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by e-mail

Dear Inspectors,

Examination of the London Borough of Brent Local Plan Initial Matters

Thank you for your letter dated 29 April 2020. Please find below the Council's response.

General Matters

In terms of a timetable of production of the identified documents:

Environment Agency Statement of Common Ground: The Council needs further dialogue with the Environment Agency following its update of the SFRA Level 2 and the Sequential and Exceptions Test. A meeting has been organised for the 6th May 2020. The Council has been informed that Covid-19 has and will continue to impact on the Agency's capacity to support the Council compared to normal. Following this meeting, the Council will be able to provide a timetable for the production of a Statement of Common Ground.

Highways England Statement of Common Ground: The Council is seeking a joint meeting with Highways England and Transport for London (TfL) on impacts of development on the strategic highway network. TfL have a transport model of the scale required to consider predicted impacts of growth in north London. It is understood that Highways England made similar representations on the London Plan. Previous timetabled meetings have been postponed due to the impacts of Covid-19. Many staff at TfL have been furloughed which is affecting the ability to respond to this matter. The Council will continue to engage with both parties to ensure the production of a Statement of Common Ground as soon as possible

Gypsies and Travellers: This matter will be addressed in the Housing Topic Paper that the Council will produce by 18 May 2020. The Council is not proposing to change the draft Brent Local Plan policy in light of the Secretary of State's Directions to the Mayor of London on Policy H14 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation.

Statement of Conformity with the London Plan: The Mayor wrote to the Secretary of State on 24 April 2020. He sought further dialogue on the potential to amend the directions taking account of additional information he is making available to the Secretary of State. As the directions include industrial land policy, the GLA on 30th

April 2020, in its correspondence with the Council, identified the need to wait until the conclusion of this process before updating the Statement of General Conformity.

Air Quality

Apologies for not including the information identified as part of the submission documents. The Council will publish a number of documents related to the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and Action Plan in the Local Plan evidence base. These include:

- 'The Brent Air Quality Action Plan 2005-2010'. This sets out some of the background to the declaration of the Air Quality Management Area in April 2002. (to be referenced EB-SI-04)
- 'Brent Air Quality Action Plan – Report 2: Brent AQ Assessment and AQMA Review' July 2016. This was the last formal review of the Borough's AQMA. It generated Air Quality Action Plan Measures. (to be referenced EB-SI-05)
- 'The London Borough of Brent Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2018', published September 2019. This sets out latest available progress against the Air Quality Action Plan Measures. (to be referenced EB-SI-06)

Viability Work

The Council has asked BNP Paribas to provide additional viability work on Policy BE1 10% Affordable Workspace in Growth Areas and on policy BH9 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation incorporation in Growth Area sites. BNP Paribas have identified that the Council will be in receipt of this by 13 May 2020.

BNP Paribas has replied separately to the Quintain/ Quod representation on Build to Rent. This is attached and will be added to the Post Submission Documents for Examination page on the website. (Reference: Core_Gen_01a)

Flood Risk

The Council is satisfied that its overall methodology and approach to the sequential and exceptions testing of sites is sufficiently robust. Nevertheless, as identified it is in on-going discussions with the Environment Agency with a view to removing any concerns that they may have. This will be addressed in the Statement of Common Ground as requested.

Transport

The documents identified are the main ones in terms of high-level transportation strategy and identified schemes currently. In addition, the transport aspects of the Local Plan have also been informed by the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy (MTS), which sets out the Mayor's policies and proposals to reshape transport in London up to 2041. For example, the active and sustainable travel objectives of the Local Plan closely align with the principal aim of the MTS, which is for 80% of all journeys in the Capital to be made on foot, by cycle or by public transport by 2041. The Local Plan also strongly advocates the Mayor's principle of 'Good Growth' – whereby active, efficient and sustainable travel will be the best outcome in new developments.

Individual transport proposals such as the West London Orbital are going through processes associated with feasibility and viability testing. Additional information can be provided on individual projects where the Inspectors feel this would assist.

