

**Examination of the North Essex Authorities
Shared Strategic (Section 1) Local Plan**

Andrewsfield New Settlement Consortium & Countryside Properties

Matter 4: Build Out Rates

Responses to Hearing Statements

The responses below are limited to comments on specific points raised within the hearing statements prepared by Mike Lambert and CAUSE only.

Response to Hearing Statement by Mike Lambert FRSA MRTPI and by CAUSE

Mr Lambert states (page 2, paragraph 6 hearing statement) that *“All the evidence points to a minimum of 10 years from the Adoption of the Local Plan to the first completion on the GCs. The consequence is that they will have little or no impact on housing delivery in the Plan period, thus confirming the Plan is not soundly based”*.

CAUSE state (page 1, final paragraph) that *“It is very important to ensure that an agreed build out rate is not over-optimistic.”*

ANSC and Countryside strongly disagree that the first completion of housing at the WBGC development will take anywhere near 10 years to achieve following adoption of the Local Plan. ANSC and Countryside also fully support the lead in time and the build out rates identified by the NEAs for the WBGC (Garden Communities Trajectory EXD/070) for the reasons set out below.

Lead in Time

The NEAs preferred route to delivery of the Garden Communities is via the use of a Local Development Order (LDO) although the NEAs do acknowledge that the Garden Communities can be delivered through a more traditional private sector or public-private partnership delivery route (paras 4.2.11 and 4.2.12 of the NEAs December hearing statement). The NEAs set out the anticipated planning milestones towards commencement under both scenarios. It is notable that commencement of development is assumed to be only 6 months later via the private or private-public sector partnership route. The milestones under the non LDO route are as follows:

- Local Plan adoption mid-2020
- Preparation and adoption of masterplan and DPD – 2019 to mid-2022
- Preparation and approval of outline planning application and satisfactory s106 agreement mid-2020 to late 2022
- Reserved matters approvals – 2023 onwards
- Commencement of development – early 2024 (according with EXD/070 Garden Communities Trajectory)

Countryside supports the above timescale as entirely achievable. Some 'parallel working' will be necessary, as is common practice, in that stages will need to over-lap and not be totally consecutive. This is already partially reflected in the NEA milestones above, as preparation of the WBGC Issues and Options DPD (EB/036) has already been completed jointly by BDC and UDC, as well as the further work undertaken via the 'Infrastructure Planning, Phasing and Delivery', July 2019 (EB/088) produced by AECOM together with NEGC's public engagement events. The early stages of application preparation will also need to start 'at risk' before the DPD is finalised. Preparation of detailed planning applications will need to commence well ahead of the outline application being approved, or indeed a 'hybrid application' could be prepared including the detailed design of the early highway and drainage infrastructure; either route will enable an early start to be made to on-site construction. This overall approach is one Countryside has adopted on numerous occasions, including with Beaulieu, and Great Kneighton. At Beaulieu, a detailed application was submitted for the highway works to allow the two key vehicular accesses to be formed, over a year ahead of outline consent being granted.

It is important that a decision on the delivery body / vehicle must be made promptly. Countryside see no reason for NEGC Ltd to be involved in WBGC since Countryside can deliver a Garden Community entirely in conformity with the North Essex Garden Community Charter. Furthermore, if the decision is not for a private sector developer to take the lead, the role of the developer must be clearly defined at the outset; and Countryside would wish to ensure that their role is cognisant of their experience and reputation in this field. Countryside worked very closely with both Chelmsford Council and Cambridge Council (and Cambridgeshire Horizons) on their schemes at Beaulieu, Chelmsford, and Great Kneighton, Cambridge; this has played a large part in the success of these very high quality developments.

Build Out Rates

The housing delivery rates at North East Chelmsford since 2015/16 have been as follows:

2015/16 – 71 (note: there is always a 'lag time' in the first year or two (as acknowledged in the NEA table at Annex A, which shows year 1: 100, Year 2: 200: Year 3 onwards 300) and also this early period included delivery of the substantial neighbourhood centre.

