

# Former Moore Place Golf Course

Hearing Statement – Matter 5: Housing  
Delivery

---

ON BEHALF OF CHARTERHOUSE STRATEGIC LAND &

MOORE PLACE HOLDINGS

March 2024

## Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Issue 8: Whether the approach towards the delivery of housing land is justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared.	4
Appendix A	10

## 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 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 8: Whether the approach towards the delivery of housing land is justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared.

**Q4.2 The spatial strategy focus is on brownfield sites, with a significant component of the supply coming forward on small sites. In accordance with paragraph 60 of the Framework, in what way would this approach ensure that there is a sufficient variety of land to come forward?**

- 2.1 The Council's spatial strategy of focussing on brownfield sites is not considered to be in accordance with paragraph 60 of the NPPF in that it fails to take into account how it will meet the needs of groups with specific housing requirements, such as those requiring affordable housing. As set out within our Regulation 19 representations (Section 4), small sites are less likely to deliver affordable housing, or will deliver lower levels of affordable housing due to site constraints which impact viability and affordable housing not being required on sites of nine or fewer homes (in accordance with the Framework).
- 2.2 Smaller sites are also less suited towards the delivery of specialist housing for older persons. Due to the additional facilities such as dining areas and treatment rooms required and the levels of care needed for these types of development, a larger "critical mass" is required to make such schemes viable. Sites of 10 or fewer units will simply not be viable for specialist housing.
- 2.3 In addition, as set out at Section 3 of our Regulation 19 representations, the focus on small sites will mean that there will be smaller homes delivered. As referenced in paragraph 2.43 of our Regulation 19 representations, there is a sizeable requirement for three-bedroom dwellings<sup>1</sup> for families who tend to prefer houses rather than flats and the chosen spatial strategy does not adequately consider the needs of families and with reference to paragraph 8 of the Framework, the need to create mixed and balanced communities. A spatial strategy focussing on small sites will result in a heavily unbalanced housing market based on an oversupply of flats through higher density development. Flatted developments have higher built costs meaning that this may also impact upon the viability of these sites.

**Q4.4 Will the Plan provide for a five year supply of deliverable housing sites upon adoption with particular reference to the definition of deliverable contained within Annex 2 of the Framework?**

- 2.4 As set out within our Regulation 19 representations at Section 2, a significant number of sites are not deliverable. The Land Availability Assessment ("LAA") 2022 sets out that the housing land supply position is 4.36 years as of 31 March 2022.
- 2.5 The Authority Monitoring Report 2022/23 shows at Table 28 that the LAA sites expected to come forward in years one through to five from 31 March 2023 is 524 dwellings. This is significantly below the 1,067 dwellings that were projected to come forward in the first five years from 31 March 2022, as set out in the LAA 2022 (or 907 with a non-implementation rate applied). This is a significant drop off. The housing land supply position put forward by the Council is 3.81 years (against a LHN figure of 650 dwellings per annum). The proposed supply of 524 dwellings is significantly lower than that suggested in the LAA 2022, almost half what was suggested the previous year. Such a change suggests that the Council has substantially overestimated the deliverability of sites and a critical issue with the quality and reliability of information within the LAAs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Table 32 of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Kingston Upon Thames and North East Surrey Authorities: Local Authority Profiles (June 2016).

2.6 The LAA 2023 was published in February 2023, however, it has not been added to the examination documents. This should be added for the Inspector to consider. Such failures in the Council's evidence base demonstrate that the Plan is not sound as it is not justified, positively prepared, effective or consistent with national policy.

2.7 There is now an even greater importance on ensuring that the housing trajectory is properly interrogated due to the introduction of paragraph 76 of the revised NPPF (December 2023). Whilst the Plan is being examined under the previous Framework, as per the transitional arrangements under paragraph 230, paragraph 76 is still applicable. Paragraph 76 states that local authorities are not required to identify a five-year housing land supply where the adopted plan is less than five years old, and where it can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply at the conclusion of the examination. Therefore, it is crucial that the Council's proposed housing land supply is examined closely to ensure that all sites included in the housing trajectory are in fact deliverable as per Annex 2 of the Framework.

