

**Elmbridge Local Plan 2037
Examination of the Local Plan**

**Matter 3: The vision, spatial strategy and the
distribution of growth over the plan period**

Statement on behalf of Taylor Wimpey

March 2024

Turley

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Response to Matter 3: The vision, spatial strategy, and the distribution of growth over the Plan period	4

David Murray-Cox
David.murray-cox@turley.co.uk

Client

Taylor Wimpey

Our reference

TAYR3017

25th March 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement is submitted on behalf of Taylor Wimpey to Stage 2 of the Elmbridge Local Plan Examination and in response to 'Matter 3: The vision, spatial strategy, and the distribution of growth over the Plan period' as set out in the Inspector's 'Schedule of Matters, Issues and Questions for Stage 2 of the Examination' (document ID-005).
- 1.2 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the other Statements submitted on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, and their representations to consultation on the draft Local Plan.
- 1.3 Taylor Wimpey has an interest in, and has actively promoted the land west of Woodstock Lane North, Long Ditton to the emerging Local Plan. The representations submitted to the Regulation 19 draft of the Local Plan included a Vision document which demonstrated how the site could be developed and a Technical Note regarding the site access arrangements and its accessibility.
- 1.4 The land promoted by Taylor Wimpey west of Woodstock Lane North, Long Ditton is currently within the Green Belt. However, at the previous consultation stage¹, this land was identified (via Options 3 and 5 (including 5a)) as a one of three 'Key Strategic Areas', including an area of retained open space and a 'Potential Development Area to be Master planned'.
- 1.5 This Statement has been prepared on the basis that the Local Plan is to be examined against the NPPF published in 2021. Unless specifically referred to, any references to the NPPF are to that version.

¹ The 'Options Consultation' undertaken in 2019

2. Response to Matter 3: The vision, spatial strategy, and the distribution of growth over the Plan period

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.

2.1 What is the Plan Period? It is expressed within the Plan as both 2021-2037 and 2022-2037.

- 2.1 This is a matter for the Council, although we note that the manner in which it responds to this question may have implications for the contributions made on behalf of Taylor Wimpey during the Examination sessions.

2.2 Paragraph 22 of the Framework requires that strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities. This was raised as an issue in the initial letter of 14 September 2023 (ID-001). The Council are requested to extend the Plan period to 2039.

- 2.2 We agree that, in accordance with the NPPF and PPG, the Local Plan should look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption. We are concerned that the proposed date of 2039 might still not provide for a 15-year period. If the Plan were adopted during the 2024/25 year, a Plan period to 2039 would only provide for 14 full years post adoption.

- 2.3 We therefore consider that the Plan period should be extended to at least 2040 in order to provide a 15-year period post adoption.

2.3 What are the implications for the above change 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).

- 2.4 Firstly, the Council should ensure that it is able to identify additional sources of supply to respond to the extended Plan-period.

- 2.5 Secondly, our assumption is that, if the Council pursues a similar approach to the extended Plan-period, then this would result in the shortfall of planned supply against the minimum Local Housing Need figure increasing.

- 2.6 Thirdly, we assume that the extended Plan-period will also result in the shortfall of affordable housing will increase.

- 2.7 We therefore consider that those three considerations underpin the reasons why the Council's approach through this draft Local Plan is unsound.

2.12 Is it clear how the SA has assessed employment needs arising from the Plans overall approach? In particular, how have the economic growth (6) and employment (7) scores been arrived at (see tables 7 and 11 of the SA) and what is the rationale behind the difference of approach in relation to these two sets of scoring? Paragraph 3.71 states that unknown scores are also given to SA objective 6: Economic growth as all three-options support economic growth but do not allocate land due to the uncertainty in the market for premises. Is this correct? Why is this different from the options assessed at table 7?

2.8 We do not provide a response to this question.

2.13 Is the scoring attributed to 'homes' within the SA accurate? In particular, are the scorings between option 4a and 5a in terms of homes accurate?