The Brent Long Term Transport Strategy (LTTS) 2015-2035 is the Council's principal strategy for improvements to the transport network and services in the borough. It includes the implementation of measures and interventions which will help connect people and places; promote healthy, sustainable travel; and create better streets and places – key Local Plan objectives. The Brent Cycling and Walking Strategies emerge from and align with the LTTS, but cover a much shorter timeframe. Both strategies are reflected in the Local Plan – in particular, the need for high quality, safe cycling and walking links and supporting infrastructure to be provided to support travel by these modes. However, the LTTS and the Cycling and Walking Strategies all precede the development of the MTS and the Brent Third Local Implementation Plan (LIP3) – the Council's strategy and delivery plan for implementing the MTS at the borough level - which align more closely with the timeframe of the Local Plan (to 2041).

As well as the need to reflect the policies and proposals in the MTS and LIP3, the LTTS also requires an update to take into account the Council's vision for Brent to be carbon neutral by 2030, as reflected in the Council's emerging Climate Change Action Plan. In addition, the current Covid-19 Pandemic will require a rethink as to how people will travel safely and sustainably both during and in the period following the pandemic. To this end, the Council is aiming to commence a review of the LTTS within the next 3-6 months, with the aim of producing a revised strategy by Summer 2021.

On potential proposals to address congestion on the strategic road network, reduce severance, or improve cycle routes, these issues are discussed with and recognised by TfL at regular liaison meetings. The ability to address the Council's ambitions where they interact with the strategic road network, is essentially controlled by TfL. This is both as the regulating transport authority whose permission is required to do works that affect the network and through the Mayor's transport funds, which are a major source of income for capital works identified in the LTIP3. For roads such as the North Circular or A5, their strategic role in supporting efficient movement of a significant number of trips around London is a high priority for TfL. Any such work is subject to modelling and significant adverse impacts are unlikely to be allowed. Projects such as enhancing the A5 corridor in accordance with the healthy streets agenda are currently restricted by funding limitations rather than their potential for adverse impact on traffic movement, e.g. Kilburn High Road.

The Council is promoting development in accordance with the Mayor's 2041 80% sustainable trips ambition. The majority of development in Brent is brownfield land regeneration in PTAL areas 3 or above. Much is 'car free' development, more often than not, there is a significant reduction in parking provision and potential for travel by private car compared to what existed before. In this scenario most transport assessments, even for significant developments in large growth areas such as Alperton are focused on provision of additional public transport improvements rather than addressing adverse highways impacts. As such, to date the Council has not undertaken the type of borough wide strategic study on the wider movement network with its potential for associated impacts on the highway network as sought by Highways England.

Staples Corner is the borough's largest potential Growth Area close to the M1 and likely of most interest to Highways England. To date the Council has not invested in significant supporting studies for this area. This is due to the uncertainty of what can be achieved at Staples Corner because of GLA policy objections in relation to release of or co-location of other uses on industrial land. The Council's draft policies look to re-provide industrial space and promote 'car free' development. Similar to recent

experience of development of other areas in Brent, it is not anticipated that development at Staples Corner would therefore have wider significant transportation impacts.

Staples Corner area has previously been subject to extensive modelling associated with the Brent Cross development. The initial outline application, plus supporting additional supplementary work such as the A5 Corridor Study related to phases is addressing impacts on the strategic and local highway network, through a series of planned improvements.

The Council has been working with GLA Regeneration who commissioned a scoping study for Staples Corner Strategic Industrial Area (SIL). This has tested the potential to meet GLA draft London Plan requirements of intensification only of SIL. It has done a scoping masterplan of a sub-area of Staples Corner. This has sought delivery of a 65% industrial plot ratio to provide the potential to release land elsewhere for residential. In doing this work, because of the likely expense of amending complicated road infrastructure in this area, the study through the input of transportation advisors has sought to limit highway impacts to a minimum through proposed development.

As identified, the Council is arranging a joint meeting with Highways England and TfL with the most updated position to be outlined in a Statement of Common Ground.