**Q4.5 HOU002 states that the five year housing supply position is 4.36 years. How does this accord with paragraph 74 of the Framework which requires Local Planning authorities to identify and maintain a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years worth of housing against their housing requirements? Is the Plan positively prepared in this regard?**

2.8 It is quite clear that a supply of 4.36 years, or 3.81 years as set out in the Authority Monitoring Report 2022/23, fails to comply with paragraph 74 of the Framework. As such, the Plan cannot be considered sound as it is not consistent with national policy. In addition, it has not been positively prepared as it fails to meet the area's objectively assessed needs.

2.9 As set out within our Regulation 19 representations (paragraphs 2.44 through to 2.64) and as referenced above, delivery of the sites identified within the LAA is likely to be poor given that many are not available for development. Therefore, the actual housing position is likely to be worse than currently identified.

2.10 The Council is not proposing to meet its identified housing need and has not adequately considered the impacts of not meeting this need within the context of the Housing Market Area and the horrendous affordability issues in the Borough. The Plan cannot, therefore, with a reasonable mind be considered to be positively prepared.

**Q4.6 Is the identified housing supply contained within the Plan and set out in the trajectory based on a sound understanding of the evidence? In responding to this question, the Council should provide an updated housing response which identifies the completions, existing commitments, site allocations and any other sources of supply it is seeking to rely upon.**

2.11 The identified housing supply is quite clearly not based on sound evidence. As alluded to in the wording of the question, there is a severe lack of adequate evidence to provide any faith that the housing trajectory can be considered a reflection of reality. Without this evidence, which will need to be robustly interrogated, the Plan cannot be considered sound. Our concerns with regards to the site allocations and evidence base underpinning it is set out within our Regulation 19 representations (Section 2) and expanded upon in our other Hearing Statements.

2.12 This information should also be made available for representors to have the opportunity to provide comments on.

**Q4.8 The Planning Practice Guidance provides advice in relation to the preparation of housing and economic land availability assessments, and sets out that when carrying out a desktop review, Plan-makers need to be proactive in identifying as wide a range of sites and broad locations for development as possible. It goes on to note that identified sites, which have particular constraints (such as Green Belt), need to be included in the assessment for the sake of comprehensiveness but these constraints need to be set out clearly, including where they severely**

**restrict development. An important part of the desktop review, however, is to identify sites and their constraints, rather than simply to rule out sites outright which are known to have constraints. Is the approach adopted by the Council in terms of the Land Availability Assessments completed consistent with this and if not why not?**

2.13 As set out within our Regulation 19 representations at paragraphs 2.49 and 2.50, the Council has followed an incorrect approach with regards to preparing its Land Availability Assessments (“LAA”). The LAAs do not include sites outside the urban area i.e. Green Belt sites despite the PPG being clear that councils should be pro-active in identifying sites and should not rule out sites because of particular constraints. The Council has failed to do this and has failed to identify the wide range of sites required under national guidance.

2.14 The LAAs are instead used as a tool to justify a retrofitted strategy rather than a comprehensive assessment of all sites in the borough. Therefore, the approach is not only inconsistent with national policy but is also not effective or justified. As such, the site selection process cannot be considered to be sound.

**Q4.14 What is the relevance of the fact that the current housing need is significantly higher than the existing target set within the Core Strategy (Paragraph 6.24 of TP001)?**

2.15 The fact that the housing need is significantly higher than the existing Core Strategy is of little relevance. The Core Strategy target was adopted in 2011, some 13 years ago. This figure came from the South East Plan which had a regional focus to growth. The LHN instead reflects the need *now* and demonstrates the failure of delivery in the borough over the past decade.