2.9 We understand that the SA gives option 4a a double negative (which we agree with) score against 'Homes', whereas option 5a is given a single negative score. In our view, option 5a should be given a more positive score than it achieves in the SA because it provides a much greater and more positive response to the particular housing needs in this Borough.

2.10 The SA clearly recognises that option 4 is less sustainable in that regard than option 5. We completely concur with that conclusion.

2.11 We note with interest that the 'Exceptional Circumstances Case' document from January 2022 (OTH043) gave a positive score to option 5a, with an anticipated supply of 9328 dwellings, with that being greater than shown in TOP001, but still not meeting the minimum Local Housing Need. We have not been able to find any explanation for that disparity.

2.14 Table 16 of the SA (page 59) summarises the total Plan impacts. What are the 197 allocated sites referred to under Economic Growth?

2.12 We do not provide a response to this question.

2.15 Under the heading 'Access and Equality' (page 13) what is the reason that boat dwellers have been excluded from this list provided?

2.13 We do not provide a response to this question.

2.16 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?

2.14 In a similar vein to our response to question 2.13, it is correct that option 5 is shown to be more sustainable than option 4 in this regard. In our view, option 5a should be given a more positive score than it achieves in the SA because it provides a much greater and more positive response to the particular housing needs in this Borough.

2.15 Table 6 in Document TOP001 identifies a negative score for Option 5a against 'Homes', which would deliver 9182 dwellings. That document was dated June 2022. The Sustainability Appraisal (also dated June 2022) (CD002) identified a positive score against 'Homes', based on the delivery of 9328 dwellings.

2.16 On the basis that TOP001 (paragraph 6.6) expressed that Option 5a would comprise 9,182 dwellings (so we assume the quantum referred to in the SA is incorrect).

2.17 The SA Non-Technical Summary (CD003) identifies a negative score for Option 5a against 'Homes' (referring to 9182 dwellings).

2.18 Nevertheless, the SA (CD002) stated at paragraph 3.69 that:

“Option 5a is 19 dwellings short of meeting the housing need but larger Green Belt sites allow for a mix of housing to be delivered and most importantly the affordable housing need to be met and the undersupply. This results in a minor positive score for the homes SA objective. It scores a minor negative result for employment opportunities as no land is being allocated to provide employment opportunities. Minor negative impacts are expected for many other environmental SA objectives as development on greenfield sites would impact land quantity, landscape and biodiversity. However, the size of sites released from the Green Belt would allow for larger climate change alleviation schemes, biodiversity net gains and green infrastructure provision.”

2.19 The SA then appears to explain (table 11a) that a negative score is achieved for Option 5a (on the basis of 9182 dwellings) because (as stated at paragraph 3.74) it would fall short of the LHN figure by over 500 dwellings. The difference appears to be a matter of 200 homes. When 9328 are assessed as part of Option 5a, the SA score is positive, but for 9128 it is negative. In our view that misrepresents the extent to which 146 fewer homes would result in a negative score. In our view, the reasons given in paragraph 3.69 are highly pertinent given the greater contribution that the option makes to addressing housing considerations.

Issue 6: Does the Plans spatial strategy expressed within policy SS3 present an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives?

2.20 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).

2.20 Fundamentally, no the Plan will not provide for sufficient land in the right places to meet needs of present and future generations. That is clear from the fact that the Plan results in a very significant housing supply shortfall against even the minimum Local Housing Need figure, let alone to address the net level of affordable housing need identified in The Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHMA) 2020 and its addendum 2021 (HOU004 and HOU005) (269 affordable units per annum).

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

2.21 Please refer to our response to Question 3.3 (Matter 4).

2.22 The draft Local Plan does not provide a framework to meet affordable housing needs over the coming years (the remaining Plan-period).

