

CHAPTER 9: HOUSING

INSPECTOR'S OVERVIEW OF POLICIES G/H/1 AND H/2

- 9.1 In addition to the objections relating to these 2 policies, and the Council's response to them, I have also taken into account the documentation submitted to the Round Table Session (RTS). A range of conflicting views was before me - all of which I have assessed and come to a reasoned conclusion. The key issue before me is whether the plan would make sufficient land available for housing and compliance, or otherwise, with national and regional guidance. For the reasons set out below, I do not support the plan's intentions for housing land supply - additional land should be allocated.
- 9.2 Before turning to my numeric assessment, plan allocations at Revised Deposit Draft would be 115 dwellings between mid-2002 and mid-2016. Objector concern was that this limited level of allocation conflicted with PPG 3: Housing, not least that development plans are required to identify sites for housing and manage the release of land over the plan period (paragraph 28 to PPG 3). Similarly, there was conflict with the need to identify sufficient sites on the Proposals Map to accommodate at least the first 5 years (or the first 2 phases) of housing development in the plan (paragraph 34).
- 9.3 In my opinion, such an approach would encourage certainty in the plan process. There are, however, other considerations. Taken as a whole, it is the clear intention of national planning guidance that the use of greenfield sites should be substantially reduced, with housing development concentrated in urban areas, priority to be given to previously-developed land. It would be reasonable for me to conclude that a plan that was able to achieve this, without the use of greenfield sites, would be acceptable in principle. Generally, this is the approach of the Council, but its assessment of supply is flawed - notably through its consideration of the contribution likely to be made by windfalls [including the absence of an Urban Capacity Study (UCS)] and also its assessment of the rate of clearance within the Borough over the plan period.

Regional Planning Guidance Provision

- 9.4 The distribution of regional housing provision is established by Table 5.1 to Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), providing for an annual average rate of provision that is net of clearance. The figures are to be the basis for the review and roll forward of UDPs and are to apply until any review of RPG is adopted. That would require provision within Rochdale of 3360 dwellings (14 x 240), but net of clearance that needs to be taken into account. Here, a conclusion reached by the Council at Table 2 of its Housing Topic Paper (summarized at paragraph 5.18 there) is that housing provision would exceed the RPG requirement, plus

clearance, by 13% - that general conclusion confirmed to me at the RTS. While that is the Council's view, I have assessed the entire calculation.

- 9.5 The Revised Deposit Draft plan assumes an annual clearance rate over the plan of 50 dwellings, this the Council basing on planned clearance and existing resources. Disputed at the RTS. There are a number of matters here. Firstly, it was not in dispute that - within Rochdale - there is a substantial legacy of unfit properties, reflecting its industrial tradition as well as more recent decline at relatively modern estates, notably Langley. Secondly, while acknowledging the sincerity of the Council's approach, the existing housing stock and housing renewal are dealt with at Policy UR6 to RPG. That seeks, generally, to improve the quality of the region's housing stock. Within urban areas, the policy identifies Rochdale (amongst other urban areas) where the policy should particularly apply. Thirdly, Pathfinder and Housing Market Renewal Programmes are underway in Rochdale. The intention here is to achieve a comprehensive approach to housing renewal, clearance and urban regeneration. Within, the balance between clearance/renewal/refurbishment has yet to be resolved, as has the specific level of funding available over the entire period of the UDP. Nonetheless, it is the clear government intention (reflecting RPG), to address the housing stock in Rochdale. Even setting that aside, I consider that Rochdale has underestimated clearance. With it, it would be reasonable to conclude that clearance would be likely to result in a substantially higher rate than that estimated by the Council.

Clearance Rate

- 9.6 So, what allowance for clearance should be made in the UDP? Varying views were before me. As to the Council, it told me (Position Statement for the RTS) that over the next 15 years around 2000 dwellings will be cleared in the Housing Market Renewal neighbourhoods. This does not, however, apply to the Borough as a whole. That specific timescale is not stated. As the document is dated March 2004, a pro-rata calculation would result - to April 2016 - in the clearance of about 167 dwellings per annum. Further to that, the Council's Housing Land Availability Study indicates that clearance, 1996-2002, ran at 129 dwellings per annum, albeit a large number of these dwellings were long term voids. Nonetheless, neither of these matters rest comfortably with a clearance rate of 50 dwellings per annum at Revised Deposit Draft. One other matter. The Council argues that 700 of the 2000 are empty properties at Langley, that should be discounted. I do not share that view. As argued by an objector, many previous occupants would be likely, taking into account the social problems there, to be displaced into other accommodation and would still require provision. Reasonably, and taking all these matters into account (particularly the emphasis given to housing renewal in RPG), an annual clearance rate of 140 dwellings should be established. The requirement over the relevant 14 years of the plan would be 5320.