**Q4.15 The Council have stated that the need in Elmbridge is no more acute/intense than in neighbouring boroughs. However, a majority of neighbouring boroughs (Guildford, Waverley, Runnymede, Spelthorne) have progressed a strategy with an element of Green Belt release and/or are able to meet their housing need in full. If the Council consider the need to be no more acute than these neighbouring boroughs, what is the rationale for Elmbridge not following this approach?**

2.16 This approach is not considered to be logical or indeed positively prepared. The fact that the housing need in Elmbridge is no more acute than neighbouring boroughs is not a sound reason to fail to meet the LHN in full or a reason to not release land from the Green Belt to achieve this. The Duty to Cooperate requires positive cross-boundary cooperation with neighbouring authorities in order to ensure that housing need is met within the Housing Market Area (“HMA”).

2.17 The Council’s approach is firstly not sound as it fails to address the undersupply of 11,500 homes across the HMA and neighbouring boroughs in the next 15 years. Instead, it is an abdication of responsibility and an approach which will only worsen housing deliverability and affordability in the borough. Elmbridge’s affordability ratio is significantly higher than the other boroughs noted by the Inspector, as demonstrated in the table below. In addition, the median house price is significantly higher than the other local authorities. This shows that the housing need in Elmbridge is in fact even more acute than neighbouring boroughs.

LPA	Median house price	Median house price to income ratio
Elmbridge	£700,000	20.04
Guildford	£505,000	12.67
Runnymede	£460,000	11.98

Spelthorne	£430,000	11.34
Waverley	£535,000	17.37

2.18 In addition, affordable housing delivery has been poor in the borough, delivering just 20% of dwellings as affordable homes.

Monitoring Period	Affordable housing delivery	Total housing delivery	Affordable % of total housing delivery
2013/14	67	257	26.1%
2014/15	104	273	38.1%
2015/16	78	240	32.5%
2016/17	4	267	1.5%
2017/18	73	231	31.6%
2018/19	57	353	16.1%
2019/20	126	396	31.8%
2020/21	45	302	14.9%
2021/22	111	768	14.5%
2022/23	13	236	5.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>3,323</b>	<b>20.4%</b>

2.19 Secondly, as pointed out within the Inspector’s question, a large number of neighbouring boroughs are releasing land from the Green Belt and/or are meeting their housing need in full. It is not considered that Elmbridge is a “special case” and in fact, only a small percentage of Green Belt land would need to be released to meet the need in full. As set out within the Green Belt reviews, there are parts of the Green Belt, such as the Former Moore Place Golf Course, which make limited contributions to the purposes of the Green Belt but can make a significant contribution towards meeting the LHN in full.

2.20 In the case of Guildford, the local authority was required by the Inspector to identify the level of housing which could be delivered within the urban areas, with the residual number of homes required to meet housing need delivered through Green Belt release. It is considered that such an approach should also be applied to Elmbridge. This is notwithstanding our previous concerns regarding the deliverability of the sites currently allocated.

**Q4.16 In general terms, the Framework seeks to support the Governments objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. Paragraph 35 states that Plans should provide a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs. Paragraph 11 of the Framework sets out the approach to Plan making. In what way does the Green Belt in Elmbridge provide a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development?**

2.21 It is quite clear that the Green Belt in Elmbridge, in particular, does not provide a strong reason for restricting development. The Green Belt Reviews undertaken by the Council which form part of the evidence base show that there are areas which make limited contributions to the purposes of the Green Belt. It is also clear that Officers consider there to be exceptional circumstances to justify release land from the Green Belt. Members, however, have decided not to listen to this advice.

2.22 The Green Belt in Elmbridge is no more worthy of protection than, or different to the Green Belt in any of neighbouring authorities, or for that matter elsewhere in the Country, yet the Council somehow considers politically it to be with no clear rational explanation to justify its present stance.

