

**TWBC Local Plan Examination - Matter 9 –  
Housing Land Supply**  
Statement on behalf of Bellway

May 2022

**Turley**

# Contents

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1.	Introduction	3
2.	Response Matter 9 – Housing Land Supply	4

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Appendix 1: Supply Tables

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David Murray-Cox  
david.murray-cox@turley.co.uk

**Client**  
Bellway Homes Limited

**Our reference**  
BELR3032

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement provides a response on behalf of Bellway to Matter 9 (Housing Land Supply) of the Examination into the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan.
- 1.2 Bellway has a legal interest in the land to the north and south of High Woods Lane (Mouseden Farm) on the eastern edge of the built up area of Tunbridge Wells/Hawkenbury which it is promoting for residential led development. The site is separated by High Woods Lane. The area south of High Woods Lane is currently in agricultural use and bordered to the east by woodland, to the south by existing sports uses and to the west by existing residential development. The area north of High Woods Lane is also within agricultural use, with further agricultural uses/woodland to the east and an indoor bowls club and allotments to the west.
- 1.3 The draft Policies Map indicates that the southern part of the land (south of High Woods Lane) is to be designated under Policy AL/RTW19 for new and enhanced sport and recreation provision as part of a new stadia sports hub. The northern part of the land promoted by Bellway is not subject to any other proposed allocations. The draft Policies Map appears to indicate that both parts of the site will continue to be located within the Green Belt and AONB.
- 1.4 The southern part of the land promoted by Bellway (i.e. the land south of High Woods Lane) is subject to a planning permission for recreational uses. That application was submitted by the Borough Council, despite it having no interest in the land. In contrast, Bellway has a legal interest in the land and is promoting this area, as part of a wider site, for residential development. Bellway would be willing to work with the Borough Council to explore opportunities for bringing forward the approved recreational facilities in the area, which residential development on the site could help deliver.

## 2. Response Matter 9 – Housing Land Supply

### ISSUE 1 – TOTAL HOUSING SUPPLY

**Q1. How has the housing trajectory in Figure 9 of the Plan been established? What factors were considered in arriving at the figures in the trajectory and are they accurate and robust?**

- 2.1 Figure 9 of the Plan appears to correspond with the ‘Projected Housing Completions’ row in table 9 of document 3.74a ‘Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper’ (February 2021).
- 2.2 Document 3.74a ‘Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper’ (February 2021) seeks to explain that the trajectory is based on discussions with developers, however the document does not provide any explanation as the evidence presented in relation to each site.
- 2.3 Document 3.74a ‘Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper’ (February 2021) then seeks to explain the assumptions made in relation to lead in times and build out rates. However so far as we can establish, this is based on national evidence rather than any specific analysis of site specific circumstances.
- 2.4 The Topic Paper refers, for example to national evidence such as the Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (2017) report ‘Start to Finish: How Quickly do Large-Scale Housing Sites Deliver?’. The Topic Paper does not refer to the updated version of that report published in 2020

**Q2. Does the total housing land supply include an allowance for windfall sites? If so, what is this based on and is it justified?**

- 2.5 Table 3 of the draft Plan indicates that an allowance has been made for windfall sites as shown below:

**Table 3 Housing Need and Supply 2020-2038**

1.	Housing need 2020-2038	12,204	18 years x 678 pa
2.	Extant planning permissions at 1 April 2020	3,313*	See HS&T TP
3.	Windfall allowance small sites	1,310	See HS&T TP/BL TP
4.	Windfall allowance large urban sites	360	See HS&T TP/BL TP
5.	Outstanding SALP/Local Plan site allocations	276	See HS TP
6.	Minimum additional allocations to meet need	6,945	= row 1 - rows (2-5)
7.	<b>Minimum total allocations</b>	<b>7,221</b>	Rows 5+6

*\*Includes discounting for C2 permissions*

**Q3. Paragraph 4.54 of the submission version Local Plan states that there is a ‘buffer’ of approximately 1,000 dwellings (based on the mid-point of dwelling ranges) over and above the minimum housing requirement across the plan period. Is the projected supply of housing justified and has sufficient land been identified to ensure that housing needs will be met?**

- 2.6 Firstly we note the minimum housing requirement is 12,204 dwellings over the Plan-period.