2.23 Document TOP002 explains that 771 affordable homes (gross) have been delivered in the Borough over 11 years since 2011/12 (at an average of around 70 per annum)

- 2.24 The Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHMA) 2020 and its addendum 2021 (HOU004 and HOU005) explains “that **399 households per annum could not afford to pay market entry threshold cost and therefore, need affordable housing**. After taking account of the supply of affordable housing from relets, the net level of affordable need is estimated at **269** units per annum.”
- 2.25 We agree that the affordable housing need in the Borough is acute. It is substantial and severe. Equally the affordability issues in the Borough are in a drastic situation
- 2.26 In question 3.3, the Inspector notes that “Part 1a of policy SS3 advises the Plan will make provision for the delivery of at least 30% affordable homes. This would equate to some 2035 affordable dwellings over the Plan period. The Local Housing Needs Assessment (HOU005) sets out a net annual requirement for affordable housing of 269 units, which equates to 4035 units over the Plan period.”.
- 2.27 This calculation appears to be based on 30% of 6,785 dwellings (and therefore assumes that 30% of all the housing delivered will be affordable. Indeed, that appears to be the intention of Part 1a of Policy SS3.
- 2.28 However, in our submission that is an unrealistic assumption, not supported by evidence. Firstly, the Plan is based on an approach which relies on a number of small sites, likely (by virtue of Policy HOU4) to deliver fewer than 30% affordable housing. Secondly, the calculation does not take into account matters such as viability, which is likely to be of greater significance in relation to this Local Plan given the heavy reliance on previously developed land.
- 2.29 The shortfall of affordable housing is therefore likely to be greater than 4,035 dwellings.
- 2.30 The shortfall of affordable housing is likely to be even greater when the Plan period is extended beyond 2037.
- 2.31 The Inspector’s question asks ‘how does the Plan propose to address this shortfall’? The short answer is that the Plan cannot address the shortfall. In our view, the most reasonable solution is to conclude that additional sources of housing supply, on the land currently within the Green Belt, would be necessary in order to address the shortfall.
- 2.32 We consider that this shortfall does not accord with the Framework. This is a Plan which fails to meet the objectively assessed needs of the area, fails to address or respond to the particular housing circumstances in the Borough and fails to meet the needs of all groups in the community.

2.22 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?

- 2.33 The proposed strategy will not support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes as required by paragraph 60 of the NPPF.
- 2.34 Please refer to our response to Question 6.6 (Matter 7) in this regard.
- 2.35 It is clear from the proposed spatial strategy that the draft Plan fails demonstrably in achieving the being positively prepared to meet the needs of the Borough. The draft Plan considers that one of the key principles behind the scale and location of growth in the borough include increasing the number of new and genuinely affordable homes (paragraph 3.17). However the Council openly recognise through its evidence base that its preferred spatial strategy and preferred growth options blatantly inhibit the facility of affordable housing, and mix of affordable housing through development of greenfield land

2.28 As currently drafted, policy SS1 requires development must (f) avoid demolition by repurposing existing structures and (g) promote the retrofit of existing buildings, including incorporating measures to reduce energy consumption. These requirements of the policy do not appear to have been taken into account in relation to the viability, capacity or density evidence which supports the Plan. Without these assessments, how can these policy requirements be justified and deliverable?

- 2.36 Taylor Wimpey reiterate the concerns and the lack of supporting evidence that informs the Council’s current drafting of Policy SS1, and the desire to avoid demolition and promote the retrofitting of existing buildings.
- 2.37 In this context, the Council have not prepared any recognisable evidence to inform the draft Plan that clearly identifies the implications of retro-fitting existing buildings, in particular the implications on the Council’s proposed allocations on previously developed land within town and urban areas.
- 2.38 Taylor Wimpey have significant concerns over the feasibility and deliverability of the proposed housing allocations whereby they require either the demolition and/or retrofitting of existing buildings, in particular where the Council have a significant number of small (less than 9 dwellings) and medium (between 10 to 200 dwellings) sites, where there would be direct implications on affordable housing and mix of housing for different groups in the community.
- 2.39 The Council’s current housing allocations includes circa 576 new residential units on sites less than 9 dwellings. Given affordability pressures in the Borough, including the provisions of Policy HOU4 (Affordable Housing), that seeks a financial contribution equivalent to the provision of 20% affordable housing of the gross number of dwellings, on top of the unpredicted cost of retrofitting buildings, the viability and subsequent deliverability of these non-major sites is far from guaranteed.