**Q4.17 CD034a which was updated in November 2023 states that the Council consider the release of land from the Green Belt for housing purposes would negatively effect the boroughs existing settlement pattern and thus cause harm to the character of Elmbridge’s existing communities. Where in the evidence base is this assessment undertaken which explains how this conclusion has been reached?**

2.23 This conclusion is not reached within the Exception Circumstances Topic Paper (January 2022). In fact, at paragraph 8.12 it states that *“Overall, officers consider that the benefits of releasing land from the Green Belt outweigh the harm.”* Further, it should be acknowledged that nowhere in the Council evidence base does it consider what harm may be caused to the character of Elmbridge by only allocating brownfield sites which are likely to be of higher density than the surrounding areas and deliver fewer affordable homes (if any) and other community and infrastructure benefits.

2.24 At paragraph 5.84 of the Topic Paper, it notes that [emphasis added]:

*“Officers are mindful of the scope of intensifying densities in the urban areas in order to protect the prevailing character of the area. Under those options that seek to optimise development sites (Options 4a and 5a), **a balance has been struck which seeks to make efficient use of brownfield sites, whilst protecting character.** Whilst the density achieved (as set out in the LAA 2021) are significantly higher than average densities of our existing settlements, the borough’s housing need is not met.”*

2.25 It is clear from the Topic Paper that offers considered the benefit of releasing land from the Green Belt outweighed the potential harm under Option 5A thus accepting the scale of growth envisaged by this option could be achieved without an unacceptable impact on the character of Elmbridge. This topic paper has not been updated to include any assessment of character, nor is there any other document which sets out how this conclusion was reached.

2.26 Topic Paper 1 – How the Spatial Strategy was formed (June 2022) sets out on page 64 the benefits and disadvantages of Option 5 which includes Green Belt release. Harmful impacts on character are not listed under the disadvantages. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how the Council now considers Green Belt release to be harmful to the character of Elmbridge.



**Q4.18 Paragraph 145 of the Framework advises, amongst other things, that local Planning authorities should Plan positively to enhance Green Belt use. Such as looking for opportunities to provide access, to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity or to improve damaged and derelict land. In what way does the Plan address this?**

2.27 The release of land from the Green Belt for development has the potential to include additional and beneficial land uses. The delivery of housing on sites which were formerly part of the Green Belt have the ability to include significant levels of open space which can be made available to the public, recreation uses such as children’s play space and enhanced landscape buffers. In addition, sites are now required to deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

2.28 For example, at the Former Moore Place Golf Course, the existing land use as a golf course is redundant as it became no longer financially viable. The golf course comprised carefully managed grassland and whilst there is a public right of way through the site, access to the public is limited. The development of the site, in addition to the significant benefits of housing delivery, has the ability to provide enhanced public open space, higher quality ecological habitats and play space for children.

