INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE SUFFOLK COASTAL LOCAL PLAN

MATTER 1 STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF PERSIMMON HOMES (SUFFOLK)
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Persimmon Homes Suffolk (hereafter referred to as ‘Persimmon Homes’) who has land interests within Suffolk Coastal District.

1.2 This statement provides a response to Matter 1 and should be read in conjunction with representations submitted to the Draft Submission Local Plan [CD-A1] in February 2019. Persimmon’s interest relates to land off Bell Lane, south of Kesgrave, which forms part of a wider site referred to as ‘Site 520’ in the Council’s evidence base.

1.3 Matter 1 pertains to Procedural/Legal Requirements and concerns the following issue:

**Issue: Whether all Statutory and Regulatory requirements have been met?**
2. DUTY TO COOPERATE

Question 1.1: Is there clear evidence that, in the preparation of the Plan, the Council has engaged constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with neighbouring authorities and prescribed bodies on strategic matters and issues with cross-boundary impacts in accordance with section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended [the 2004 Act]?

2.1 Under section 33A of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004, local planning authorities (LPAs) are required to demonstrate evidence of having made every effort to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters.

2.2 Paragraphs 20-23 of the NPPF (2019) lists the strategic policies for which provision should be made within plans, and these include housing, employment, transport infrastructure and conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, amongst other things.

2.3 NPPF paragraphs 24-27 provide clear policy advice on the effective cooperation in plan making, including a requirement on strategic policy-making authorities to prepare one or potentially more statements of common ground (SoCG) setting out the cross-boundary matters to be addressed and outline the progress in resolving the spatial issues deemed to be a priority. The updated NPPF provides a clearer policy basis to understand what the strategic priorities are and gauge whether strategic policy making authorities are collaborating constructively to address these matters.

2.4 NPPF paragraph 35, confirms that at the examination stage, for plans to be found sound, amongst other things, they should be effective including "working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground".

2.5 Alongside the changes to the NPPF is extensive guidance on Duty to Cooperate (DTC) in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). With regards to maintaining effective cooperation, paragraph: 015 (Reference ID: 61-015-20190315) of the PPG sets out some of the activities expected to be documented in a SoCG. This includes assessing impacts of emerging policies and preparing and agreeing
strategic policies affecting more than one authority area to ensure development is coordinated and ensuring unmet needs are met.

2.6 PPG paragraph 022 (Reference ID: 61-022-20190315) places far greater emphasis on the need for strategic policy-making authorities to demonstrate that they have explored all options for addressing strategic matters unless to do so would contradict policies in the NPPF.

2.7 With the above in mind we are concerned that it has not yet be demonstrated that the duty to cooperate has been met in regard to the delivery of the identified spatial priorities for the Ipswich Strategic Planning Area (ISPA) and in particular addressing the cross-boundary needs of Ipswich.

2.8 Whilst it is commendable that a Statement of Common Ground has been prepared between the Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Authorities (ISPA) (CD-AD13), and regular meetings have clearly taken place since 2013 along with the collation of joint evidence, government policy and guidance places greater emphasis on delivering outcomes, and where spatial matters cannot be addressed then every effort to secure cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters should be made before plans are submitted.

2.9 We note for example that the ‘Housing’ section of the SoCG paragraph C3 states:

"Throughout the Local Plan preparation process, each local planning authority will undertake and maintain a thorough assessment of housing supply potential within their area. Each local planning authority will plan to meet its own housing need and should have a policy setting out the specific minimum housing number it is intending to deliver in its own area. Where the need cannot be met within the local authority’s boundary, following a comprehensive re-assessment of deliverability the ISPA Board will provide the forum to collectively consider how the unmet need can be met within the ISPA, subsequently to be determined through each local authority’s local plan." [emphasis added]

2.10 We have previously raised concerns that the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, as currently drafted, focuses upon its own need rather than providing a meaningful commitment to accommodate the needs of Ipswich Borough.
2.11 Ipswich Borough has seen significant under delivery against its annual housing target of 489 homes since 2011, whereby it has delivered an average of 306 homes per year between 2011/12 and 2016/17. This equates to just 63% of its target so far and, despite a significant increase in delivery planned from 2019/20 onwards, the Council is predicted to under deliver against its overall target by the end of the Plan period. The Borough’s most recent Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) (March 2018), which covers the period 2016/17, shows that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and that it cannot meet its adopted housing target.

2.12 The issue is not helped by the fact that Ipswich Borough draft Local Plan remains at the Preferred Options stage. The growth strategy and housing and employment requirements of Ipswich Borough are still at an early stage of development and yet to be tested at examination. But in the absence of a joint Ipswich Borough/Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Strategy, the only way to ensure that cross boundary needs can be met without delaying the current Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, or requiring early review, is to include policies with sufficient flexibility for additional land to be released to meet needs if it is found that the Ipswich Borough Local Plan strategy is unable to meet needs.

2.13 As it stands the cooperation by Suffolk Coastal extends to an agreement to allocate the Humber Doucy Lane site (allocation reference: SCLP12.24) which itself is only intended to deliver 150 houses post 2031. This site is clearly dependent upon the wider Ipswich Garden Village (within Ipswich Borough) coming forward to deliver the infrastructure required to unlock it and therefore is constrained in the short to medium term. Suffolk Coastal working in conjunction with the other members of the ISPA Board must demonstrate the other options considered, and explain within the SoCG why the allocation of a single site to meet cross boundary needs satisfies the duty to cooperate.

2.14 A duty to cooperate is not only a test of soundness, but also a legal requirement under the Localism Act 2011. Section 110 of the Act specifically focuses on the duty to co-operate in relation to planning of sustainable development, and therefore, the plan does not fit the legal requirements for plan making and is accordingly unsound.
3. **Sustainability Appraisal**

   **Question 1.2: Is the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) adequate?**

   3.1 The SA is inadequate in its assessment of alternatives, particularly in determining the transport sustainability of alternative development options. The SA does not refer to the key findings of the various Transport reports that make up the Evidence Base (Documents D29-33) and indeed, the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (Document B6) predates the earliest report examining the strategic impact of the preferred strategy upon the network. The final SA (December 2018) predates the final WSP Transport Reports issued in January 2019.

   3.2 It is therefore clear that the SA has been written to justify and evidence the preferred growth strategy, rather than to inform and advise as to the most sustainable growth strategy.

   3.3 Land off Bell Lane, Kesgrave was the subject of an appeal (ref: APP/J3530/W/16/3160194) which concluded that the site is a highly sustainable location for development (para 100 of appeal decision) but was instead dismissed on grounds of being contrary to the overall growth strategy within the Local Plan.

   **Question 1.3: Has the SA been undertaken on the basis of a consistent methodology and is the assessment robust?**

   3.4 See response to Question 1.2.

   **Question 1.4: Has the SA taken into account reasonable alternatives and has sufficient reasoning been given for the rejection of alternatives?**

   3.5 See response to Question 1.2.