

Gladman Hearing Statement
Newcastle City Council
Development and Allocations Plan
2015-2030

Examination

Matter 3: Housing



June 2019

1 MATTER 3: HOUSING

Issue: Whether the approach towards the supply and delivery of housing land is justified, effective and consistent with national policy, in order to ensure the timely delivery of the CSUCP housing requirement for Newcastle.

Q3.2. Is there a sufficient range and choice of sites allocated in the Plan in terms of location, type and size, to provide adequate flexibility to meet the CSUCP housing requirement for Newcastle to 2030? Would the housing allocations ensure that the Plan would be consistent with the Framework, insofar as it seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing?

- 1.1.1 The Council's Housing, Employment and Mixed-Use Allocations background paper (2018) states that Policy DM5 provides a capacity of 4,200 dwellings and an additional supply of 100% buffer (over the residual requirement). In principle, Gladman are supportive of the buffer provided in the Council's housing land supply which will help to provide some flexibility in response to changes in circumstance. However, the housing requirement contained in the CSUCP should be considered as a minimum rather than a maximum to provide choice and competition in the market place.
- 1.1.2 Whilst there is no numerical formula for determining the appropriate quantum for such a contingency, the Council should be mindful that the housing requirement in the CSUCP is heavily reliant on large scale strategic sites and the majority of sites identified in the Development and Allocations Plan (DAP) are located on previously developed land. Gladman has concerns regarding the deliverability of the sites selected and consider further flexibility is required by the Plan to ensure housing needs are delivered in full over the plan period. This will be discussed in greater detail in response to questions 3.3 and 3.7 below.
- 1.1.3 Furthermore, it should be noted that figure 2 of the background paper referred to above only takes into account the gross housing completions and does not take into consideration net losses arising from regeneration schemes. Gladman consider further clarity should be provided as to the amount of dwelling losses that will be expected over the plan period.

Q3.3. What is the expected timescale for development in terms of lead in times and annual delivery rates, are these assumptions realistic and supported by evidence? Is the supply of housing sufficiently flexible in the event of non-delivery of allocated sites?

- 1.1.4 The Council will need to ensure that the DAP provides a sufficient range and choice of sites allocated in the Plan in terms of location, type and size to meet the needs of the City. In allocating sites, the Council should ensure that realistic delivery assumptions around lead-in times and build out rates are

used for the proposed allocations, especially given the number of sites located on previously developed land and the level of infrastructure requirements associated with them. It does not appear that the Council has provided an up-to-date break down for the delivery of individual sites over the plan period and it is therefore difficult to provide an in depth response on this matter.

1.1.5 Although Gladman does not wish to comment on the proposed allocations, we consider further flexibility is required. Should any delays occur against the initial housing delivery projections this would result in a situation whereby the development needs of that area are unlikely to be achieved over the plan period. It would also mean that the Council's ability to demonstrate a flexible and rolling five-year housing land supply would be put in jeopardy.

1.1.6 In order to secure the deliverability of the Plan's housing needs, Gladman consider that the DAP should allow for additional flexibility so that sites, not allocated through the DAP, can come forward to accommodate any slippage which may occur in respect of the identified sites. This will also aid the Council in delivering additional housing in sustainable locations both in mix and location of sites across the settlement hierarchy.

Q3.7. A considerable number of the proposed site allocations appear to be rolled forward from the Walker Riverside and Benwell Scotswood Area Action Plan which were adopted in 2007 and 2009 respectively. Are these sites deliverable?

1.1.7 The definition of 'deliverable' has been updated as part of the changes to the NPPF. Importantly, the new definition places the onus on the local planning authority to demonstrate that sites within its Housing Land Supply are capable of coming forward.

1.1.8 Given that many of the sites having been identified more than 10 years ago and rolled forward from the Walker Riverside and Benwell Scotswood Area Action Plans this casts significant doubt as to whether they can be considered deliverable over the next five years. Additional evidence will need to be provided to justify these sites for their inclusion within the DAP and to allow the Inspector to find the DAP sound on this matter.

