

North Chelmsford Area Action Plan (NCAAP)

Examination in Public – Matter 3

Statement of Common Ground between Broomfield Parish Council, Great Waltham Parish Council, Little Waltham Parish Council and Chelmsford Borough Council

In respect of Site Allocations and Methodology in North West Chelmsford and Broomfield

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Statement is to outline areas of agreement between Broomfield, Little Waltham and Great Waltham Parish Councils and Chelmsford Borough Council in respect of the NCAAP strategy for North West Chelmsford, namely:

- The limit on the number of proposed dwellings in North West Chelmsford and Broomfield to a maximum of 800 dwellings as set out in para. 2.3 of the NCAAP Proposed Submission document
- The dispersed approach to site allocations
- The unsuitability of certain rejected sites, particularly the area of Pleshey Farmland Plateau between Broomfield, Little Waltham and Broads Green (Great Waltham).

2. The limit on the number of proposed dwellings in North West Chelmsford and Broomfield

All parties are aware of their respective positions in relation to the Core Strategy. However, it is accepted that an agreed level of development has now been determined by the adoption of that Strategy.

In North West Chelmsford, the NCAAP allocates up to 800 dwellings spread across 4 Site Allocations. This upper limit reflects a number of constraints on development in the North West area, these include:

- The sensitivities of the landscape of the Pleshey Farmland Plateau and the Chelmer River Valley. The characteristics of these landscape areas are set out in broad terms in the Borough Council's Landscape Character Assessment. Further detail for the Parish of Broomfield (particularly the views of parishioners on the role and value of landscape character areas) is set out in the Broomfield Community Landscape Character Statement
- The constraints of the road infrastructure in the area, particularly the B1008
- Other infrastructure constraints, for instance sewerage capacity.

The Parish Councils are in agreement with the NCAAP Strategy to impose a maximum limit to the number of new dwellings in North West Chelmsford. Given the constraints set out in the NCAAP, all parties agree that it would not be appropriate for more than 800 dwellings to

be allocated in North West Chelmsford; and that up to 800 dwellings are only possible given the dispersed approach set out in the Plan.

3. The dispersed approach to site allocation

The Parish Councils support the dispersed development pattern of the sites allocated in North West Chelmsford.

The NCAAP Proposed Submission Document notes (para. 2.24) that in the absence of any planned major highway or transportation interventions (which would in themselves have an adverse impact on landscape character), it is important to disperse the traffic impact of new developments across a wider area. The Parish Councils are in agreement with this.

The Parish Councils also agree that a dispersed approach reduces the impact of the development on the landscape, as a centralised development of 800 dwellings would have a hugely detrimental impact on the Pleshey Farmland Plateau or Chelmer River Valley. Given the constraints of the Chelmer River Valley Green Wedge, the other possible locations for a centralised development are limited and would be likely to lead to the coalescence of either north Chelmsford and Broomfield, or Broomfield and Little Waltham (and possibly Broads Green in Great Waltham).

The Parish Councils also agree that the dispersed approach with four discrete site allocations is the most Sound approach because it enables a greater degree of flexibility.

The dispersed approach also enables a range of community benefits, including some development at Broomfield Hospital and some in Broomfield village to support new community facilities, whilst also making greater use of existing facilities within the Principal Neighbourhood Centre at Newlands Spring.

All parties therefore agree that a centralised approach to development in North West Chelmsford would be less sound and would lead to significantly worse impacts on the local landscape and infrastructure.

4. The unsuitability of certain rejected sites

A number of alternative sites have been promoted by landowners and developers throughout the preparation of the NCAAP. Broomfield, Great Waltham and Little Waltham Parish Councils are opposed to developments that lead to the coalescence of settlements and the loss of significant areas of countryside. The Parish Councils therefore strongly support the Borough Council's decision through the NCAAP to reject the proposal for a large centralised development north and west of Broomfield Hospital.

This area of Pleshey Farmland Plateau is currently unspoilt countryside, with Woodhouse Lane and the gradually rising land of the Plateau forming a natural boundary with the

Hospital and Hospice sites. Due to the relief, the Plateau is also highly visible, which increases its sensitivity to adverse change.

All parties therefore feel that this site is less Sound than the sites proposed in the NCAAP for the following reasons:

- Lack of evidence of the need for Hospital-related housing, beyond that already provided for in the NCAAP
- Remoteness of the site from the wider transport network and facilities in Chelmsford town centre
- Significant impact on traffic levels using the B1008
- Lack of synergy with existing settlements
- Loss of opportunities to create better community facilities and a local focus in the Angel Green area of Broomfield, in particular the opportunity to rebuild the local primary school as a 2-form entry school on an adjacent site
- Difficulty of a new settlement of up to 800 houses to offer a good range of community facilities in the long-term, especially a primary school
- Likelihood that the settlement would need to grow to support such facilities in the future, increasing the problems listed above and potentially impacting upon the adjacent archaeological site.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, as the adopted Core Strategy and consequent development of up to 800 dwellings in this area is a given, the Parish Councils and Chelmsford Borough Council agree that the pattern and location of site allocations set out in the NCAAP Proposed Submission Document represent the most appropriate and Sound option available.