



# **CEC SADPD Examination Hearing: Matter 3 - Housing**

Land at Heybridge Lane, Prestbury

On behalf of PH Property Holdings Ltd  
September 2021

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Asteer Planning LLP on behalf of PH Property Holdings Ltd (PH Property) and responds to the Matters Issues and Questions for the Examination (MIQs) into Cheshire East Council's Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) prepared by the Inspector.
- 1.2 This Hearing Statement relates to Matter 3 – Housing.
- 1.3 PH Property is an SME housebuilder focused on delivering high quality residential development in Cheshire. Over the past 25 years, PH Property has developed a strong track record of developing housing in Cheshire East and their recent developments include: Alderley Park, Alderley Edge, Somerford Booths Hall, Somerford, Congleton and Heys Green, Henbury, Macclesfield.
- 1.4 Our representations in this Hearing Statement reflect PH Property's role as a experienced regional housebuilder with various land interests in Cheshire East.
- 1.5 This statement responds to the MIQs related to Matter 3 – Housing, Questions 47, 53, 59 and 68. Our response deals with the questions under the relevant Issue heading and includes the full question text for ease of reviewing. Abbreviations follow those used in the MIQs.

## 2. OTHER TYPES OF HOUSING (POLICIES HOU 1-4)

- 2.1 This chapter presents PH Property's representations in connection with other types of housing.

### **Housing Mix (Policy HOU 1)**

**Question 47. Is the requirement of Policy HOU 1 for all major housing developments to provide an 'appropriate mix' of housing types and sizes using the figures in Table 8.1 as a starting point, justified on the basis of proportionate evidence, clear and unambiguous, and consistent with the LPS and national policy?**

- 2.2 In principle, PH Property supports the need to deliver a mix of property types and tenures, however it has concerns with Policy HOU 1 and in particular Table 8.1. We question whether Table 8.1 is appropriate, effective and necessary. We consider that as currently drafted, Policy HOU 1 does not meet the tests of soundness and we propose that Table 8.1 should be removed from Policy HOU 1 for the reasons set out below:
- 2.3 Firstly, Cheshire East is a large local authority area and the geography, character, housing needs and viability can vary significantly. Prior to the formation of Cheshire East, the Borough was made up of three former Authorities: Macclesfield, Congleton and Crewe and Nantwich which shows the extent of the wide-ranging economic, social and environmental considerations across the Borough. Whilst it is acknowledged that the housing mix presented in Table 8.1 is indicative, it will be used as a starting point for housing mix considerations. Table 8.1 takes no account of the economic, social and environmental considerations faced on a settlement by settlement basis nor a site by site basis. It proposes a blanket approach which is neither appropriate nor effective and is not clear.
- 2.4 Secondly, Table 8.1 has been informed by the Cheshire East Residential Mix Study 2019 (ED 49) which does not assess the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required on a settlement by settlement basis. As stated above, the Borough of Cheshire East is large (made up of 3 former Local Authority Areas) and has wide ranging economic, social and environmental considerations. Furthermore, the demographics and demand for housing differs across the Borough and on a settlement by settlement basis. Table 8.1 adopts a blanket approach and has no regard to circumstances on a settlement by settlement or site by site basis. It is therefore inappropriate and should be removed from the policy.

- 2.5 Thirdly, it is unclear whether the Cheshire East Residential Mix Study 2019 (ED 49) which has informed Table 8.1 is based upon a demographic assessment only or whether market trends and demand have been factored in. For example, does the evidence basis take into account the growing need for additional space at home to cater for spare bedrooms, home working and the increased time people now spend at home which has been further exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic. It is essential that Policy HOU 1 is flexible to address changing market demand over the Plan period.
- 2.6 Fourthly, there is a risk that rather than being applied as a starting point for consideration, Table 8.1 is applied prescriptively in the decision making process. This could have serious viability implications, in particular for small and medium sized sites. It could also lead to unsustainable patterns of development, for example by providing small starter homes in less accessible locations.
- 2.7 We support the inclusion of point iii which requires applicants and decision makers to consider the character and design of the site when reflecting on a scheme's ability to deliver a mix of housing. However, Table 8.1 has no regard to local character. For example one bedroom properties are likely to be provided in apartment buildings which will not be accessible in some locations for example small edge of settlement Green Belt sites where landscape and visual considerations are important.
- 2.8 In summary, PH Property has detailed concerns with Policy HOU 1 and it is proposed that the policy is amended to a) remove reference to Table 8.1 in point i and b) add a site's viability as a factor to also be considered in point iii.