Supply

- 9.7 That takes me to the contribution likely to be made by **windfalls**. To begin, PPG 3: Housing is dated March 2000, the Revised Deposit Draft version of the UDP April 2003. The former advises all local planning authorities to undertake UCSs. On this plan, the Council has not prepared one - neither for that matter did any of the objectors that appeared at the RTS. It did, however, prepare an Urban Potential Study, prior to PPG 3, but its results were not made public. "Tapping the potential" was published in December 2000. Both elements of national guidance indicate the important informing role that an UCS can play in helping to assess the contribution to housing land supply made by windfall sites, albeit that paragraph 36 to PPG 3 indicates that windfall allowances should be partly based on examining past trends together with an UCS assessment of the likely future windfall contribution. The Council has failed on the latter, but used the former to inform the future. National planning guidance indicates the need to safeguard against unrealistic windfall allowances. Here, the past time-scale used by the Council for assessing the **large windfall contribution** was contested by objectors. The Council used a long period from 1986 to 2002, a number of objectors generally favouring a shorter period, this from 1996. My balance of judgement is to support the latter approach. I am not persuaded that the former would represent the most appropriate means of assessment, not least as it have included a period when the housing market was not representative of that likely over the remaining period of the plan. Reasonably, also, the stock of these windfall opportunities would be likely to decrease over the remaining years of the plan. I estimate the contribution from this source should be set at 100 dwellings per annum. For **small windfall sites**, and for somewhat similar reasons, my view is that an allowance of 70 dwellings per annum would be appropriate.
- 9.8 Overall, my view is that the Council's assessment of the **commitment element of supply** is fairly robust - this relating to sites with planning permission, allocations and contributions from Areas of Opportunity. Taking into account, however, my recommendation at Chapter 7 that the H/2 allocation at Healey Hall Mills should be reinstated, the allocations there should be increased to 155 dwellings. At the RTS there was a strong objector view that a "slippage" allowance should apply to the commitment element, somewhat reflected by the Council view that total provision over the plan period would be likely to exceed the RPG requirement - and allowing an element of flexibility. **I return to the principle of "slippage" at paragraph 9.9**, but proceed at this stage on the basis of a "slippage" allowance of 15%.
- 9.9 That, then, takes me to an **overall assessment, including "slippage"**. The requirement, from 2002 to 2016, including clearance at 140 dwellings per annum is 5320. Supply less "slippage", and excluding large windfalls/small windfalls (sites), is about 1100 units. Adding windfalls and sites under construction, total supply should be taken as 4200 units. That amounts to an annual rate of provision of around 300 dwellings compared with the requirement of 380. There would be

an annual rate of under-supply of 80 dwellings which to the end of the plan period would amount to circa 1100 dwellings. **In my view, however, a “slippage” allowance should not be made.** The basis of the plan, monitor and manage approach - reflected overall in “Tapping the potential” and “Planning to deliver” - is to introduce certainty to the plan process. The monitoring process should be sufficiently robust to identify any shortfall in intended supply, bringing forward, for example, allocated sites. My balance of assessment, therefore, is that additional land should be allocated for about 1000 dwellings and I shall recommend accordingly. That would be consistent with a cautious approach. In coming to this view I have also taken into account a number of other matters. Clearance replacement rates - as acknowledged by the Council in some circumstances - may well be substantially less than 100%. This would create a potential demand for more land - albeit, in Langley, the Council argues the potential for a significant replacement rate, but that does not apply to the Borough as a whole. An effect of Pre-Inquiry Change 5 would increase flexibility in Mixed Employment Zones (including housing) while redundant school sites may make a contribution to housing - though on this matter the evidence was far from convincing by the Council. In this Borough, increased density at windfall sites would, in my view, make only a limited contribution to supply. I have also taken into account the Council's assessment of the effect of housing renewal on land supply, as well as the contribution that the Council argues would be made to housing land supply by Areas of Opportunity - not accepted, generally, by objectors.

