



MATTER 11

POLICIES LPP 33 – LPP 43

BRAINTREE SECTION 2 LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION



Hearing Statement of Lewis & Scott Retirement Living Ltd

June 2021

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in response to the proposed allocation of the land at Mount Hill, Halstead. It is prepared on behalf of Lewis & Scott Retirement Living Ltd following the submission of representations by Mark Jackson Planning on behalf of the landowner, Mrs Pauline Hennessey.
- 1.2 This Hearing Statement addresses the published 'Matters, Issues and Questions', specifically the question posed within Matter 11 – A Prosperous District – Homes – Policies LPP 33 – LPP 43.
- 1.3 It is significant that outline planning permission was granted on 30 April 2020 for the development of the land at Mount Hill, Halstead (ref. 16/01646) to include a total of 16 no. supported living homes and 9 no. market homes falling within Use Class C3 of the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order. The planning permission remains extant and capable of implementation following the approval of reserved matters and discharge of any conditions or obligations. As such, the principle of development at the site has been secured through the planning application process.
- 1.4 Our submissions to Matter 10 addressed the extent of the need for specialist housing in Braintree, sought the inclusion of the site within the development boundary of Halstead (to correct what we can only assume is a cartological error) and sought to widen the wording of Policy LPP 25 to reflect the evidenced need for specialist housing.
- 1.5 As an adjunct to the above, this Hearing Statement seeks:
 - Minor amendments to Policy LPP 34; and
 - Minor amendments to Policy LPP 35.

2 POLICIES LPP 34 AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND LPP 35 SPECIALIST HOUSING

Q1. Are the above policies and site allocations justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national guidance, and local context?

Q2. Do the policies provide clear direction as to how a decision maker should react to a development proposal?

- 2.1 The Government has made clear its commitment to delivering a significant boost to housing in order to address a legacy of chronic under-delivery. The extent of under-delivery of housing has had profound social and economic impacts on the population.
- 2.2 Policies LPP 34 and LPP 35 address two areas of housing policy that should be encouraged above and beyond the normal requirements as they address sectors of the population who are unable to access affordable or suitable housing, which if left unaddressed can lead to significant health and economic impacts, particularly given the ageing population within the HMA and Braintree District.
- 2.3 As such, seeking to address the needs of these sectors should be at the forefront of Local Plan policies.
- 2.4 The Government has made clear its commitment to the delivery of specialist affordable housing in relation to First Homes, through the introduction of guidance at Paragraph: 024 Reference ID: 70-024-20210524 to Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 70-029-20210524 of the planning practice guidance.
- 2.5 In this context, both Policy LPP 34 and Policy LPP 35 should be seeking to maximise delivery of affordable and specialist housing. They should not be seeking to preclude delivery of these forms of housing, which play such a significant beneficial role for the community. As a consequence, we are seeking the deletion of those elements of the policies which seek to preclude or otherwise suppress the delivery of these forms of housing in order to comply with national planning policy.
- 2.6 Policy LPP 34 proposes the imposition of two arbitrary constraints to delivery at sub-paragraphs b. and e. of the policy. There is no evidence to justify the cap on settlement size within sub-paragraph b. Nor is there any evidence that developments that provide rural affordable housing must be capped at no more than 15 dwellings. The removal of

both of these constraints will bring the policy into line with national policy to ensure it is sound.

2.7 Policy LPP 35 is a generally supportive policy, but it does not offer sufficient support to proposals for specialist housing in the context of the need (as identified in our submissions to Matter 10) or the benefits. In addition, it introduces constraints to delivery that should be removed in the interests of boosting delivery and to accord with the other policies of the plan.

2.8 Specifically, the policy should be amended to:

Policy LPP 35

Specialist Housing

Specialist housing is defined as accommodation, which has been specifically designed and built to meet the needs of the elderly, disabled, young or vulnerable adults, and may include some elements of care and support for everyone who lives there.

Proposals for specialist housing provision are allocated on the Proposals Map and will be permitted within development boundaries providing that all the following criteria are met:

- a) Everyday services that users would expect to access, such as shops should be available on site or should be located close by and be able to be accessed by a range of transport modes
- b) Health services should be available on site or in close proximity and have capacity to accommodate the additional services required from residents
- c) Parking should be provided in line with the Council's adopted standards
- d) There is an appropriate level of private amenity space to meet the needs of residents

Minor extensions to, ~~or~~ the expansion of existing, **or the provision of new** specialist housing in the countryside, may be acceptable if all the following criteria are met;

- I. Proposals must be affordable. If market housing is required to make the scheme viable then an open book viability assessment must be provided**
- II. The scale, siting and design of proposals is sympathetic to the landscape character and host property
- III. The Council will have regard to the cumulative impact of extensions on the original character of the property and its surroundings

IV. A travel plan should be provided, which sets out how additional staff, visitors and residents will access the site and ways to minimise the number of journeys by private vehicle

~~New specialist housing on unallocated sites in the countryside will not be supported.~~

On sites allocated for specialist housing, general needs housing will not be permitted.

- 2.9 To expand upon the suggested policy changes, as noted in previous submissions, Lewis & Scott specialises in the delivery of affordable specialist housing and as such this provision risks reducing the potential supply of rural exception specialist housing contrary to the provisions of LPP 34. In this context the inclusion of the sentence serves no actual beneficial purpose and risks reducing delivery for a significant, and growing, sector of the population that is most at need.
- 2.10 In addition to the above, the Council should confirm that it is committed to increasing the supply of specialist housing in the Plan period and identify targets for delivery against which progress can be measured. As specialist housing forms such a critical source of housing for the ageing population (particularly in the context of the needs identified in our Matter 10 submissions) it should be capable of measuring total supply and applying the principles of the housing land supply tests.
- 2.11 As detailed in our Matter 10 Hearing Statement, the ageing population is a critical issue that must be addressed proactively, particularly for those who are unable to afford market specialist housing. Without these changes, not only will the health & wellbeing of those most vulnerable be affected, the policies are not in accordance with national policies and contradict other policies in the plan. As such, the decision-maker would be unable to clearly define the correct approach to the determination of applications that are brought forward. As this would risk delay to the delivery of, or in the worst-case refusal of, proposals to deliver affordable specialist housing then these changes are of the utmost importance for the benefit of the community as a whole.