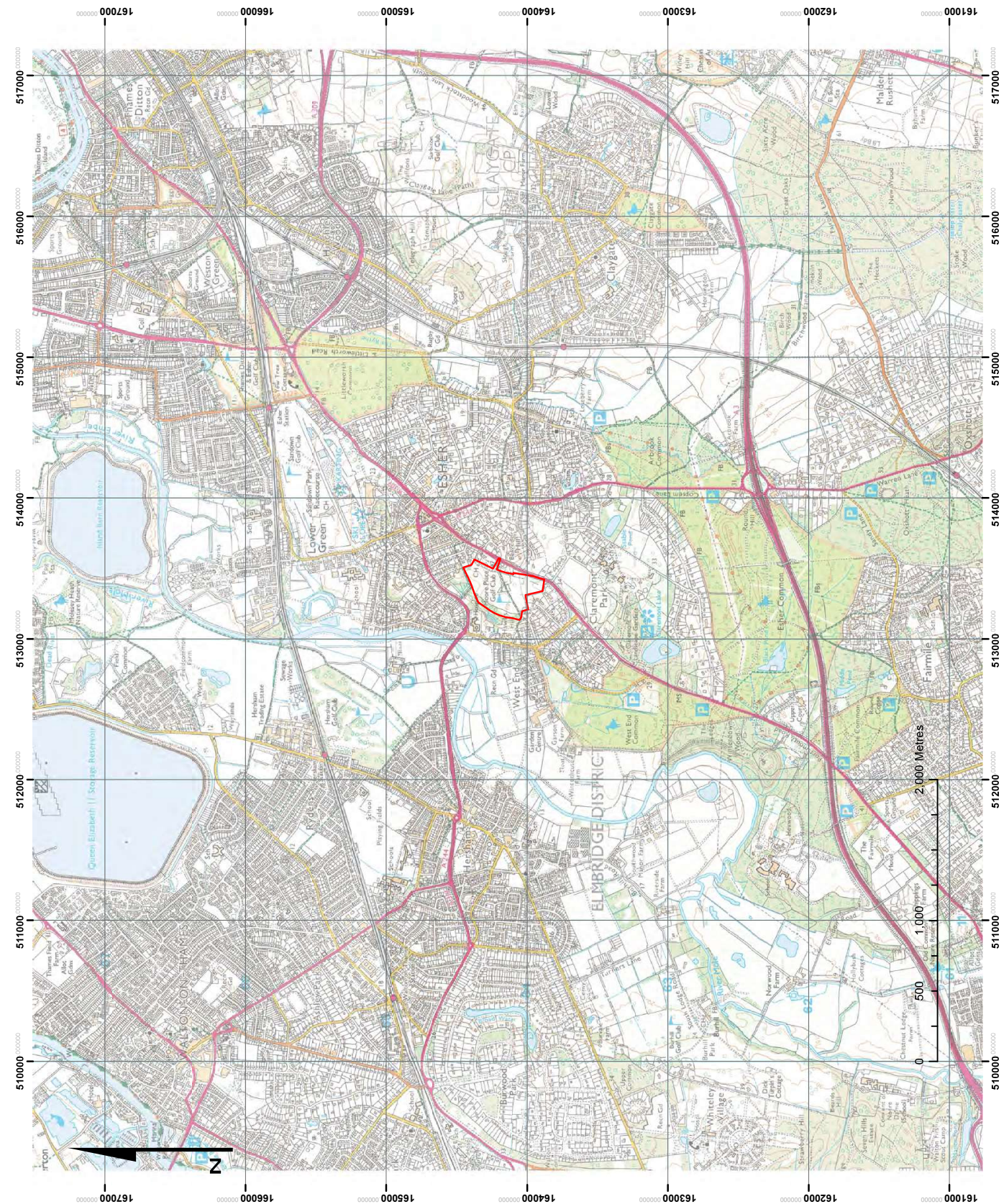
**Q4.19 With reference to paragraph 143 (e) of the Framework, are the Council able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the Plan period?**

2.29 The Council are unlikely to be unable to demonstrate that the Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered beyond the Plan period given that a significant part of the proposed supply of homes are not considered to be deliverable.

## Appendix A

**Legend:**

Site Boundary



DATE:	REVISIONS:	VERSION:	INITIALS:
<b>LOCKHART GARRATT</b>			
<b>CELEBRATING 20 YEARS</b>			
1998 - 2018			
TITLE: Site Location Plan			
PROJECT: Moore Place Golf Course			
CLIENT: Charterhouse Strategic Land Limited			
MAP REF: 4279/01/17-3345			
VERSION: v1			
DATE:	SCALE:	1:25,000@A3	
13/04/18	RF	PRODUCED BY: SM	
<small>Reproduced with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright (c) Licence number: AL 52814A00          Lockhart Garratt Ltd 8 Welbourne House, Corbygate Business Park, Weldon, Corby, NN17 5JG. No responsibility is accepted for errors, omissions or omissions without the permission of Lockhart Garratt Ltd.          7-8 Welbourne House, Corbygate Business Park, Weldon, Corby, NN17 5JG. No responsibility is accepted for errors, omissions or omissions without the permission of Lockhart Garratt Ltd.</small>			
<small>www.lguk.com</small>			



**Nexus Planning**

London

Holmes House

4 Pear Place

London SE1 8BT

T 0207 261 4240

[nexusplanning.co.uk](http://nexusplanning.co.uk)