2.29 What are the implications of these policy requirements for the Council's site allocations in terms of the capacity and density requirements? In responding, the Council should be explicit with reference to: (i) the site allocations which would be affected by this policy requirement (ii) the extent to which this policy requirement has been taken into account (iii) the implications in terms of capacity to accommodate development (if relevant). I suggest a table format is used utilising the Local Plan references for the individual sites listed at chapter 9 of the Local Plan.

- 2.40 On the basis of SS1(f), our assumption is that buildings should be retained and not demolished. Yet, it is clear from the LAA (2022) that a number of proposed allocations include demolition. If that is the case, then the Local Plan should be clear and any associated evidence documents should assess the policies and allocations on that basis.
- 2.41 If the Council's position is that buildings should be retained, then it should publish updated evidence as to the likely capacity of those sites to accommodate new development.

2.30 Is there an inherent conflict between policy SS1 parts (f) and (g) and policy HOU2 (d) which seeks comprehensive development that leads to more efficient and effective site layouts? If this is the case is it clear how a decision maker should respond to the policies?

On the basis of SS1(f), our assumption is that buildings should be retained and not demolished. Yet, it is clear from the LAA (2022) that a number of proposed allocations include demolition. If that is the case, then the Local Plan should be clear and any associated evidence documents should assess the policies and allocations on that basis.

2.31 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?

- 2.42 We address this matter at length in our Statements to other Matters (namely Matter 2 and 4). It is abundantly clear that the Local Plan will not provide for homes for all, regardless of whether that is through affordable housing (given the track record of delivery prior to this Plan (with that framework not being such that the sites supported by the Council could not be delivered in any event), or through market housing.
- 2.43 A Plan will justified, where it provides an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence.
- 2.44 This is not a plan which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed need. In fact, this is a Plan which fails to achieve that objective by a substantial degree. Measured against just the Local Housing Need there is a substantial shortfall. However, that calculation is only part of the equation as this Plan also fails to address critical obstacles to accessing housing, including affordable housing, in this Borough. The Council's evidence itself highlights the manner in which these greater levels of development can be accommodated.
- 2.45 Consequently, the Plan is not justified.

- 2.46 To be 'deliverable', the it must be deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground.
- 2.47 As we set out in our Statements on other Matters, this is not a Plan which is based on evidence as to the deliverability of sites, and the Council has not presented evidence such as a detailed trajectory which can be scrutinised.
- 2.48 The Plan is not effective.
- 2.49 For those two reasons alone, irrespective of any other considerations, this Plan is unsound.

2.36 According to the footnote, the figures do not include a nonimplementation rate or windfall allowance – is this correct? How do these figures relate to those presented within the housing trajectory?

- 2.50 This is particularly unclear. The housing trajectory² indicates, for options 1 and 2, that windfall sources (for example a small site windfall allowance of 987 dwellings) for part of the overall expected supply.
- 2.51 We note in response to question 4.10 that the manner in which the Council addresses that question may have implications for the contributions made during the Examination on behalf of Taylor Wimpey.
- 2.52 As a basic principle, we note that Policy SS3 lists 6,785 dwellings (through the total at each settlement). That is comparable to the level of development set out within Approach 2 of the Housing Trajectory at Appendix A5. Approach 2 includes both a windfall allowance, and appears to be different to Approach 1 because of the application of a non-implementation rate.
- 2.53 On that basis, we assume that the Plan is based on Approach 2, and therefore the figures in Policy SS3 do include a windfall allowance and non-implementation rate.

² Appendix A5 of the draft Local Plan

Turley Reading
The Pinnacle
20 Tudor Road
Reading
RG1 1NH

T 0118 902 2830