulted in Government confirming that until further notice, the 2014-based projections should remain the demographic starting point for calculating the standard method³. We would suggest as a matter of principle the same should be said for Local Plans examined under the 2012 NPPF and supporting guidance. In line with the conclusions of other Inspectors, it will have to be determined whether the updated projections have resulted in a "meaningful change" in the housing situation in for the NEAs⁴.
- 2.3 Current calculations for the standard methodology would result in an increase in housing need for the Plan area of approximately 625 dwellings per annum against the current Section 1 Local Plan housing targets. Whilst this will be addressed in future reviews there is the risk that over the next five years, actual housing need is not addressed and affordability continues to worsen.
- 2.4 Updated evidence published since the last EiP hearings show worsening affordability conditions within all three local authorities⁵. The NEAs took a positive approach to setting housing requirements and in identifying the garden communities have committed to the principle of seeing the delivery of new housing at pace.
- 2.5 The garden community movement is in accordance with Government policy to address increasing unaffordability through significantly boosting the supply of housing. Whilst these are long-term

¹ IED/012

² 2016-based household projections and 2018-midyear projections.

³ PPG 2a-004-20190220

⁴ PPG 2a-016-20150227

⁵ Median house prices to gross annual workplace earnings (affordability ratios) 2017 to 2018 figures: Braintree 9.5-10.17, Colchester 8.99-9.51, Tendring 9.08-9.1.

proposals to be delivered across a number of plan-periods, they maintain an important role in meeting the current housing needs of North Essex within the Plan period. All measures to support early phases of delivery supported by appropriate levels of infrastructure, as detailed in our Phased Delivery Report should be supported and facilitated through policy.

- 2.6 We support measures to result in a positive approach to housing delivery and addressing worsening affordability in the area. In particular we would encourage the NEAs, through the Local Plan, to reflect the ability of CBBGC to release early phases of development before the necessity to deliver strategic infrastructure.