Location of the Shortfall

- 9.10 I shall recommend, therefore, that an additional 1000 dwellings should be allocated in the UDP. In so doing, I am aware that excessive areas of land allocated should be avoided, not least to secure regeneration and renewal objectives. Nonetheless, the requirements of RPG, national planning guidance, as well as the view of objectors that additional land should be allocated - all need to be balanced. That I have done and conclude that the additional land to be allocated would be the way for the plan to proceed - not prejudicing renewal and regeneration and addressing the needs of all sectors of the Rochdale community. The additional allocations should not include approved Green Belt in the adopted plan and carried forward into the UDP. In identifying sites, the Council should follow the search sequence set out in paragraph 30 to PPG 3, as well as that in paragraph 31, together with the general intentions of PPG 13, notably at its objectives at paragraph 6. The Council should seek to maximize brownfield recycling. That approach would be likely to include within the assessment, land defined as Protected Open Land under Policy D/10. Here, the Council did not express a view to me at the RTS on the merits of any specific urban extension about the Borough, relying on its Revised Deposit Draft position. It supported, however, the exclusion from the assessment of approved Green Belt land defined in the adopted plan and carried forward into the UDP, to be considered only as a last resort. My recommendations at Chapter 7 confirm that position, with 1 minor

exception. I make one further guiding comment to the Council in its assessment of additional land that needs to be allocated. This relates to the (Urban) Greenspace policies of the plan as set out at Chapter 14. Having considered the objections at this chapter, including extensive visits to Greenspace Corridors, these are particularly important elements of the urban form of Rochdale - not least, as the Council argues, that they bring open and green areas close to substantial urban populations, a number comprising areas of deprivation. They do not, however, carry the same weight as approved Green Belt. Nonetheless, it is my view that the Council - in its assessment - should give their general protection considerable weight.

- 9.11 Here, and in addition to the main urban area of Rochdale, there are a number of somewhat freestanding urban areas within the Borough - Littleborough, Heywood and Middleton, for example, variously constrained by Green Belt designation. At the RTS, a number of objectors argued the strategic merits of locations for urban extensions (some contradictory). In the light of the recommendations I shall make to the Council, the merits of urban extensions (excluding Green Belt land) would be addressed by it - consistent with the various elements of national planning guidance. As to the need to reduce travel, not least by the private car, the urban areas of the Borough have - overall - reasonable access to its motorway network. As I was told at the RTS, and accept, there can be no certainty where occupants of a new housing development would work - that beyond the control of the planning system. A balanced judgement would be necessary. Nonetheless, and in my opinion, an important consideration would be the location of objection sites, and others, in relation to services and employment at varying levels that would be likely to reduce the need to travel, and consistent with the plan's broadly sustainable approach - as well as considerations of housing choice. Here, the required additional allocations need not be met, solely, by one site - that for the Council to consider.

Phasing

- 9.12 As I intend to recommend additional allocations be made to the UDP, that raises the issue of phasing. Clearly, and understandably, the Council's position is that - taking into account its estimate of the sources of housing land supply - a phasing policy is not necessary. I have come to a different assessment. Here, my balance of judgement is that windfalls (as I estimate their contribution), sites with planning permission and sites under construction, would be fairly expected to make a major contribution to meeting the annualized RPG level of housing provision over the 5 years of the UDP from 2002. Thereafter, their expected contribution would reasonably be expected to decline. At that time, the additional allocations recommended should be considered to make an increasing contribution to housing land supply. A phasing policy should reflect that.

Monitoring

- 9.13 As additional allocations of housing land are required, there would be a need for the UDP to include monitoring arrangements - reflecting the “plan monitor and manage” approach of PPG 3, together with the more detailed advice in “Planning to deliver”. A recommendation is set out below, the intent of the policy generally indicating that the Council will continuously monitor the supply of land for housing and the results would be considered in an assessment of whether exceptions should be made to the phasing policy.