- 2.7 Table 9 of document 3.74a 'Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper' (February 2021) claims an overall supply of 13,257 dwellings, including 1,670 dwellings on windfall sites. We assume that this figure is calculated on the assumption that all extant permissions, existing site allocations, windfall sites and new allocations deliver as expected in the trajectory.
- 2.8 Assuming that all sites deliver in the manner expected by Table 9 of document 3.74a then that does represent a buffer of approximately 1,000 dwellings, however this is a situation where the Council relies on a number of very large and very complicated schemes.
- 2.9 If the overall supply relied upon by TWBC is 13,257 dwellings, that is 1,053 more than the minimum requirement. The buffer is 8.62% of the overall minimum requirement. In our submission, the extent of the buffer is insufficient bearing in mind the nature of the sites relied upon by TWBC.
- 2.10 Table 9 of document 3.74a 'Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper' sets out the level of completions from sites during the Plan-period and we make the following observations in relation to STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel and STR/SS 3 The Strategy for Tudeley Village:

*STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel*

- 3,540 dwellings are expected from STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel. This is based on the assumption that delivery commences in the year 2025/26 and immediately delivers 300 dwellings per annum, with that rate continuing until 2036/37 when 240 dwellings are delivered per annum.
- We consider that the Council has been overly optimistic over the lead in time before this scheme is delivered and then the subsequent rate of housing completions for the reasons set out below:
  - **Lead in:** the 'Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper' envisages that development would commence on this site in 2025/2026. We understand that the Council's Local Development Scheme envisages that the new Local Plan will be adopted in June 2022. That means that there would be less than 4 years between the adoption of the Local Plan and the delivery of housing at this site. However the allocation policy establishes that there is a significant amount of work to be undertaken in relation to this allocation. That work includes comprehensive masterplanning and the creation and adoption of one or more Supplementary Planning Documents. The Policy indicates that compulsory purchase powers may be utilised to ensure comprehensive development.
  - The Lichfield report 'From Start to Finish' identifies average 'lead in times' of close to 7 years for sites larger than 2,000 dwellings. The LPA's assumptions are that the site delivers less 4 years from when they expect the Local Plan to be adopted. This lead in time is extremely optimistic and fails to reflect the complexities of delivering large scale strategic residential sites including land assembly, the preparation of SPDs, the

preparation and determination of (complex) applications, reserved matters, conditions and infrastructure delivery. In opinion, the lead in time should therefore be extended. If the delivery of housing from the Paddock Wood/Capel allocation were delayed until 7 full years after the adoption of the Plan, that would suggest the first dwellings would be completed in 2029/30. The effect of this would be to remove 1,200 dwellings from the supply. Removing 1,200 dwellings from the housing trajectory would remove any degree of buffer to the minimum overall housing requirement given the comments at paragraph 4.54 of the draft Local Plan.

- **Completions rate:** There is no analysis as to how matters such as the requirement for phasing/infrastructure delivery would affect the completions rate. In any event, we consider that the expected completions rate is likely to be excessive
- The 2020 version of the Lichfield Report ‘Start to Finish’ found that, on average, sites of more than 2,000 dwellings delivered at a rate of 167 dwellings per annum.
- That report also indicates that on average 61 dpa are completed per annum on sites with one outlet, dropping to 51 for sites of two outlets and 45 for three outlets. Delivering 300 dwellings per annum is likely to require around 6 outlets. On the basis of the Council’s trajectory, that suggests those outlets would need to immediately and then consistently deliver 50 dwellings per annum. We have not seen any indica
- Furthermore, the LPA has assumed that 300 dwellings will be delivered in the first year with now allowance for completions to ramp up over time.

