CHESTERFIELD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
MATTER 6 – HOUSING LAND SUPPLY (HLS)

Inspector’s issues and questions in bold type.

This Hearing Statement is made for and on behalf of the HBF which should be read in conjunction with our representations to the pre submission Local Plan consultation dated 22nd February 2019. This representation answers specific questions as set out in the Inspector’s Matters, Issues & Questions document dated 9th August 2019.

We will need to reach a conclusion on whether the Plan’s housing requirement of 4,374 dwellings (Policy LP1) is sound. However, without prejudice to that main issue and working on the assumption that it is soundly-based:

6.1 What is the housing land supply position as of 1 April 2019? – was this updated as part of housing topic paper?

The Council should provide an up dated HLS position as of 1st April 2019 (preferably before the Matter 6 Hearing Session to be held on 5th November 2019). The Housing Topic Paper sets out an overall HLS of 5,450 dwellings (as at 1st April 2018) for 2018 – 2033 comprising of 550 consents and 4,900 dwellings on allocations but excluding any windfalls estimated as 34 dwellings per annum.

6.2 How many homes have been completed since the start of the plan period and what definition/methodology of “completion” has been applied?

The Housing Topic Paper identifies 212 completions in 2018 / 19 since the start of the plan period (assumed to be 2018). The Council has not set out its definition of “completion” in the Housing Topic Paper. The HBF would expect a completed dwelling to be ready for occupation.

6.3 Does the Plan illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery through a trajectory and set out a housing implementation strategy describing how a five year supply will be maintained (NPPF paras 73, 74 and 75)? On submission, the Plan does not contain a housing trajectory. Does Appendix 2 of the Housing Topic Paper (June 2019) present a sound trajectory?

The submitted Local Plan does not include a housing trajectory as set out in the 2019 NPPF a housing trajectory should be included (para 73). The trajectory in Appendix 2 of the Housing Topic Paper would form the basis for such a trajectory if proven sound after robust testing of assumptions during the Local Plan Examination.
6.4 In general terms completions since 2011/12 (a period of relative economic stability) have been averaging around the 150 dwellings per annum mark, notwithstanding a 2013 Core Strategy and evidence that the Council has permitted schemes in the absence of a 5-year housing land supply. Against this background is the housing topic paper trajectory realistic to forecast a significant increase in delivery, peaking at 800 dwellings per annum in 2022/23?

The realism of the Council’s housing trajectory as set out in the Housing Topic Paper is dependant on the accuracy of the Council’s assumptions on lead in times and delivery rates of individual housing sites included in that trajectory. It is critical that these assumptions are realistic and supported by parties responsible for housing delivery on individual sites. The realism of the Council’s assumptions will be proven in answer to Question 6.7 below.

6.5 Is the plan’s submitted provision for a supply buffer of some 20% above the figure of 4,374 set out in Policy LP1 justified, effective and positively prepared?

The provision of a buffer to the Council’s HLS is justified, effective and positively prepared. A buffer provides flexibility to respond to changing circumstances, to treat the housing requirement as a minimum rather than a maximum and to provide choice and competition in the land market. There is no numerical formula to determine the appropriate quantum for a buffer but a high dependency upon one or relatively few large strategic sites or particular settlements / localities necessitates greater numerical flexibility than if HLS is more diversified. The HBF is supportive of as large a contingency as possible to achieve maximum flexibility.

6.6 In applying the NPPFs definition of deliverable, would there be a deliverable supply of housing for at least five years upon plan adoption? Does the Plan strike the right balance between providing sufficient sites for genuine, early choice and competition for the housing market, including smaller sites, whilst maintaining focus on larger, strategic brownfield and regeneration sites?

The Council’s 5 YHLS Statement 1/4/19 to 31/3/24 published 29th May 2019 identifies a 5 YHLS of 6.88 years based on LHN figure of 240 dwellings per annum. The HBF agrees with the Council’s use of a 20% buffer in the calculation but note that the recouping of shortfalls in delivery since the start of the plan period are incorrectly excluded from the calculation. The Council has not provided a 5 YHLS position based on its proposed housing requirement of 265 dwellings per annum. The HBF may wish to make oral representations on any forthcoming new evidence during the Examination Hearing Sessions.

The Council has proposed a variety of housing sites for allocation however to promote the development of a good mix of sites the Council should confirm that at least 10% of the housing requirement is identified on sites no larger than one hectare in the Local Plan as specified in the 2019 NPPF (para 68).
6.7 Noting Appendix 3 of the Housing Topic Paper, what intelligence from developers or key assumptions have been applied to inform the housing trajectory in the Housing Topic Paper? In particular: (i) any necessary master-planning; (ii) timeframes for the grant of detailed planning permissions; (iii) timelines for the discharge of conditions; (iv) lead-in times for developers to be on-site including infrastructure contingencies; (v) number of outlets per site; and (vi) annual completions per outlet.

Appendix 3 of the Housing Topic Paper provides insufficient information on which to base any conclusions about the soundness of key assumptions. Some further information is available in Appendices 3 and 6 of the Council’s latest 5 YHLS Statement should be produced by the Council. The HBF would not wish to comment on individual sites.

6.8 Are any main modifications necessary for soundness to update the housing trajectory and provide accompanying text which clearly explains the key components of the trajectory and how a deliverable land supply is to be calculated (for example: approaches to dealing with any shortfalls and past-delivery, projections for windfall, and any allowances for non-implementation)?

Main modifications to both the housing trajectory and its supporting text will be necessary for soundness. These changes will be determined by the outcomes of the Local Plan Examination.

6.9 The Local Plan housing supply has no reliance on windfall sites. Is that a justified approach in light of the evidence at Appendix 4 of the Housing Topic Paper (June 2019)?

National policy permits an allowance for windfall sites if there is compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available and will continue to be a reliable source of supply.

6.10 The Housing Topic Paper identifies the Council’s preference for dealing with any shortfall in housing delivery to date would be to recover performance over the plan period (the Liverpool method). Would this be a justified and effective approach?

The Council’s preference for dealing with any shortfall in housing delivery over the remaining plan period (the Liverpool method) is not justified. The critical determinants to calculating any shortfall is establishing the start date of the plan period (see Question 3.8 of Matter 3) and the housing requirement per annum. If the plan start date is 2018 then the shortfall to be recouped will be less than the figure previously calculated by the Council. The HBF preference for dealing with any shortfalls in housing delivery is the Sedgefield approach in accordance with the NPPG (ID 68-031-20190722). If the Council wishes to deal with past under delivery over a longer period then this should be justified during the Local Plan Examination.
6.11 What would be the implications for housing land supply were the plan period extended to provide a 15-year strategic policy framework on plan adoption? The Council’s Soundness Assessment (document KSD13) states at page 6 that there is additional delivery on strategic sites for the final 2 years of the plan period to take it to 15 years from adoption (2020) as required by the NPPF.

The extension of the plan period to 2035 should have limited impact on the HLS given the residual capacity of strategic sites beyond 2033. It is possible that the Council’s over supply buffer may be reduced. The implications of other changes to the housing requirement figure, lead in times and delivery rate assumptions in the housing trajectory, etc. are likely to have significantly greater impacts than the extension of the plan period.

6.12 Paragraph 3.8 of the Plan sets out that the Council will take action if monitoring is unable to demonstrate a supply of deliverable housing sites’. What would this action entail? Is it clearly presented in the monitoring and review framework (document KSD10)?

The Council’s actions if monitoring demonstrates a lack of deliverable housing sites is not clearly presented in the monitoring and review framework.