

# Former Moore Place Golf Course

Hearing Statement – Matter 3: The vision,  
spatial strategy, and the distribution of  
growth over the Plan period

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ON BEHALF OF CHARTERHOUSE STRATEGIC LAND & MOORE

PLACE HOLDINGS

March 2024

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 These Hearing Statements have been prepared on behalf of our client, Charterhouse Strategic Land, in response to the Examination in Public of the submission version of the Elmbridge Local Plan 2037.
- 1.2 Charterhouse Strategic Land, in partnership with Moore Place Holdings LLP [the property owner], is promoting the former Moore Place Golf Course off Portsmouth Road, Esher, for residential development (hereafter referred to as the Site). A site location plan is included in **Appendix A**.
- 1.3 Our client, under Moore Place Holdings LLP, has previously submitted representations to Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) as part of the December 2016 Elmbridge Local Plan: Strategic Options Consultation (Regulation 18).
- 1.4 Representations were also submitted on behalf of Charterhouse Strategic Land as part of Elmbridge Borough Council's second Regulation 18 Options consultation which ran 19 August to 30 September 2019.
- 1.5 Further representations were submitted by Charterhouse Strategic Land in March 2020 in response to the Council's further Regulation 18 consultation document published January 2020, followed by representations to the Regulation 19 consultation of the Local Plan in July 2022.
- 1.6 Within these Hearing Statements, we have had regard to the documents sent to the Inspector after the submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State which were not available as part of the Regulation 19 consultation.

## 2. Issue 5: Whether the vision and proposed spatial strategy is justified, effective, positively prepared, and consistent with national policy including the proposed distribution of development across the Borough.

**Q2.3: What are the implications for the above change [extension of the Plan period] in terms of the level of planned growth across the borough? The Council are requested to address this point with reference to an update in terms of the planned level of growth proposed for housing, employment, and other uses and what (if any) implications this may have for the IDP and housing trajectory which should also be updated (see questions 4.1 and 4.10 regarding the housing trajectory).**

- 2.1 The Council should increase the Plan period to ensure that it will run for 15 years after adoption, as per paragraph 22 of the NPPF. The increase in the Plan period offers an opportunity for the Council to plan positively for future growth.
- 2.2 The Council states in its full response to the Inspector’s Initial Letter (Ref. COUD002) that it will not increase the Plan period as per the request of the Inspector as it is not a legal requirement but is instead guidance. Whilst the NPPF is indeed guidance, paragraph 35 of the NPPF requires that, in order to be considered sound, plans should be in accordance with national policy. If the Plan period is less than 15 years after adoption, then it cannot be considered to be in accordance with paragraph 22 of the NPPF and therefore national policy and therefore sound.
- 2.3 The Council contends that the change would require significant updates to the evidence base which would stall the progress of the Plan and would not be in line with the Government’s plan-led system. It is not considered that there would be significant changes required to the evidence base and it would only require modest amendments to account for the Plan period. This is notwithstanding our concerns around the soundness of other elements of the evidence base including Land Availability Assessments, the site selection process and justification for not releasing land from the Green Belt.

**Q2.6 How does the 5480 new homes relate to the 6785 (at least) net new homes identified in policy SS3?**

- 2.4 It is quite clear that the 5,480 homes referred to in INF001, does not relate to the 6,785 homes set out within Policy SS3. The Sustainability Appraisal (2022) prepared by the Council does not, at any point, consider a spatial strategy for 5,480 homes. As such, document INF001 needs to be updated to understand the impacts of the chosen spatial strategy. We would note, again as set out within our Regulation 19 representations and across our Hearing Statements, that we do not consider the spatial strategy to be sound and the Council should undertake the necessary work to understand the impacts on transport matters based on meeting the housing need in full.

**Q2.9 Has the SA considered all reasonable options for a spatial strategy that would secure a sustainable pattern of development in the borough?**

- 2.5 As set out within our Regulation 19 representations (paragraphs 2.1 to 2.19), the Sustainability Appraisal has not considered all reasonable alternatives. The Council has only considered one option which would meet the housing need in full (Option 3), an option which is well in excess of the LHN. Option 3 is a supply-based target in that the figure has been arrived through adding up the number of units from the LAA 2018, all Green Belt parcels from the evidence base documents and sites promoted minus a non-implementation rate of 15% (page 32 of the Sustainability Appraisal June 2022). This option is not a needs-based target, it is not a target which has been calculated based on meeting Elmbridge’s housing need in full and addressing the unmet need in neighbouring boroughs). The Council, in understanding that the LHN had increased slightly from the Regulation 18 and Regulation

19 consultations, should have considered an option which met the LHN in full and one which sought to meet the LHN in full and try to address unmet need from the wider HMA.