Conclusions on my Overview of G/H/1 and H/2

- 9.14 On the basis of RPG, there would be likely to be, over the period of the plan as proposed at Revised Deposit Draft, a shortfall in the supply of housing land. Here, I have carefully considered whether I should give any “benefit of doubt” to the Council, reflecting the need for caution. In my view, however, the conclusion is clear. Additional land needs to be allocated. The likelihood is, however, that - under existing development plan procedures - a Modifications Inquiry would be likely to result. A new development plan procedure is being introduced through the Local Development Framework and the Council should consider the way to proceed, including a DPD. As to this UDP, numeric provision should proceed on the basis of RPG. There would be a shortfall in supply to meet the RPG requirement. Further allocations are necessary, their identification reflecting national planning guidance, primarily in PPGs 3 and 13. Phasing and monitoring policies are necessary.
- 9.15 The Council should revisit this part of the Housing chapter. **I RECOMMEND THAT** it should be based on the following:
- **Policy G/H/1** would establish the RPG requirement for Rochdale as an annualized building rate - the reasoned justification explaining its basis, including its components. This would reflect my reasoning above.
 - **Policy H/2** would allocate site(s), identified on the Proposals Map, for about 1000 dwellings - the reasoned justification explaining the basis for them.
 - **Policy H/3**, phasing, would provide for the release of allocated sites (including any greenfield), subject to monitoring, to ensure a 5 year supply.
 - **Policy H/4** would establish a monitoring process over the remaining years of the plan.
 - **Other policies** in the chapter (including Revised Deposit Draft Policies H/3 and H/4) together with their reasoned justification, would need to be renumbered and the chapter and plan edited for consistency.

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan Review: 2001-2016: Inspector's Report

9.16 Green Belt objection sites within this chapter should remain within the Green Belt, consistent with my recommendations at Chapter 7. As to other objection sites, I have considered making recommendations on them. As G/H/1 and H/2 represent a major failing of the plan, this should be addressed by the Council through the relevant development plan process, and tested - not least in the interests of fairness to objectors. The limited number of objections to the wording of the policies have, effectively, been covered above. The general intent of Pre-Inquiry Changes 11, 12 and 13 should be included within the rewritten policies and their reasoned justifications.

G/H/1 (Part One Policy) - Housing

Objections:	24/3	Hartle Estates
	24/205	Hartle Estates
	98/11	Countryside Agency North West
	248/201	Peel Investments (North) Ltd
	296/2	PVC Group Ltd
	299/1	House Builders Federation
	308/4	Federal Mogul T & N Limited
	310/204	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd
	340/5	Mr D Tongue
	358/2	Bryant Homes Ltd
	358/202	Bryant Homes Ltd
	359/205	Healey Dell Properties & David McLean Homes
	381/202	Government Office North West
	383/2	Mr R Atherton
	434/3	G & D Buckley
	434/6	G & D Buckley
	442/7	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd & Bellway Homes NW Ltd
	488/201	English Partnerships

Key Issue:

- **does the plan reflect required housing land and supply?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.17 I have dealt with the principles of these objections at paragraphs 9.1 to 9.16 above.

Recommendation:

9.18 I recommend that:

- **The plan should proceed on the basis of paragraphs 9.1 to 9.16 above, including my recommendations at paragraph 9.15.**

H/2 – Land Provided for New Housing - General Objection

Objection: 299/2 House Builders Federation

Key Issue:

- **does the plan identify an adequate and continuous supply of housing throughout the plan period?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.19 I have dealt with the matters relating to this objection at paragraphs 9.1 to 9.16.

Recommendation:

9.20 I recommend that:

- **The plan should proceed on the basis of paragraphs 9.1 to 9.16 above, including my recommendations at paragraph 9.15.**

H/2 (c) (Deposit Draft) - Rainshore Mill, Norden

Objections:	64/2	Mr J Richardson
	99/2	William Tatham Ltd
	181/3	Mrs J Astridge
	181/201	Mrs J Astridge
	258/2	Mr A Harrison
	258/202	Mr A Harrison
	286/2	Mrs T Patterson
	286/201	Mrs T Patterson
	294/2	Mr J Emmerson
	303/2	Ms D Potts
	304/2	Ms C Waterfield
	304/202	Ms C Waterfield
	305/2	Crosby Homes NW Ltd
	382/2	Norden Development Opposition Group
	382/201	Norden Development Opposition Group
	448/1	K Nadduck
	510/202	Mrs L Emmerson

Key Issue:

- should Rainshore Mill, Norden be a housing allocation over the period of the plan?

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.21 I deal with the future of Rainshore Mill at Chapter 7 of my Report, these objections being assessed there. Taking into account Green Belt considerations - I come to the conclusion that it should make a contribution to housing land supply.

Recommendation:

9.22 I recommend that:

- No modification be made to the plan in response to these objections.

H/2 (d) (Deposit Draft) – Healey Hall Mills, Healey

Objections:	99/5	William Tatham Ltd
	191/2	Ms D Aquatias
	305/1	Crosby Homes NW Ltd
	359/206	Healey Dell Properties & David McLean Homes
	378/2	Mr G Aquatias

Key Issue:

- should this site be a housing allocation over the period of the plan?

