

## Response to Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions

**Matt Clarke on behalf of RHS**

**9<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

**Matter 6: Strategic Housing Growth – Reserve Sites  
S2 (also H1, H2, I1 and I2 – but only as they affect these sites)**

**Issue: Whether policy S2 and its associated text dealing with reserve sites is justified by the evidence, consistent with national policy, and effective**

***1. Have enough Reserve Sites been allocated in order to deal with any potential housing shortfall problem?***

It is considered that the identification of three reserve sites (RE1, RE2 and RE3), with a combined indicative capacity of 900 dwellings represents a reasonable proportion of the total dwelling provision planned for under Policy S2 (i.e. 20%). It is understood that these sites would, however, only be brought forward following a review of the LDP, considered on a five-yearly cycle, unless monitoring revealed a need for earlier review due to the emergence of a shortfall in delivery sooner than this. It is noted that Maldon District Council has proposed a Minor Modification (047) which elaborates on the monitoring process.

In order to meet any housing shortfall more promptly from this source clarification would be required as to the mechanism for release of reserve sites under such circumstances. Alternatively, or potentially additionally (depending on the extent of shortfall), consideration should be given to the need for identification of additional capacity within the current proposed allocation site boundaries, where this could be achieved without detriment to the character of the development, and would make more efficient use of the Strategic Allocations.

***2. Does the Plan have realistic contingency arrangements to handle the likely uncertainties, such as the late provision of critical infrastructure or the late delivery of required development (PPG ID 12-018)? Does the Plan have sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change (NPPF, paragraph 14)? If not, why not, and what other reserve sites or flexibilities might be considered?***

It is unclear what the contingency arrangements would be in the event of the non-delivery of critical infrastructure at one or other of the key settlements. It is acknowledged that Proposed Minor Modification 047 in relation to Policy S2, does provide some elaboration of the methodology for establishing the emergence of any shortfall in housing delivery within a two year period, and outlines measures that could be employed to address this situation. However it does remain unclear whether these measures could be actioned expediently or would require review of the LDP. Clarification of the mechanism for the release of the reserve sites is required.

Additionally, as noted above, it is felt that the scope for further capacity within the existing Strategic Allocations would also represent an immediate source of contingency under such circumstances, or to address housing shortfall more generally.

**3. Will one or more of the Reserve Sites be needed sooner than stated in the Plan? If so when? And will the Plan's provisions act quickly enough to implement them?**

It is not currently apparent that the Reserve Sites will necessarily need to be released sooner than stated in the LDP, although it is acknowledged that additional capacity would potentially need to be found to ensure demonstration of a five year land supply based on the revised OAN and including for a 20% buffer. This would represent one source of additional supply, alongside scope for the appropriate delivery of additional capacity from the existing site allocations.

As stated above, it is currently unclear whether the mechanism for release of the Reserve sites would be compatible with a need to respond quickly to changing circumstances, but also that there may be alternative options for achieving additional capacity in any event.

**4. The Council says that all of the allocated Reserve Sites are identified in the SHLAA as being suitable for housing delivery (RE1 – SHLAA ref: 9004, RE2: 8038 and RE3: 3533h). Can they be delivered quickly?**

In theory the sites could be delivered swiftly, subject to clarification of the appropriate mechanism for their release, and previous representations have set out a willingness to do so in the event that the need arose in respect of the RHS's portion of site RE3 (with the remainder already having been the subject of a planning application).

**5. What circumstance would trigger the Plan's proposed review of the Reserve Sites, apart from the passing of time (5 years)? What other triggers might be appropriate?**

It is considered that Proposed Minor Modification 047 addresses this question to some extent through the quantification of the extent of emergent shortfall that would trigger a review of these sites as part of a wider raft of potential "management actions." This also appears to accelerate the period within which such a review could be commenced (based on a two yearly deviation from the housing requirement) as opposed to the original default five yearly review.

**6. Do the Council's suggested modifications to policy S2 at Ref 047 in SD04b resolve any concerns about the trigger mechanisms for the release of the Reserve Sites?**

Whilst this states that the Council would "**consider releasing Reserve Sites**" under the circumstances specified, it does not go as far as clarifying the mechanism under which this would be delivered in the context of the Plan-led system.

**7. Do any of the infrastructure requirements, including affordable housing in H1, or H2, I1 and I2, or elsewhere, need to be altered or varied to make the Reserve Sites viable and thus deliverable?**

No comment.

9<sup>th</sup> January 2015