- 2.6 Given that Option 5A was close to meeting the LHN in the second Regulation 18 consultation and currently meets 95% of the LHN, the Council should have also considered an option which built upon this and met the LHN in full. Option 5A only requires 3% of the Borough's Green Belt to be released. Therefore, minor changes and minimal additional release of Green Belt land would be required to ensure that the Plan does, in fact, meet the LHN in full and as such, the Plan to be found sound in this regard.

**Q2.16 The SA scores option 5a as a negative against the homes objective as it would fall short of the LHN figure by some 500 units. Is this correct?**

- 2.7 Table 11a of the Sustainability Appraisal shows a minor negative for housing delivery. This was reduced from a minor positive from the previous consultation (second Regulation 18) as the LHN figure had increased slightly in that time. Whilst CSL strongly believe that the LHN should be met in full, and Option 5A amended to ensure this, it is considered that Option 5A was retrofitted to change from a minor positive to a minor negative in order to allow the Council to justify not selecting it as its spatial strategy.
- 2.8 Option 5A meets 95% of the housing figure whilst the chosen spatial strategy meets only 70% of the LHN (or 69% using the reduced figure in the Council's suggested main modifications). The chosen spatial strategy is scored as a major negative for the delivery of homes. Meeting 95% of the LHN should be looked upon more favourably than currently indicated in the Sustainability Appraisal. It is considered that it should score a minor positive rather than a minor negative.

### 3. Issue 6: Does the Plan’s spatial strategy expressed within policy SS3 present an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives?

**Q2.20 Does the Plan present an appropriate spatial strategy and in what way is this supported by the evidence base? In particular, will the proposed distribution of housing help to ensure that sufficient land will be available in the right places to meet the housing needs of present and future generations (paragraph 8 of the Framework).**

3.1 The Plan does not present an appropriate spatial strategy which is supported by a robust evidence base, as set out in our Regulation 19 representations and throughout our Hearing Statements. The chosen spatial strategy does not meet the LHN in full, indeed it falls well short of it and the Council has confirmed that there are no exceptional circumstances to justify a deviation from the Standard Method.

3.2 Exceptional circumstances do exist to release land from the Green Belt, and it is clear that Officers consider this to be the case (ref. Minutes from the Local Plan Working Group, June 2021). Whilst Members may not agree with this, no sound justification has been provided which indicate that exceptional circumstances do not exist to release land from the Green Belt to assist in meeting the housing need in full.

3.3 It is considered that the evidence base has, since 2021, been retrofitted to suit the political agenda from Members, without having due regard to the significant issues which a reduced housing target will bring. By significantly reducing the housing target so as not to release land from the Green Belt and pursuing a strategy which will exacerbate affordability issues and compound the significant need for affordable homes, the Council is not in accordance with paragraph 8 of the Framework as it is not meeting the housing needs of today, let alone the housing needs of future generations.

**Q2.21 In what way will the spatial strategy address the Council’s priority of addressing the acute affordable housing need within the Borough?**

3.4 The chosen spatial strategy is quite clearly not addressing the acute affordable housing need. Instead, the spatial strategy will only exacerbate existing issues showing, therefore, that it is not a priority for the Council. The current affordability ratio for Elmbridge is 20.04, making it the fourth most unaffordable authority in England and the most unaffordable outside of Greater London<sup>1</sup>. This is up from the previous year where the affordability ratio was 18.05, making Elmbridge the ninth most unaffordable place in the country. Without serious intervention, it is not considered that affordability will improve and certainly not with the proposed level of growth within the Plan.

3.5 As is set out later on in this Hearing Statement, the Council’s decision to focus on small sites will mean that levels of affordable housing delivery will be nowhere near the amount needed to address the shortage. The Council has stated that it will seek affordable housing contributions on sites of nine dwellings or less, despite this not being in accordance with the Framework. As set out within the Hearing Statement for Matter 6, it is not considered that this is a sound approach and will not assist in addressing the acute affordable housing need.

