

# Response to Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs)

## On behalf of Persimmon Homes

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21 Garlick Hill  
London EC4V 2AU  
Tel: 020 7489 0213  
Fax: 020 7248 4743  
www.dwdllp.com

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### Matter 2: Strategic Housing Growth – Overall Numbers S1 and S2

**Question 1:** The Council does not seem to be suggesting that it accepts that the Local Plan housing figures should be adjusted to reflect the additional evidence produced over the summer of 2014 (EB098a), which would go some way to addressing Persimmon's concerns about the objectively assessed housing needs. The Council's evidence base and proposed modifications lacks clarity as to what figures it wants the Inspector to recommend as main modifications to make the Plan sound. If this is not made clear Persimmon will rely on previous representations submitted which question whether the Council does indeed have an objectively assessed housing needs basis to secure the delivery of its five year housing land supply.

**Question 2:** Policy S2 (SD04b) still does not establish an appropriate, clear, effective and soundly based distribution of development and growth that is sound in accordance with the NPPF. This is because:-

- The existing commitments of 497 dwellings is reliant on the implementation of a large number of small medium and large sites with permission (Appendices B, C and D of EB096b). These Appendices do not include the expiry dates of these permissions to see how vulnerable the delivery of committed sites is.
- The objectively assessed housing need figure should be recording completion rates in accordance with the 310 dpa proposed evidence base (EB098a) housing needs figure, from 2013/14, as the East of England Plan housing targets expired in 2012/13. The 120 dwellings per annum target is no longer an appropriate annual housing target as demonstrated by the Council's evidence base.
- As the Council has not provided further evidence on North Fambridge housing delivery and suitability to answer the Inspector's questions on Matter 7, there is further vulnerability regarding the delivery of 154 housing units over the first five year period of the Plan.

- The Council also relies on an intensive programme of the submission and approval of applications set out in Appendix F of EB096b, which are not materialising at the rate the Council anticipates. All delays to the approval of planning permissions will affect the delivery rate and achievement of a deliverable five year housing land supply.
- Due to this vulnerability in achieving the Council's proposed five year housing land supply, Reserve Site RE2 North of Scraley Road should become a Strategic Allocation, in order that the Council can demonstrate a robust five year housing land supply.

**Question 4:** It is the nature of strategic sites that they do take time and money to deliver. It is our experience that from the date of submission of a strategic site application (1,000 units plus), that it may take up to five to six years before units are available to the market place. This is based on the following timescales:

- Submission of an EIA Outline Application Year 1
- Review, discussion and negotiation of S106 Agreement by end of Year 2
- Submission of Phase 1 Reserved Matters with permission by end of Year 3
- Discharge of Pre-Commencement Conditions during Year 4
- Start on site during Year 4
- Delivery of first units to market during Years 5 and 6 allowing an 18 month build programme
- In addition, it is not likely that more than 50-100 units would be released in any one year, which the Council does now reflect in EB096b and housing delivery rates.

**Question 5:** See original representations.

**Question 6:** If main modifications were recommended by the Inspector to the Council to make the Plan sound, to reflect the Additional Housing Evidence at the top of the range at 310 dpa, this would make the Plan consistent with national policy. This is providing the figures were stated as minimum housing requirements.

**Question 13:** The appropriate evidenced five year housing land supply figure needs to allow a 20% additional buffer to annual housing delivery rates to reflect that the proposed new five year housing land supply figure is seeking to address past and future housing needs. The Council only wants to allow a 5% buffer based on previously meeting its historic annual housing delivery rate of 120 units pa. It is acknowledged in the Council's evidence that the historic low housing rate has stifled it's growth and therefore relying on an historic buffer would not protect and deliver a positively planned for housing need growth. Such an approach does not allow for the typical fluctuations of time that occur from the date of allocations, to achieving permissions and then to a practical start on site,

following the discharge of pre-commencement conditions and approval of reserved matters for larger sites. Given the challenge in front of Maldon on housing delivery, it would be prudent to adopt a 20% additional buffer to the five year housing land supply OAN.

The Council identifies itself in EB098c that the OAN at 310 units per annum '*is in effect a threefold increase in the housing target for the District when compared with the targets ...the Council does not consider that it would be realistic, achievable or deliverable to plan for a higher level of growth either now or in the future.*' This reflects the enormous challenge ahead for the Council and it is therefore prudent to make the Plan sound that in addition to a 20% buffer that Reserve Site RE2 is proposed as a Strategic Allocation particularly as the Council also acknowledges are all reserved sites are deliverable in the short term (Document CED10 paras 28-29).

**Question 14:** The Council does not set out how it arrives at its five year housing land supply figures used in Document EB096b, which would be helpful to understand its position and comment further at the EiP.

**Question 17:** Although the Inspector does not raise a question as to whether the proposed modifications in SD04b Ref 047 are acceptable, in respect of the monitor and review suggestions regarding Policy S2, Persimmon consider that this is not acceptable. A 20% deviation below the required annual housing delivery rate will begin to significantly deflate the Council's ability to demonstrate a deliverable five year housing land supply. Given that the Council is only suggesting that a 5% buffer to the five year housing land supply is necessary given its historic housing delivery rate on a low housing delivery target, the deviation rate should be reduced to 5% to ensure that the Council can continue to demonstrate a five year housing land supply.

In addition, the first remedy if there is a default on achieving the housing delivery for 2014 -2019 is to immediately release the Reserve Sites (if the Inspector does not consider that Reserve Site RE2 should not become a Strategic Allocation site as part of main modifications to make the Plan sound).