Q3.10. Is the Plan effective and consistent with paragraph 16(d) of the Framework with regard to the lack of indicative housing numbers for housing site allocations in the Plan? Are the assumptions regarding the capacity of the sites in terms of housing numbers and net developable areas justified and what are the assumptions based on?

1.1.9 The DAP should include enough opportunities to ensure identified housing needs are met in full by providing a clear framework that ensures policies contained in the Local Plan can be applied consistently as a whole. Gladman consider that for the sake of clarity and to ensure compliance with paragraph 16(d) of the Framework that indicative housing numbers should be included within Policy

DM5 to provide both applicants and decision makers assurance over the quantum of development that will be expected to be delivered on each of the identified sites.

Q.3.14. Should reference be made in policy DM5 to the scope for provision of further housing on unallocated sites within the plan period?

1.1.10 Yes. Further to the comments made above, Gladman consider that it would be prudent to include additional wording within Policy DM5 which allows for the consideration of sites not identified by the Plan to ensure the minimum number of homes needed is delivered. Indeed, Gladman refer the Council to Policy HOU5 of the Ashford Local Plan which was recently found sound at examination¹:

“Proposals for residential development adjoining or close to the existing built up confines of any named settlement will be acceptable... provided that each of the following criteria is met:

- a) The scale of development proposed is proportionate in size of the settlement and level, type and quality of day to day service provision currently available, and commensurate with the ability of those services to absorb the level of development in combination with any planned allocations in the Local Plan and committed development in liaison with service providers;*
- b) The site is within easy walking distance of basic day to day services in the nearest settlement and/or has access to sustainable methods of transport to access a range of services;*
- c) The development is able to be safely accessed from the local road network and the traffic generated can be accommodated on the local and wider road network without adversely affecting the character of the surrounding area;*
- d) The development is located where it is possible to maximise the use of public transport, cycling and walking to access services;*
- e) Conserves and enhances the natural environment and preserves or enhances any heritage assets in the locality; and*
- f) The development (and any associated infrastructure) is of a high-quality design and meets the following requirements;*
 - i) It sits sympathetically within the wider landscape;*
 - ii) It preserves or enhances the setting of the nearest settlement;*
 - iii) It includes an appropriately sized and designed landscape buffer to the open countryside;*

¹ Ashford Local Plan Inspectors Report – Paragraph 184-190

- iv) *It is consistent with local character and built form, including scale, bulk and the materials used;*
- v) *It does not adversely impact on neighbouring uses or a good standard of amenity for nearby residents;*
- vi) *It would conserve biodiversity interests on the site and/or adjoining area and not adversely affect the integrity of internal and nationally protected sites in line with Policy.”*

1.1.11 Gladman consider that the adoption of a similar approach consistent with the relevant circumstances of the local area will ensure the housing requirement is met as a minimum and would provide greater scope for flexibility in decision making. It would also enable a higher level of development to come forward in each area than outlined in the Local Plan where it is needed and determined to be sustainable. Further, it would allow for sustainable development to be delivered in rural areas to ensure the vitality and vibrancy of rural areas remains which is necessary to ensure delivery of rural housing needs which may not be met by the proposed allocations and commitments.

1.1.12 In addition, a review mechanism linked to the Plan’s monitoring should be included within the DAP should it become apparent that the proposed allocations are not delivering the necessary number of homes anticipated. This will ensure that the Council will take swift action to remedy any shortfall in its housing land supply.

1.1.13 A review policy would need to be clear, easily understandable and effective. Specifically the triggers for a review need to be meaningful, have teeth and contain an end date that is in the control of the local planning authority. The policy should also include consequences for failing to meet the target dates.

Accessible and Adaptable housing (Policy DM6)

Q.316. Is policy DM6 positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy and guidance and with the CSUCP?

1.1.14 Policy DM6 is not considered to be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy and the guidance contained in the CSUCP.