### **Self and Custom Build Dwellings (Policy HOU 3)**

**Question 53. Is Policy HOU 3 justified and consistent with national policy in seeking serviced plots for self and custom-build housing on housing developments of 30 or more homes? In particular:**

- a) Given the current excess in the number of serviced plots permitted over and above the number of self-build and custom-build applicants on the register in Cheshire East, as evidenced in the 2019/20 Annual Monitoring Report, is criterion 2 of the policy justified?**
- b) What is the evidence to support the site size threshold of 30 dwellings?**
- c) What is considered to be an 'acceptable proportion' of serviced plots?**

2.9 In principle, PH Property supports Part 1 of policy HOU 3 which supports proposals for self-build and custom-build housing in suitable locations. However, PH Property objects to Part 2 of the policy requiring housing developments of 30 or more homes to provide a proportion of serviced plots of land because it does not meet the tests of soundness for the following reasons:

1. CEC already has a supply of sites with planning permission for self-build or custom build housing which outstrips demand and as a result we firstly question what the need is for a requirement for a proportion of housing sites to deliver self-build and custom-build plots.
2. Setting a site threshold of 30 dwellings could have significant implications on the viability of small and medium sized sites and this is not accounted for in the policy. This is an important consideration and could impact housing delivery.
3. The policy is imprecise and is not clear as to what proportion of a site would be required to provide such plots. Due to a lack of demand, the requirement to deliver self build and custom housing will take up space on housing sites which will further impact housing delivery.
4. The provision of self-build and custom build plots could complicate the discharge of planning conditions putting further pressure on this Council function and leading to delays in delivery.
5. The provision of self-build and custom build plots comes with uncertainty about what could be delivered, and in light of supply outstripping demand whether plots will indeed be delivered. Vacant plots would have a negative impact on amenity of new residents to a development site whilst uncertainty about the type of housing that might be built is likely to also have a negative impact on sales and the overall value of housing developments.

2.10 Self-build and custom build housing does have a role to play in housing delivery and is supported by Part 1 of Policy HOU 3. However, the second part of Policy HOU 3 is not justified and does not meet the tests of soundness. For the reasons set out above, it is therefore respectfully requested that Part 2 of Policy HOU 3 is removed.

### 3. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS & REQUIREMENTS (POLICIES HOU 6-14)

- 3.1 This chapter presents PH Property's representations in connection with other development standards and requirements.

#### **Backland development (Policy HOU 8)**

**Question 59. Is Policy HOU 8 clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals? In particular how would the following terms and tests be measured in criteria 1 and 2?**

- a 'satisfactory' means of access?
- an access with an 'appropriate' relationship to existing residential properties?
- 'unacceptable' consequences for the amenity of existing or proposed properties?

- 3.2 PH Property would like to comment on the consideration 3 to Policy HOU 8. Consideration 3 states: *"are equal or subordinate in scale to surrounding buildings, particularly those fronting the highway"*.

- 3.3 PH Property would like to emphasize that developments should make an efficient use of land in accordance with paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The consideration should be maintaining an areas prevailing character and setting rather than restricting the scale of development to equal or subordinate scale of surrounding buildings. Point 4 of Policy HOU 8 addresses character and therefore, to be consistent with paragraph 124 of the NPPF, it is proposed that criteria 3 is removed.

#### **Small and medium sized sites (Policy HOU 14)**

**Question 68. Does Policy HOU 14 serve a clear purpose and how would it be effective in enhancing the supply of small and medium sized sites for housing, alongside all of the other policies in the plan which affect the supply of small and medium sized sites?**

- 3.4 PH Property strongly supports Policy HOU 14 and it's purpose is to add weight to the consideration of small and medium sized sites. This approach accords with Paragraph 69 of the NPPF which highlights the important contribution small and medium sized sites can make to meeting the housing requirement of an area and can be built out relatively quickly.

- 3.5 Small and medium sized housing builders are an important component of the house building industry and play a pivotal role in housing delivery. It is respectfully requested that the representations that PH Property have made to Matters 1, 2, 3 and 6 should be taken into account because the Plan as drafted and in particular Policies HOU 1, HOU 3 and HOU 8 could affect the supply of housing from small and medium sized house builders who in the main deliver residential development which is bespoke and high quality.