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>

**Q2.22 Noting that the proposed strategy would not meet the Borough’s objectively assessed housing need, in what way will the proposed spatial strategy support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes (paragraph 60 of the Framework) by providing a sufficient amount and variety of land to come forward? In particular, in what way will the proposed strategy deliver the mix of homes needed? Is the Plan positively prepared in this regard?**

3.6 The proposed spatial strategy is not in accordance with the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. Neither will it succeed in providing a variety of land to come forward which will deliver the mix of homes required. Smaller sites tend to deliver a limited mix of homes as they are more suited smaller dwellings in order to ensure they are viable and respond to the constraints of the site. These types of properties are less suited to families who prefer houses which are more easily and commonly delivered on larger, undeveloped sites. In addition, smaller sites often struggle to deliver the living standards and levels of private amenity space required and are not representative of the local housing market. By aiming to deliver such a large proportion of supply on small sites (which make up half of the allocations), the Plan will fail to deliver mixed and balanced communities.

3.7 It should also be noted that the LHN figure for Elmbridge is subject to the 40% cap. In reality, the level of housing need is much higher than 650 dwellings per annum (“dpa”). Without the cap, the figure is 930dpa. Therefore, the Plan is only proposing to deliver 453dpa, 49% of its actual housing need. As such, the Plan cannot be considered to be positively prepared as it is not even aspiring to deliver the capped LHN in full.

**Q2.31 The Council’s approach to sustainable place making is set out at policy SS2. Is the approach reflective of paragraph 7 of the Framework? Part 2b of the policy refers to delivering homes for all. However the Councils approach to housing will only provide for approximately 69% of the boroughs housing needs over the Plan period. Is the policy justified and effective as a result?**

3.8 As set out above, the Plan will not deliver “homes for all” as the spatial strategy is proposing to deliver a significant shortfall against the LHN figure. Underdelivering by nearly 3,000 homes over the Plan period will mean fewer households will have access to a decent home within Elmbridge. The problem is also wider than this as there is a severe unmet need in neighbouring boroughs and in the Housing Market Area, some 11,500 dwellings in the next 15 years (paragraph 6.30 of the Exceptional Circumstances Case – Green Belt January 2022). This means that households will also be unlikely to find a suitable home within this larger area, pushing them out of this part of the South East.

3.9 As set out within our Regulation 19 representations and within our Hearing Statements, there is substantial doubt as to whether the Plan can and/or will even deliver the 6,785 dwellings set out in Policy SS3 given that many of the site allocations are not deliverable or developable. Therefore, Policy SS2 cannot be considered justified or effective.

**Q2.33 The Council’s spatial strategy relies entirely on brownfield sites within urban areas and is set out at policy SS3 which identifies the scale and location of good growth. Part 4 of the policy identifies the individual settlements within the borough and the number of units to be delivered. For each of the settlements identified, could the Council provide in a table a breakdown as to how the individual number of units have been arrived at.**

3.10 The Council should provide a detailed analysis of sites in order for interested parties, as well as the Inspector, interrogate the spatial strategy in sufficient detail. This information should also be made available for representors to have the opportunity to provide comments on.

**Q2.34 Do these numbers correlate with the site allocations contained within chapter 9 of the Plan?**

3.11 At this stage, it is not possible to determine if the distribution of growth set out within Policy SS3 and if these correlate with the site allocations within the Plan. The Council should provide a detailed analysis of sites in order for

interested parties, as well as the Inspector, to interrogate the spatial strategy in sufficient detail. Notwithstanding this, given that a number of allocations cannot be considered available, it is likely that the numbers are incorrect. For example, as set out within the Council's Full response to the Inspectors initial Letter ID001 (ref. COUD002), it notes that five Council owned car parts are no longer available for development. Therefore, the further information provided by the Council on the site allocations should also be made available for representors to have the opportunity to provide comments on.

