

Statement Regarding Matter 4

Submitted by:

Kirklees Community Action Network

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Q ref	<u>Matter 4 – Housing Land Supply & Delivery</u>
4.a	<p><u>Reasons not to deliver full OAHN.</u> The Council should NOT be seeking to deliver the full OAHN at the outset of the plan, primarily to mitigate the delivery risk. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OAHN can only ever be a very rough estimate, which will need to be adjusted many times over the lifetime of the plan. We cannot predict the future 15 years hence and we cannot afford to lock ourselves in to an OAHN that may prove to be too high or we cannot deliver. We need to have flexibility to adjust OAHN down, as well as up, OR we need to start off with a low OAHN and only increase it when proven necessary. • The plan does not have any flexibility to reverse site allocations that have already been made on the basis of an initially inflated OAHN. It only has flexibility to allocate more land for development. It therefore makes sense to start off with a low OAHN and increase it if, and only if, the actual future housing demand is proven. <p>Both these points are just simple, common sense, risk mitigation techniques that would be incorporated in any normal project or programme management proposal. Unfortunately the plan seems to eschew all common sense, modern, programme management methodology.</p>
4.b	<p><u>The housing target of 31,140 should certainly not be regarded as a “Minimum”.</u> We cannot predict the future 15 years hence and the alleged housing requirement of 31,140 dwellings can only ever be an “educated guess” at this moment in time. Actual demand may prove to be significantly less. OAHN will undoubtedly vary during the lifetime of the plan and those variations could be very significant [e.g. downwards as a result of Brexit]. It should not therefore be accorded the artificial trappings of a fixed figure such as “maximum”, “minimum” or “fixed target”. We need to keep all options open.</p>
4.f	<p><u>Main risks to delivery.</u> Whilst developers may say that nimbyism, land availability, and shortage of resources (particularly labour & materials) are the main obstacles to delivery, we believe that these are relatively low risk issues compared to variations in the national and local economy, public confidence, uncertainties of demand, availability of personal finance [mortgages] and the inflexible nature of the plan itself. The only one that can be addressed within the plan is its inflexible nature. However if that were to be properly addressed it would also go some way towards mitigating the other major risk factors.</p>

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4.h	<p>Windfalls and Brownfield land supply. We refute the Council’s assertion that <i>“a brownfield only approach will not meet the district’s housing and employment land requirements alone”</i>. In our view, if the Council were to place a proper strategic focus on urban regeneration and brownfield development, whilst restricting green belt releases and taking a pragmatic, effective approach to plan management, housing numbers and land allocations, it is more than likely that the District’s housing and employment land requirements will be met, without any significant urban extension in to the Green Belt – certainly for many years to come. Over 90% of the housing built in Kirklees over the last 15 years has been built on brown field land and there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that the supply of brown field land will not continue at or near that level in to the future. The fact that the number of brownfield house completions has fallen in the past three years is entirely due to the Council having lost its focus on brownfield development and the current planning “free-for-all” which effectively gives developers “carte-blanche” for development on (Green Field) Provisional Open Land.</p> <p>The Council’s view is not and never can be a statement of fact. It may ultimately prove to be true or false, depending on the actual amount of brownfield land that comes forward over the lifetime of the plan and the actual market demand for housing over the plan period. We also reject the Council’s completely unsubstantiated view that <i>“it is unlikely that past levels of windfall completions will be sustained throughout the Local Plan period”</i>. We believe that the number of windfall completions could even increase, if the Council placed a proper strategic, robust and practical focus on master-planned urban regeneration of the older and larger urban areas.</p> <p>We accept that brown field land comes forward in the form of windfalls and it is not possible for the Council to identify all brown field sites at the commencement of the plan. However this problem can be resolved quite easily in the plan by adopting a flexible plan structure and/or making an appropriate and realistic allowance for brownfield windfalls at the start of the plan. We consider that it would be practical and realistic, based on the evidence of historic brown field land supply, to make a minimum windfall allowance of zero in year 1 (when the majority of brown field sites are already known), rising linearly to 900 dwellings in year 5 and 900 dwellings per annum thereafter (the historic norm). That would mean windfalls would contribute a minimum total of 11,500 dwellings to the land supply over the 15 year plan period, compared with the ultra-conservative figure of 4,500 dwellings that has currently been included. NB: We note that clause 48 of the NPPF specifically allows Council’s to include a windfall allowance in 5 year land supply assessments but the Council have neglected to do so in the first five years of this Local Plan.</p>
4.h	<p>Small versus large sites. We believe that the Council have failed to properly recognise in the plan, the importance of balance between small and large sites. Large sites tend to be green-field sites and are typically developed by large National house building companies. However the smaller sites are often infill or brownfield sites which are developed by Local builders. The balance between small and large sites therefore has a significant impact on the brownfield / greenfield balance, as well as the local economy. Historically the smaller brownfield sites have made a significant contribution to the overall land supply and housing delivery in Kirklees. We think that should continue and be encouraged within the plan.</p>

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4.x	<p>“Development Land Banking” We are appalled by the plan statement that <i>“A windfall rate higher than expected will mean that the council will maintain a significant supply of deliverable housing sites and support choice and competition in the market for land”</i>. We call it “land banking” and say it is completely unacceptable. We actually expect the windfall rate will be much higher than the Council have allowed for in the Local Plan and, together with over-allocation of green field sites at the start of the plan, it would mean the unacceptable, uncontrolled growth of significant “allocated & consented land banks” (Something that is already happening in many parts of Kirklees, where developers are simply “sitting” on land that already has planning permission). It may suit planners and developers to have a surfeit of allocated and/or consented land within the housing supply chain, but it simply is not fair on local communities and future generations of residents to have green fields and green belt prematurely allocated and/or consented for development, when it is not strictly necessary to do so and the need for those allocations has not been objectively assessed. We believe it is fundamentally wrong, perhaps even offensive, to adopt a plan that will facilitate more building on green field and green belt land than is strictly necessary and/or gives planners and developers the free choice, to build on green field instead of brown field land.</p>
4.x	<p>Safeguarded Land. We have included comments about safeguarded land in matter 4, as well as matter 8, because we regard the allocation of “safeguarded land” as the first irreversible step in the land supply chain, rather than just a spurious mechanism to minimise the need for future changes to Green Belt boundaries. In that context we are deeply concerned about Policy PLP6 and its practical implications.</p> <p>In our view, assuming that policies and planning attitudes remain the same, the planners in 2032 will allow development on the safeguarded land that they have inherited from 2017 and roll back the green belt boundaries even further to create new “safeguarded land” for their successors to allocate for building in 2047. The Green Belt boundaries will therefore be subject to continual “roll-back” at every planning cycle and “safeguarded land” will simply become the first irrevocable allocation in the land supply chain.</p> <p>We note that the NPPF requires the Planning Authority to base land allocations on “objectively assessed needs”. However the need for “safeguarded land” allocations has never been “objectively assessed” and there is absolutely no evidence to show that they will be required for development in the next plan period (2032 to 2047), especially on the scale and in the locations proposed. It would be ludicrous to use the 2014 base ONS projections as an evidence base for the period 2032 to 2047; yet that is exactly what is being proposed. In our view, the Council have failed to recognise that, once green fields are identified in the plan as “Safeguarded” land, they become irrevocable “committed” allocations in the land supply chain, on the first stage of a one way conveyor belt towards development.</p>