### *STR/SS 3 The Strategy for Tudeley Village*

- 2,100 dwellings are expected from STR/SS 3 The Strategy for Tudeley Village. This is based on the assumption that delivery commences in the year 2025/26 and immediately delivers 150 dwellings per annum, with that rate continuing until 2035/36 from which point when 200 dwellings are delivered per annum.
- We consider that the Council has been overly optimistic over the lead in time before this scheme is delivered and then the subsequent rate of housing completions for the reasons set out below:
  - **Lead in:** the ‘Housing Supply and Trajectory’ envisages that development would commence on this site in 2025/2026. We understand that the Council’s Local Development Scheme envisages that the new Local Plan will be adopted in June 2022. That means that there would be less than 4 years between the adoption of the Local Plan and the delivery of housing at this site. However the allocation policy establishes that there is a significant amount of work to be undertaken in relation to this allocation. That work includes comprehensive masterplanning and the creation and adoption of one or more Supplementary Planning Documents. The Policy

indicates that compulsory purchase powers may be utilised to ensure comprehensive development.

- The Lichfield report ‘From Start to Finish’ identifies average ‘lead in times’ of close to 7 years for sites larger than 2,000 dwellings. The LPA’s assumptions are that the site delivers less than 5 years from when they expect the Local Plan to be adopted. This lead in time is extremely optimistic and fails to reflect the complexities of delivering large scale strategic residential sites including land assembly, the preparation of SPDs, the preparation and determination of (complex) applications, reserved matters, conditions and infrastructure delivery.. In opinion, the lead in time should therefore be extended. If the delivery of housing from the Tudeley Village allocation were delayed until 7 full years after the adoption of the Plan, that would suggest the first dwellings would be completed in 2029/30, two years later than expected by the Council. The effect of this would be to remove 300 dwellings from the supply.
- **Completions rate:** Whilst the Council appears to have applied more reasonable completion rates to this site, we consider that evidence will still need to be provided in order to support the claimed figures. Given the overall contribution that this site makes towards housing supply, it is imperative that the Local Plan is based upon a justified housing trajectory.
- Furthermore, the LPA has assumed that 300 dwellings will be delivered in the first year with now allowance for completions to ramp up over time.

2.11 TWBC document 3.74a ‘Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper’ acknowledges that there is no local evidence data for build out rates of sites of more than 400 dwellings. TWBC also refer to NLP’s report from 2016 which suggests an average rate of 161 dwellings per annum (up to circa. 310) for sites of more than 2,000 dwellings and that the Letwin Review from 2018 found an average yield from sites of that scale. TWBC’s Topic Paper then proposes, without local evidence, to use the rate of 299 dwellings per annum.

2.12 Paragraph 4.44 of TWBC’s Topic Paper explains:

*“Large and super-size sites are likely to experience delivery in peaks and troughs due to changing conditions throughout construction. As a result, some years will exhibit high levels of completions and some years will be lower; this will be dependent on the number of outlets involved in construction and the planning stage at which the site is at. Any build-out rate assumptions made by the Council will take into account these delivery cycles.”*

2.13 Based on table 9 of document 3.74a ‘Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper’, there does not appear to be any recognition of these delivery cycles.

2.14 The buffer claimed by TWBC is exhausted in any of the following events (individually, with further implications if they occur in combination):

- 200 dwellings are delivered per annum from STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel between 2025/26 to 2036/37 (twelve years) with 40 delivered in 2037/38, resulting in an overall supply of 12,157 dwellings;
  - The delivery of STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel is delayed until 2029/30, removing 1,200 dwellings from the supply, and resulting in an overall supply of 12,057 dwellings;
- 2.15 If the delivery of the STR/SS 3 The Strategy for Tudeley Village is delayed until 2029/30, that removes 300 dwellings from the supply and reduces the buffer to around 753 dwellings which represents a buffer of 6.17%.
- 2.16 We note that the figures given above are provided in isolation and do not take account of any other adjustments which might be made to deliverability and housing supply.

**Q4. In the event that new housing is delivered as expected, what is the justification for the size of the buffer proposed?**

- 2.17 The housing requirement is expressed as a minimum figure, there are significant local affordability issues and there should be flexibility to ensure that these needs can be addressed.