**Q2.35 Where in the evidence base does it set out which sites are included within these numbers?**

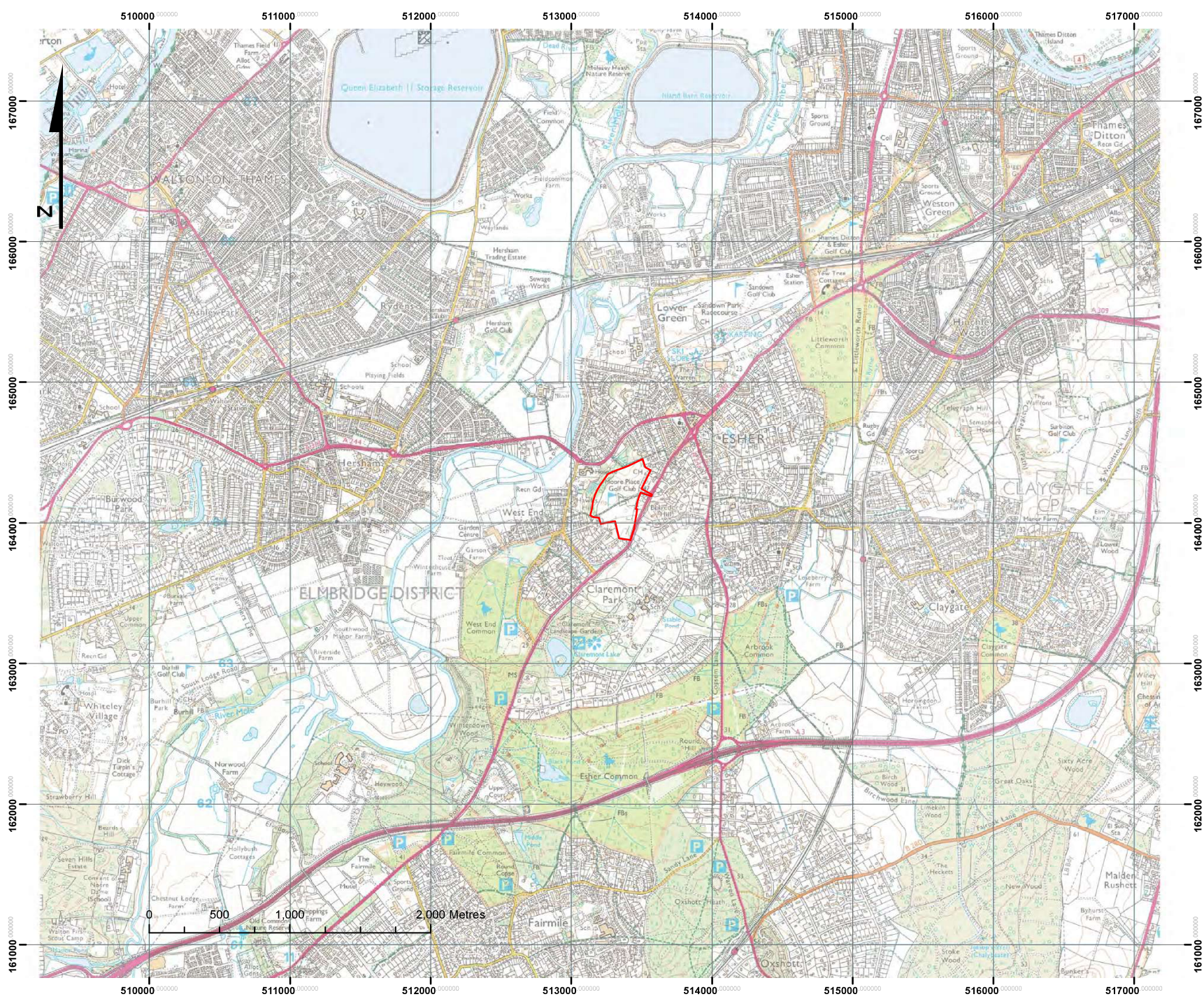
- 3.12 The evidence base does not provide this information, a symptom of the spatial strategy being retrofitted to a political end, without due regard to the impacts on housing delivery. This information should also be made available for representors to have the opportunity to provide comments on.

**Q2.36 According to the footnote, the figures do not include a non-implementation rate or windfall allowance – is this correct? How do these figures relate to those presented within the housing trajectory?**

- 3.13 The Council has indicated that it updated the housing trajectory as part of the LAA 2023, however, this document has not been published as part of the examination, so it is impossible to determine whether the figures contained within Policy SS3 are indeed correct. Without this information in front of the Inspector, it is not possible for the Plan to be found sound. This information should also be made available for representors to have the opportunity to provide comments on.



## Appendix A



**Legend:**

Site Boundary

REVISIONS:		
DATE:	VERSION:	INITIALS:
<b>CELEBRATING 20 YEARS</b> 1998 - 2018		
<b>TITLE: Site Location Plan</b>		
<b>PROJECT/SITE: Moore Place Golf Course</b>		
<b>CLIENT: Charterhouse Strategic Land Limited</b>		
<b>MAP REF: 4279/01/17-3345</b>		
<b>VERSION: v1</b>		
<b>DATE: 13/04/18</b>	<b>SCALE: 1:25,000@A3</b>	
<b>APPROVED BY: RF</b>	<b>PRODUCED BY: SM</b>	
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