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.23 At Deposit Draft, land at Healey Hall Mills was a housing allocation. That provision was deleted at Revised Deposit Draft. I have dealt with the future of Healey Hall Mills at Chapter 7 of my Report, these objections being assessed there. Taking into account Green Belt considerations - I come to the conclusion that it should make a contribution to housing land supply.

Recommendation:

9.24 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- Reinstate Deposit Draft paragraph H/2 d), and with subsequent renumbering.

H/2 – Land Provided for New Housing (Omissions)

Objections:	24/7	Hartle Estates
	99/3	William Tatham Ltd
	99/4	William Tatham Ltd
	109/1	Mr F Mills
	157/3	Mr K Hilton
	159/2	Fairclough Homes
	159/3	Fairclough Homes
	159/4	Fairclough Homes
	159/5	Fairclough Homes
	210/2	Exors of J Milne
	211/1	Ms H Kirk
	213/4	Mr F Thomas
	213/5	Mr F Thomas
	213/6	Mr F Thomas
	221/3	Mr A Ollerhead
	248/9	Peel Investments (North) Ltd
	305/3	Crosby Homes NW Ltd
	308/5	Federal Mogul T & N Ltd
	310/1	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd
	358/3	Bryant Homes Ltd
	340/6	Mr D Tongue
	353/2	Ms W Hall
	383/3	Mr R Atherton
	433/2	Tack Lea Works
	434/1	G & D Buckley
	434/4	G & D Buckley
	437/2	Beva Construction
	441/4	Mr J Kay
	441/5	Mr J Kay
	442/2	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd & Bellway Homes NW Ltd
	442/8	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd & Bellway Homes NW Ltd
	445/2	Mr J Murphy

Key Issue:

- **the approach the Council should follow on these objection sites that would, generally, provide additional land for housing - in the light of my conclusions on the overview of Policies G/H/1 and H/2.**

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.25 Objections to the UDP are to sites both within, and outside, the Defined Urban Area. They variously relate to: greenfield and previously-developed land; approved areas of Green Belt carried forward into the UDP; land within Greenspace Corridors; existing employment sites; as well as land within Employment Zones. The Council will need to come to a view on these sites, together with other land within the Borough, to reflect my recommendations at paragraph 9.15 above.

Recommendation:

9.26 I recommend that the plan should proceed on the following lines:

- It should reflect paragraphs 9.1 to 9.16 above, including my recommendations at paragraph 9.15.

H/3 - Residential Development Outside Allocated Areas

Objections:	24/4	Hartle Estates
	98/12	Countryside Agency North West
	299/3	House Builders Federation
	308/6	Federal Mogul T & N Limited
	358/4	Bryant Homes Ltd
	418/2	Littleborough Civic Trust
	442/9	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd & Bellway Homes NW Ltd
	461/202	The Wilton Estate

Key Issues:

- is the policy too restrictive as it would apply to rural areas - needing to refer to the achievement of sustainable development objectives, and should a size threshold be adopted below which a supply would not apply?
- should the policy give priority to large, previously-developed sites?
- should the design criteria for new development (Policy BE/2) be restated in H/3?
- should the Defined Urban Area (DUA) be relaxed to allow the identification of reserve and peripheral, greenfield sites?
- the role of vacant and under-used land within the DUA in meeting housing land supply; the merits of the 3 year supply in the last paragraph of the policy; and the role of paragraph 32 to PPG 3: Housing.

Inspector's Reasoning:

- 9.27 To begin, I share the view of the Council that Objection 299/3 was not clear and note that the Council sought clarification - not forthcoming. I cannot, therefore recommend on it - although I have dealt with its G/H/1 and H/2 objections above.
- 9.28 Next, to the Countryside Agency. Notwithstanding the urban concentration and regeneration approach of the UDP (established by G/SP/1), H/3 would not - as a matter of principle - preclude residential development in rural areas, subject to its criteria. As the Council argues, settlements there - fairly described as "hamlets" by it - are invariably small and most constrained by Green Belt designation. Any inappropriate development arising would need to establish very special circumstances reflecting national planning guidance and the Green Belt policies of the plan. It would not be unreasonable of me to conclude that - as the Council argues - any likely limited need arising there would be able to be met in the nearby urban areas. Moving on, I see no need for criterion a) to be replaced by the achievement of sustainable development principles. That theme runs, generally, through the UDP. H/3 has a sustainable element, while a modified as suggested policy would not establish, clearly, that which comprises sustainability objectives. Similarly, there should be no size threshold below which a supply limit would not apply. A purpose of the policy is to pursue previously-developed land, rather than greenfield sites. An implication of this part of the Agency's objection would be a large number of small, greenfield sites developed that would undermine the clear intent of national planning guidance and the UDP.
- 9.29 While I note 308/6's view that the development of large previously-developed sites have the potential to effect substantial environmental and amenity benefits - that would be a material consideration in the assessment of such a proposal. Other factors would need to be taken into account in the assessment of development proposals arising through the policy, not least the criteria to the policy that - on a small site - may weigh in favour of a development. It would be unwise, therefore, to give priority to large sites.
- 9.30 To restate the design criteria at BE/2 within the policy (418/2) would result in duplication and excessive detail. Paragraph 9.16 of the plan already has a cross-reference to BE/2 and sufficient control is established by the plan.
- 9.31 My general conclusion at Chapter 7 is to support the principle of the DUA and its definition. Most of the land outside the DUA is approved Green Belt carried forward into the UDP - the remainder generally Protected Open Land (Policy D/10). My conclusions and recommendations on the supply of housing land are dealt with above. There, the Council should follow a search sequence to identify further housing land over the period of the UDP. As a matter of principle, a greenfield site on the edge of the DUA (not within the Green Belt) would not be discounted in the necessary assessment (461/202).

- 9.32 Finally - to 24/4, 358/4 and 442/9, the last Key Issue set out above. On the first matter there, my attention has been properly drawn to page 16 of "Tapping the potential". It indicates, generally, that vacant land should be viewed as a potential source of supply, certainly in the initial stages of a capacity study - not undertaken by the Council. Annex C to PPG 3 provides a definition of previously-developed land, but does not include vacant land. In the policy, the Council has generally followed the advice in national planning guidance. Objection does raise a material matter - there likely to be significant areas of vacant land within the Borough. This would, however, be one of the material considerations in the assessment of a development proposal undertaken by any reasonable local planning authority. I come to a similar conclusion on paragraph 32 to PPG 3.
- 9.33 Finally, to the 3-year supply (last paragraph of the policy statement) where I have read the Panel's Report on Draft Regional Planning Guidance (3-5 years) - but not carried forward into finalized RPG. On this UDP, I have concluded that additional land needs to be allocated - partly based on my reservations on the contribution likely to be made by windfall sites. Releasing sites, prematurely, can result in over-capacity and, reasonably, caution should be exercised. Nonetheless, a 5-year supply was not discounted in the document that the Council refers me to. My balance of judgement is that a 5-year supply before the release of any greenfield sites, taking into account the approach to be followed by the Council in identifying additional housing land, is the appropriate way for this UDP to proceed.

Recommendation:

9.34 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **At the second paragraph of the policy, delete "3 years" and substitute "5 years".**

H/5 - Residential Density

Objections:	98/13	Countryside Agency North West
	156/4	Hopwood Community Association
	299/4	House Builders Federation
	442/10	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd & Bellway Homes NW Ltd

Key Issue:

- **should the policy refer to a general quality of design policy (including village plans); would it adversely affect areas of trees and woodland; and is it too**

prescriptive - taking into account likely high residential densities in the North-West and the need for a mix of development, particularly in inner-urban areas?

Inspector's Reasoning:

- 9.35 The intent of the policy is apparently to reflect national planning guidance on housing density as embodied in PPG 3: Housing at paragraphs 57 and 58. In assessing a development proposal, the UDP would need to be considered as a whole - through all relevant policies. Paragraph 9.24 notes the emphasis to be placed on "good quality design" while Policy BE/2 establishes a relevant and reasonably comprehensive listing of design criteria for new development. I come to a similar view on trees and woodlands through Policy NE/8 - subject to my conclusions there.
- 9.36 PPG 3: and PPG13: Transport (the latter at paragraph 16) seek, generally, to avoid the inefficient use of land and achieve a greater intensity of development at places with good transport accessibility. That is broadly reflected in the policy. I see no convincing reason to depart from it. Lower density development is not precluded, subject to the tests in the third paragraph of H/5. Similarly, even within a range of 30-50 dwellings per hectare net, there would be no reason why - on a substantial site, for example - good design would not be able to accommodate a lower density element as part of a mixed-development that meets the requirements of the guidance, this including inner-urban areas. As a result, I am not persuaded that the policy (taken as a whole) would prejudice urban regeneration in Rochdale. The policy does not, however, indicate the type(s) of housing development that would be permitted. The Council is advised that it should, while "living conditions" is preferable to "amenity" in the third paragraph of the policy statement. I leave those matters with the Council.