**Q5. Paragraph 69 of the Framework states that in order to promote the development of a good mix of sites, local planning authorities should (amongst other things) identify land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than 1 hectare, unless there are strong reasons why this cannot be achieved. What proportion of the housing requirement will be met from sites no larger than 1 hectare in Tunbridge Wells?**

- 2.18 The only comment we make in response to this question is that the Local Plan is predicated on large sites. In combination, STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel and STR/SS 3 The Strategy for Tudeley Village are expected to deliver 5,640 dwellings.
- 2.19 In Bellway's submission this highlights that the reliance on those sites, and the fragility which exists if delivery does not occur as expected.

**ISSUE 2 – FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY**

**Q1. Taking into account completions since the based date of the Plan, what will be the anticipated five-year housing land requirement upon adoption of the Plan?**

- 2.20 In our submission the five-year housing land requirement should be the minimum annual requirement of 678 (which forms the basis of the Plan's overall minimum requirement) over 5 years. That equates to a minimum requirement (before the addition of any buffers) of 3,390 dwellings.
- 2.21 In these circumstances, and given the prevalent affordability issues and the reliance on large and complex sites, we do not consider that there would be any justification for reducing the five year requirement to take account of completions since the base-date of the Plan.



**Q2. How does the five-year housing land requirement compare to previous rates of delivery in Tunbridge Wells?**

2.22 No comments.

**Q3. Based on the housing trajectory, how many dwellings are expected to be delivered in the first five years following adoption of the Plan?**

2.23 No comments.

**Q4. What evidence has the Council used to determine which sites will come forward for development and when? Is it robust?**

2.24 Aside from the broad analysis set out in document 3.74a 'Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper', we have been unable to identify any detailed evidence to explain why the housing trajectory (in general terms) is justified.

2.25 We note that the housing supply position statement for April 2021 includes some commentary as to why sites should be included in the supply. However we also note that in a number of recent appeals, Inspector's have reduced the deliverable supply and the housing land supply position as a result.

2.26 In any event, that statement is for a different five year supply period than Q1 is concerned with and as far as we can tell, there is no evidence to demonstrate that a 5 year supply will be demonstrate at the point of the Plan being adopted.

**Q5. Where sites have been identified in the Plan, but do not yet have planning permission, is there clear evidence that housing completions will begin within five years?**

2.27 We refer to our previous comments regarding the lack of evidence or analysis regarding the deliverability of specific sites.

**Q6. How have the projected rates of housing delivery been established for the strategic sites at Tudeley Village and Paddock Wood and East Capel? Are the figures realistic when taking into account the need for supporting infrastructure?**

2.28 We have commented on this in relation to Issue 1 and refer to those points in response to this question.

2.29 The Council appears to have applied very optimistic lead in times in relation to these sites and, particularly in relation to STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel, very optimistic build out rates. The Council has assumed that the sites will immediately deliver at a rate of 300 dwellings per annum in relation STR/SS 1 The Strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel and 150 dwellings per annum in relation to STR/SS 3 The Strategy for Tudeley Village

2.30 There does not appear to be any specific analysis or explanation as to why these lead in times or build out rates are applicable in this case.

**Q7. What allowance has been made for windfall sites as part of the anticipated five-year housing land supply? Is there compelling evidence to suggest that windfall sites will come forward over the plan period, as required by paragraph 70 of the Framework?**

2.31

**Q8. Having regard to the questions above, will there be a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites on adoption of the Plan?**

- 2.32 So far as we can establish, the most up to housing land supply statement before this Examination is that which presents the position as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. The Council is understood to have set out an up-to-date position as of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 (still showing the position from April 2021) which shows 4.66 years.
- 2.33 The Inspector's question is rightly concerned with the housing land supply position on the adoption of the Plan.
- 2.34 Aside from the broad analysis set out in document 3.74a 'Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper', we have been unable to identify any detailed evidence to explain why the housing trajectory (in general terms) is justified.
- 2.35 We note that the housing supply position statement for April 2021 includes some commentary as to why sites should be included in the supply. We also note that in a number of recent appeals, Inspectors have reduced the deliverable supply and the housing land supply position as a result.
- 2.36 In any event, that statement is for a different five-year supply period than Q1 is concerned with and as far as we can tell, there is no evidence to demonstrate that a 5 year supply will be demonstrate at the point of the Plan being adopted.