Housing

More details on housing policies will be provided in the Housing Topic Paper. The minimum delivery target that the Council wish to take forward in the Brent Local Plan for the period 2019/20-2028/29 is the London Plan Intend to Publish 23,250 dwellings. This change to the published draft Local Plan is set out in the proposed main modifications supplied with the submitted draft Plan. This is for monitoring purposes for the housing delivery test. The Housing Trajectory submitted with the draft Plan (document EB_H_06) identifies a buffer. This gives greater certainty of delivery. Throughout the whole Plan period, the Council is proposing a minimum of 44,845 dwellings. This is in general conformity with paragraph 4.1.2 of the draft London Plan. It reflects the capacity available from identified sites and windfalls and should not be seen as a maximum, or cap to delivery. The delivery of this amount is considered to be appropriately justified by the supporting evidence of the Local Plan housing trajectory.

The Secretary of State's disappointment with regards to the draft London Plan in its inability to achieve the identified housing needs resulting from the Government's standard methodology, is noted. Nevertheless, the standard methodology is the starting point for Development Plans in terms of needs, it does not automatically translate into housing targets. National policy and guidance recognises that it might not be possible for a variety of reasons for plans to meet the needs. It is noted that the Secretary of State did not amend the targets resulting from the Examination Panel's recommendations. In setting London's and Brent's target, the Panel took account of needs and the actual capacity to deliver additional homes in the borough. The next review will similarly take into account needs and London's capacity as a whole to deliver, setting targets for individual boroughs. For Brent there is currently no indication if targets will be higher.

Notwithstanding the standard methodology, national planning practice guidance identifies that Local Plans should not seek to revisit housing targets set by spatial development strategies. In the context of Local Plan targets set by the London Plan

and its position on housing targets beyond 10 years set out in paragraph 4.1.2, the Brent Local Plan target for the period to 2041 is in general conformity with the London Plan.

The Local Plan housing trajectory identifies delivery of 2,542 dwellings per annum in the first 15 years. This is above the current draft London Plan 2,325 annualised target. For the remaining years as might be expected, as Brent relies almost entirely on the recycling of land most of which is currently in use, the delivery figure drops to around 959 dwellings per annum. This figure would be likely to rise in the next Local Plan. This is as in the intervening years large sites not yet known will gain greater certainty of being released, and therefore allocated. In addition, an increase in the small sites windfall figure might also be justifiable based on historic trends achieved.

The Council aimed to achieve conformity with the initial draft London Plan target of 29,150 dwellings in the period 2018/19-2028/19, but despite best endeavours was unable to identify how it would achieve it. It is noted that in the representations received, no significant additional capacity that would radically alter the Plan's delivery levels was identified. Consequently, the Council feels that its Local Plan delivery targets are currently justified and that there are no other reasonable alternatives.

On small sites, the Council considers that the 'Small Sites SHLAA for West London. Part B: Delivery and Implementation Trends' November 2018 work it commissioned with other West London boroughs provides a better estimate of likely delivery. It will add this study to the evidence base (to be referenced EB_H_07, EB_H_08 and EB_H_09). For the purposes of the annual monitoring report, it will monitor delivery of small sites against the London Plan target.

Employment

The Council is satisfied that the evidence base it has to support its position on industrial land is sufficiently robust. It commissioned the West London Employment Land Evidence work (submission document EB_E_011) with other neighbouring boroughs. All the boroughs and the West London Alliance have scrutinised the document and approved its contents. There is no nationally prescribed methodology of identifying industrial needs. Consequently, the Council considers that the West London Employment Land evidence is a valid alternative to identify appropriate amounts and sectors of needs.

The Council does not dispute that overall there is a need to provide at least comparable amounts of industrial floorspace to those that exist. Like the Panel who considered the London Plan and subsequently the Secretary of State, it does not believe that the Mayor's Intend to Publish London Plan provides the right flexible policy context when taking account of relevant factors to ensure delivery of new industrial floorspace that meets needs. The Council will publish a topic paper on employment matters on 18 May 2020.

I hope that this has answered the issues that you raised. We will aim to provide greater clarity on Statements of Common Ground as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

P. Lewin

Paul Lewin
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