Recommendation:

- 9.37 **I recommend that the Council be advised to consider modifying the policy along the following lines:**

- **"Housing development proposals will be permitted that result in a net site density of between 30-50 dwellings per hectare.**

Higher densities will be sought, and permitted, on sites in - and around - town centres and within walking distance of public transport nodes (including railway stations), proposed Metrolink stops and corridors well served by public transport.

Development proposals at a lower density will be permitted provided that a developer can demonstrate that a higher density would be impossible or undesirable - taking into account the shape, topography and character of the site and impacts on the living conditions of local residents."

H/6 - Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing Development

Objections:	24/5	Hartle Estates
	299/5	House Builders Federation
	308/7	Federal Mogul T & N Limited

Key Issues:

- **are the standards within the policy, as well as the calculation of occupancy, justified?**
- **should the existence of acceptable open space nearby reduce the need for either, additional provision or, a contribution to maintenance by new housing developments?**
- **the role of the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).**

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.38 None of the objectors express substantive concern at the principle of the policy, it reflecting the general thrust of PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation - together with its Companion Guide. The Council argues, however, that the requirements of the policy and its elements have been based on an assessment of local need, as well as the nature of the existing open space within the Borough. Although that appears to reflect, generally, paragraphs 6 to 9 of PPG 17, limited information is before me. While the Council refers to UG/2, the reasoned justification to H/6 should provide further information. Here, it is not clear to me whether the Council's proposed SPG would be the source of that information. I would expect it to be so. In any event, the SPG should be approved - after consultation - as soon as possible. As, however, Section 54A of the 1990 Act establishes the role of the development plan, a potential developer should be able to see in the policy a reasonable indication of the requirements likely to be placed upon it. Contradictorily, somewhat, to the second sentence of this paragraph, the Council tells me that its LEAP and NEAP standards are derived from NPFA suggested standards - not apparently consistent with national planning guidance that stresses the importance of local assessments. There is some confusion here, in my view. The Council should clarify in the reasoned justification whether the standards to be pursued in the policy are based either, on a specific Rochdale assessment of need or, whether they are based on NPFA standards. If the latter, it should justify why they have been used.

9.39 I share the view of the Council that "bedrooms" represent a reasonable basis to assess occupancy and the need for recreational open space, notwithstanding objector evidence before me on a declining average household size. Further, it would be reasonable when a housing development arises in an area where there is a more than adequate existing provision of recreational open space - to meet existing demand as well as that arising from the proposal - for the policy

requirement to be waived/reduced/varied subject to proper assessment. Where such a development would place additional demands on the existing open space arising from its occupants, it would be reasonable for the developer to make a contribution towards its maintenance. This should be reflected in the reasoned justification.

Recommendations:

9.40 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **Add a new second paragraph to the policy as follows:**

“Subject to assessment, the above requirement may be waived/reduced/varied in those circumstances where a housing proposal arises in an area where the existing recreational open space is sufficient to cater for existing need as well as that arising from the development.”
- **Reflecting paragraph 9.38 above, the reasoned justification should justify the nature and basis for the standards pursued by the policy.**
- **Modify the reasoned justification to reflect the last 2 sentences of paragraph 9.39 above.**

H/7 – Affordable Housing

Objections:	24/6	Hartle Estates
	98/14	Countryside Agency North West
	299/6	House Builders Federation
	308/8	Federal Mogul T & N Limited
	358/5	Bryant Homes Ltd
	381/21	Government Office North West
	442/11	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd & Bellway Homes NW Ltd

Key Issue:

- **has the policy been justified for inclusion within the UDP and, if so, is it too onerous and lacking in detail?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.41 It appears to me that a main concern is the basis of the policy, taking into account national planning guidance. Here, the relevant national guidance is, mainly, within paragraphs 14 to 18 of PPG 3 and paragraph 9 to Circular 06/98: Planning and Affordable Housing. To both I give substantial weight. There is no need for

me to repeat them here, other than to record - amongst others - the last sentence of paragraph 14 to PPG 3. Here, I note the last sentence to paragraph 9.5 of the plan. The Council has not met, in my view, the requirements of national planning guidance as it relates to this UDP before me. It has not justified a policy that would require all new private housing to provide an element of affordable housing (subject to criteria). It follows, therefore, that I must give limited weight to the view of the Council that it intends to produce an up-to-date assessment of housing need in the near future. Any assessment should be completed as soon as possible. I come to a similar conclusion when the Council tells me that interim information indicates that there are some areas of the Borough which are in need, and some areas where there is no need. Limited detailed information is available. In my opinion, an affordable housing policy in a development plan places a somewhat onerous requirement upon a developer. Such a policy should only be adopted when it has been justified through the clear requirements of national planning guidance. This is not the case with H/7. As I shall recommend deletion of the policy, there is no need for me to consider detailed objections to the wording of the policy, or to comment on Inquiry Change 44.

Recommendation:

9.42 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **Delete Policy H/7 and paragraphs 9.35 to 9.39, with subsequent renumbering and plan consistency throughout.**

H/8 - Maintaining and Improving Older Private Housing

Objection: 381/22 Government Office North West

Key Issue:

- **is the policy acceptable for inclusion within a UDP?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.43 While the Council refers me to Policy UR6 of Regional Planning Guidance, development plans are one of a number of mechanisms that contribute to a comprehensive approach to housing renewal, clearance and urban regeneration. Development plans should indicate the type(s) of development that would be permitted. This, the policy does not achieve - representing an aim/objective rather than a statement of planning policy. What, for example, does "maintained and enhanced" mean in the 1st line of the policy? In the assessment of any land-use proposal, the starting point would be Section 54A of the 1990 Act. Development proposals would arise in areas of older private housing. Matters a) to g) represent,

generally, reasonable planning considerations - though h) is a procedural matter for the Council, as is the allocation of resources at the last sentence of the policy. Both should be deleted from the policy - they already referred to in the reasoned justification. The wording of the policy should be modified - together with its heading. I have considered the policy before me in the light of the objection. A development control policy would result. It is not clear, however, whether development should meet all of the sub-paragraphs. To do so would be unreasonable - the thrust of the policy being met, for example, by a development that created a safer environment through better design [H/8 g)]. That should be reflected in the reasoned justification.

Recommendations:

9.44 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **The heading to the policy should be: “H/8 AREAS OF OLDER PRIVATE HOUSING”**
- **The policy would then be worded as follows:**

“Development proposals will be permitted that result in:

 - a) **an improvement to the quality of the housing stock;**
 - b) **the clearance and redevelopment of unfit, obsolete and low market demand housing;**
 - c) **the re-use of vacant and under-used buildings in order to make the most effective use of the existing stock;**
 - d) **relevant areas of public open space, amenity landscaping and children’s play areas;**
 - e) **an increase in access and parking arrangements;**
 - f) **a reduction in pedestrian/vehicular conflict; and**
 - g) **a safer environment through the design of the proposal.”**
- **Clarify the reasoned justification to reflect the last 3 sentences of paragraph 9.43 above.**

H/9 – Maintaining and Improving Public Sector Housing

Objection: 381/67 Government Office North West

Key Issue:

- **is the policy acceptable for inclusion within a UDP?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

9.45 I have dealt with a similar objection at Policy H/8 above and come to a similar conclusion - development proposals being likely to arise within areas of public sector housing. In recommending a modification to the policy, it is unclear whether the reference in the first 2 lines to "surrounding residential environment" relates to land within the Council's control, or other adjacent land, or both. That should be clarified in the reasoned justification. Sub-paragraph f) does not deal with a land-use planning matter and should be deleted from the policy - already referred to in the reasoned justification as an amplification of the Council's approach. The last 3 sentences of paragraph 9.43 above are also relevant to this policy.

Recommendations:

9.46 I recommend that the policy be modified along the following lines:

- **The heading to the policy should be: "H/9 AREAS OF PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING"**
- **The policy would then be as follows:**
 - "Development proposals will be permitted that result in:**
 - a) the housing stock meeting local needs;**
 - b) a diversification of the housing stock and tenure to meet changing local demand, if necessary through selective clearance and redevelopment;**
 - c) adequate areas of public open space, amenity landscaping and children's play areas;**
 - d) improved access and parking arrangements; and**
 - e) improved security and energy efficiency."**
- **Clarify the reasoned justification to reflect the last 3 sentences of paragraph 9.43 above.**

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