**Q9. What flexibility does the plan provide if some of the larger sites do not come forward in the timescales envisaged?**

- 2.37 We have already demonstrated that this Plan is not flexible and cannot deal with circumstances where larger sites do not deliver as expected. In some of our scenarios, the 'buffer' relied upon by the Council is extinguished by delay or lower build out rates. In other cases, the buffer is significantly reduced. Each of those scenarios is presented in isolation and not in combination with other potential delays or changes to build out rates.
- 2.38 Appendix 1 includes a series of tables which show the effect of the changes referred to in this Statement, including:
- Reducing STR/SS1 by 100 dwellings per annum between 2025/26 and 2036/37 (with 40 dwellings delivered in 2037/38)
  - Delaying completions from STR/SS1 until 2029/30
  - Delaying completions from STR/SS1 and STR/SS3 until 2029/30 and reduce delivery rates from STR/SS1 to 200 dpa
- 2.39 These tables should not be taken as suggesting that TWBC will be able to demonstrate a five-year supply in the early parts of the Plan-period as they simply take the completions forecast in table 9 of document 3.74a 'Housing Supply and Trajectory Topic Paper' without any adjustments other than those referred to in the bullet points above.

**Q10. Is it necessary to have a review mechanism in the Plan to consider progress against these, and other sites, and to identify any appropriate steps to increase supply if required?**

2.40 In our view, the appropriate mechanism, and preferred solution, should be to ensure that a sound Plan is adopted with sustainably located, supported by evidence that they will contribute towards meeting identified needs as expected by the Council.

## Appendix 1: Supply Tables

Reduce STR/SS1 by 100 dwellings per annum between 2025/26 and 2036/37 (with 40 dwellings delivered in 2037/38)																		
Baseline Req for 5 years	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390
Plus buffer (5%)	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560
Projected housing completions	767	932	990	986	801	785	560	637	586	523	636	633	620	561	498	605	606	431
Annualised requirement	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712
Deliverable supply for 5 years	4476	4494	4122	3769	3369	3091	2942	3015	2998	2973	2948	2917	2890	2701	2140	1642	1037	431
Supply position	6.29	6.31	5.79	5.29	4.73	4.34	4.13	4.24	4.21	4.18	4.14	4.10	4.06	3.79	3.01	2.31	1.46	0.61

Delay completions from STR/SS1 until 2029/30																		
Baseline Req for 5 years	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390
Projected housing completions	767	932	990	986	801	585	360	437	386	623	736	733	720	661	598	705	706	691
Plus buffer (5%)	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560
Annualised requirement	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712
Deliverable supply for 5 years	4476	4294	3722	3169	2569	2391	2542	2915	3198	3473	3448	3417	3390	3361	2700	2102	1397	691
Supply position	6.29	6.03	5.23	4.45	3.61	3.36	3.57	4.09	4.49	4.88	4.84	4.80	4.76	4.72	3.79	2.95	1.96	0.97

Delay completions from STR/SS1 and STR/SS3 until 2029/30 and reduce delivery rates from STR/SS1 to 200 dpa																		
Baseline Req for 5 years	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390	3390
Projected housing completions	767	932	990	986	801	435	210	287	236	523	636	633	620	561	498	555	556	541
Plus buffer (5%)	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560	3560
Annualised requirement	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712	712
Deliverable supply for 5 years	4476	4144	3422	2719	1969	1691	1892	2315	2648	2973	2948	2867	2790	2711	2150	1652	1097	541
Supply position	6.29	5.82	4.81	3.82	2.77	2.38	2.66	3.25	3.72	4.18	4.14	4.03	3.92	3.81	3.02	2.32	1.54	0.76

**Turley Office**  
The Pinnacle  
20 Tudor Road  
Reading  
RG1 1NH

T 0118 902 2830