Hearing Session 3: Housing Delivery

10.00am Thursday 3 April 2014

1. Expected housing delivery rate

What is the year-by-year trajectory of housing numbers (i.e. new units per annum) that the Plan seeks to deliver through the Plan period? Does the intended delivery rate vary during different phases of the Plan?

What is the rationale for this delivery trajectory; and what evidence suggests that it is realistic?

Does this trajectory fit with the phasing of development for individual allocated sites as set out in the Delivery and Implementation Table (pp133-136)? If not, why not? Does this undermine the consistency, coherence and effectiveness of the Plan?

Savills Response

Like our submissions for other site, our response to the RDLDP did not refer to phasing. We considered that the plan should focus on overall provision and that, because the plan ends on 2026, any further breakdown of delivery rates was, effectively, pointless.

As with our other submissions, if phasing is to be retained, it should be more flexible and broader in scope or definition. It should also avoid a disaggregation of each specific site contribution for reasons which are obvious from the schedules that are included at the back of the plan.

If that option is pursued, a better breakdown for each key stage of the plan would be to recognise that the first five years will be slower as the development industry continues to recover and starts to perform. At the moment the phasing proposed by the Council goes someway in this respect – it sees 31% of development in the first five years (2011-16), 46% in the second (2016-21) and 23% in the third (2021-26).

As we have said elsewhere, a better approach (which would also reflect the period that can be most confidently predicted) would be to lower the expectation for the first five year period to 15 - 20%, then move up to 40 – 45% and then go to 35 – 45% depending on the figures chosen and delivered for the previous two periods. This approach would be more accurate and provide more flexibility in the short term.
2. Evidence that the Plan’s sites will deliver

What evidence demonstrates that the Plan’s allocated sites can be relied upon to deliver the right mix and numbers of units through the Plan period (i.e. in accordance with the delivery rates sought)?

What assessment has been undertaken of likely development trajectories for each allocated site, taking into account factors such as:

- Land condition and remediation/site preparation requirements;
- Site infrastructure requirements;
- Acquisition, scheme design and approval process;
- Developer’s sales expectations and construction/completion rate intentions, where a developer is in place?

A high proportion of the housing anticipated to be delivered is on sites already having planning permission. What development progress has been achieved to date on each of these sites? Does this provide confidence that housing at an appropriate rate will be delivered on these sites?

What evidence is available to demonstrate that a 5 year housing land supply can be maintained, given the housing delivery rate sought by the plan and the heavy reliance on sites which are already available for development?

What flexibility measures are built into the Plan to enable an appropriate response if allocated sites fail to deliver housing at the anticipated rate?

Savills Response

Jubilee Park is a very firm commitment – key approvals are in place for a scheme of about 900 new homes, land preparation is advanced and infrastructure installation is underway. Proposals from three major local and national housebuilding companies – Taylor Wimpey, Bellway and Linc have or will soon be submitted to the Council and new homes will be delivered next year.

The sites owner and master developer, Walters, is also committed to full development of the site and there are no constraints on development caused by infrastructure capacity or the local environment. The Council and the Inspector can therefore be very confident that the site will be completed. Interest is already substantial and experience of development in the surrounding area also indicates that high rates of growth can be achieved (as these could quite possibly exceed what is expected in the LDP).
As we said earlier, the progress made on this site and some of the other key commitments contained within the plan should provide the confidence that the LDP’s sites can be relied upon to deliver the housing required over the plan period.

This can all be achieved without triggering any unacceptable environmental impacts. The grant of outline planning permission was based on a comprehensive assessment of the site, the area it sits within and the physical and social infrastructure that serves it. Furthermore, key technical issues - and in particular flood risk, drainage, transportation and ground conditions - have been thoroughly investigated and solutions have been devised, all of which are acceptable to the Council and relevant statutory consultees. As such it is also recognised that there are no major constraints to the development of the site and certainly none of the structural or procedural issues described in the questions above or found elsewhere in the hearing session agendas.

In terms of delivery, the position set out in the RDLDP proposes the delivery of 780 new homes on the site over the plan period, delivered as follows:

- 80 homes to 2016;
- 350 homes between 2016 and 2021 (i.e. 70 a year); and
- 350 homes between 2021 and 2026 (a further 70 a year).

These figures reflect a discussion about the site that took place as part of the latest Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS). The site was considered by the study group even though it was excluded from this year’s figures because of the date planning permission was granted.

As we say above these rates could in fact be conservative and full development of the site (which would deliver 900 homes) is a realistic possibility over the plan period. The only thing that could interfere is in fact the allocation of other land – which for these reasons is clearly not necessary (and underscores the risks associated with an unrealistically high level of growth).

In summary the site has the potential to deliver a large number of new homes – and a full range and mixture of properties. Walters is currently making excellent progress and – as reported in the statement for session 2 – it is clear the site is on target and will deliver the level of housing set out above. In this light it is clear that the Council is right to rely on the number of homes the RDLDP expects Jubilee Park to deliver over the plan period.