2016/17 - 282

2017/18 - 372 (including 4 Countryside Properties outlets at Beaulieu: Beaulieu Chase, Heath, Keep and Oaks, each having very distinctive styles)

2018/19 – 270 (note: during this period Countryside were engaged delivering considerable highway infrastructure which unlocks future phases)

The above demonstrates that a single developer can provide different products and achieve high completions on one site. Delivery at Beaulieu will start to increase again through 2020/21 as a 152 unit parcel has been sold to Cala, a parcel has been sold to Countryside's JV partner

L&Q for 300 dwellings, and a recent sale has been made to a care home operator, Anchor, for 82 homes.

In the case of Beaulieu, it is noteworthy that within the first 4.5 years following approval of the outline planning application in March 2014, the following community uses were also delivered: a neighbourhood centre built by Countryside including community centre, an education centre, a day nursery and several local retail units (note the health centre will be part of this area but the health authority did not require it sooner) with apartments above, primary school and early years facilities, strategic scale public open spaces, and the secondary school was at an advanced stage (schools delivered by the County Council but sites provided and serviced by Countryside). From an early stage the bus service to Chelmsford town centre and railway station was up and running.

A significant part of the WBGC will be delivered during the Plan period up to 2033 including:

- A minimum of 2,060 new homes within Braintree District;
- 52,500 sq. m of employment space;
- Supporting transport infrastructure including local bus services from day one of the WBGC development as set out in the Statement of Common Ground with the NEAs. This may involve using innovative methods at the very early stages of the development, similar to that at the Countryside development at Marham Park in Bury St Edmunds where a bus is owned by Countryside, and run via The Voluntary Network (The Voluntary Network is a registered charity which specialises in running accessible community transport across Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, improving local transport links within these area) so operating as a 'demand responsive' service. In addition, Countryside has significant experience of working with bus companies to deliver early transport services to new residents. For example at the Beaulieu development Countryside worked closely with the bus company to provide free bus passes to all residents for the first year. The necessary funding for local bus services and contributions towards the rapid transit system are reflected in the per household costs identified in the NEA Order of Cot Estimate (EB087) that have been adopted for the viability analysis. Countryside have assumed that the early phases of the delivery of the WBGC will be associated with the need for introducing additional bus services to complement existing services and that in time, as demand grows with the delivery of the WBGC these services would be expected to grow and become commercially self-sufficient.
- Early phases of green public open space of strategic scale. Countryside intends to provide a Country Park or similar and to deliver this within the Plan period to 2033;
- New schools and nurseries commensurate with the number of dwellings/residents; Supporting neighbourhood centres to include community, leisure and health care provision.

Overall Phasing Strategy

The key guiding principles are to:

- Begin construction where development can take advantage of existing infrastructure and where new and existing residents can benefit from any new facilities;
- Provide the transport facilities – particularly by phasing of the road infrastructure;
- Design and construct an appropriate amount of the landscape and public realm proposals simultaneously with (and where possible in advance of) development, to help create the identity for the Garden Village and provide distinctive character areas;
- Ensure the appropriate level of employment, community, education and neighbourhood facilities are in place to meet demand for the development.

Quantum of Development

The NEAs have identified the WBGC as a site for strategic housing and employment growth. The Plan identifies the site for around 10,000 new homes with a minimum of 2,060 in the Plan period, employment areas, local centres and open space.