1.1.15 Policy CS11 (Providing a range and choice of housing) of the CSUCP only seeks to ‘encourage’ the provision of accessible homes, it does not however require the application of these standards on all development of 11 or more dwellings. The reasoning behind the Council’s decision to pursue Policy DM6 is borne from an ageing population, this in itself is not a sufficient reason to require a policy requirement of 25% of all qualifying development to meet the M4(2) standards. Indeed, Gladman note the Council’s response to Gladman’s Regulation 19 representations within which the Council state *“The Council agrees that an ageing population alone is not a justification for the need for*

adapted housing, but evidence that the ageing population will require more adapted housing is important." Inline with our response to the Regulation 19 consultation, these technical standards have been deliberately set as optional which if to be included as a policy in the DAP would require robust evidence. Gladman does not consider the evidence supporting this policy is sufficient in accordance with the guidance in the PPG².

- 1.1.16 In its current form the effect of this policy will likely result in placing undue policy burdens on developers and may potentially threaten the viability of sustainable development proposals. Please see response to question 3.17 for further details.

Q3.17. Is there a clearly identified need for 25% of all new homes on developments of 11 or more housing units to be built to accessible and adaptable standard and is this supported by viability evidence?

- 1.1.17 Gladman refer to the Viability and Deliverability Report 2018³ which highlights that there are viability issues within Newcastle and Gateshead and specifically sets out that the 25% accessible and adaptable homes standard is not viable for any scheme in the low-mid, low urban/suburban areas and for a 100 dwelling scheme is not viable in any area of the urban/suburban areas tested. It is clear from this that the Council's own evidence is not supportive of the proposed policy requirements and that this could hinder the deliver of homes.

Q.3.18. Should there be any flexibility in Policy DM6?

- 1.1.18 Yes. Whilst Gladman recognise the importance of delivering housing to assist in meeting the needs for older people and those with mobilities issues, the Framework is clear that policies seeking to implement the optional technical standards for accessible and adaptable housing should only be pursued if this would address an identified need and would not harm the viability of development proposals.
- 1.1.19 Given that the Council's own evidence highlights viability pressures associated with the delivery of M4(2) homes, Gladman believe it would be prudent if this policy was deleted in its current form in favour of a more flexible approach to delivering M4(2) homes consistent with the flexible approach contained in the CSUCP. The following wording is put forward for consideration:

"Development proposals which include an element of homes inline with the accessible and adaptable standard will be supported"

² PPG Reference ID: 56-007-20150327

³ See Section 8: Plan viability testing

Space Standards (Policy DM7)**Q3.22. Has the need to use the NDSS and the effect of Policy DM7 on viability been adequately demonstrated?**

- 1.1.20 Policy DM7 requires all development to meet the minimum internal floorspace standards set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). The Council's justification for the inclusion of Policy DM7 is set out in 'Addressing Housing Needs and Standards' background paper. The evidence is reliant on the findings of the SHMA (2017) which considered a two-year period and 1,544 cases. It highlights that of the properties sampled 41% meet the NDSS. The collection of this evidence does not in itself identify a need for NDSS standards as required by the PPG.
- 1.1.21 Gladman note that Policy CS11 of the CSUCP sought to provide a range and choice of housing to meet the needs of residents. It does not however seek to meet this requirement through the optional technical standards. Accordingly, it is not considered that the need for Policy DM7 has been demonstrated by the Council's evidence as required by national guidance. In order to demonstrate the need for NDSS it is expected that market indicators should be used which would assess the quality of life/reduced sales and where standards are not being met. This evidence has not been provided.
- 1.1.22 As highlighted in response to Policy DM6, Gladman have concerns with the assumptions made with regards to development viability in the Councils Viability Assessment. Whilst the Council consider that NDSS can be provided viably and would not undermine the overall deliverability of the Plan, the assumptions made in response to M4(2) standards would highlight the inaccuracies of the assessment. By requiring NDSS on all development this will likely impact development viability in combination with other plan objectives. As such, Gladman consider that a cautionary approach is required, and more flexibility needs to be included within the Policy.