Delivery

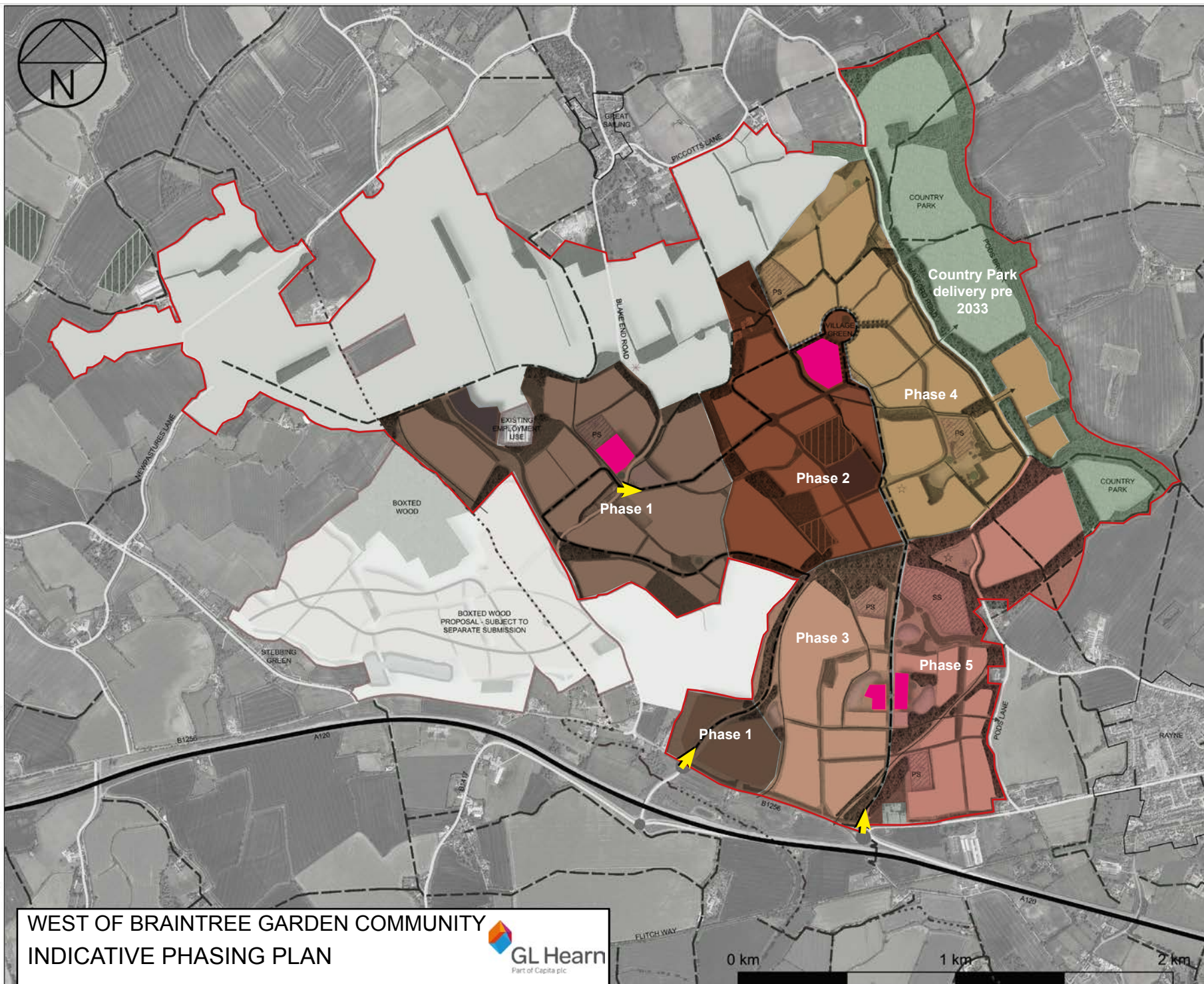
The diagram (appended) shows ANSC and Countryside's proposed indicative delivery strategy is in five broad phases to provide the housing, employment, transport and social infrastructure in the Plan period and beyond. A key decision is how to access the site with least disruption to the existing area whilst ensuring that the entrance/s are in a suitable location in marketing terms. In turn careful consideration must be given to separation of construction traffic from emerging residential areas and resident and visitor traffic. At this site, and due largely to its scale, it is anticipated that two, first phase accesses will be provided as shown on the diagram, at points indicated by the illustrative plan with one off Blake End Road and the other off the B1256 which connects in turn with the A120. The third indicated entrance point allows for mineral extraction traffic to be segregated. This approach will help to accelerate early delivery of homes and jobs on site.

The successful delivery of housing, employment and infrastructure at Beaulieu and Skyline 120 taken with the existing rates of completions currently running at an average of around 250 homes per annum at Beaulieu clearly demonstrates the North Essex Authorities trajectory is achievable.

For the above reasons, ANSC and Countryside object to the hearing statements by Mike Lambert and CAUSE and submit that the WBGC will be able to be delivered in accordance with the NEAs Garden Communities Trajectory (EXD/070). Upon analysis of all the various reports, quite apart from current local experience of Countryside, the delivery figure of 300 dpa is realistic for a site of the size and nature of the WBGC.

Word Count (Responses): 1,514

December 2019



WEST OF BRAINTREE GARDEN COMMUNITY
INDICATIVE PHASING PLAN



Legend

- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Phase 4
- Phase 5
- District Centres
- Indicative Primary Site Entrances