

<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>LONDON FIRST</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>1588</b>
<b>MATTER</b>	<b>M20 SMALL SITES &amp; SMALL HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS</b>

**M20. Are the presumption in favour of small housing developments of between 1 and 25 homes in Policy H2 and the targets in Table 4.2 justified and deliverable and will the policy be effective? In particular:**

**a) Is the modelling of delivery from small sites in the SHLAA justified, including reliance on PTALs?**

1. Small sites can provide a valuable contribution to housing land supply and can be built out relatively quickly compared to large sites. Therefore, the inclusion of Policy H2 in the draft Plan is welcomed. However, London First has concerns about the ability to deliver 245,730 of London's net housing completions over the Plan period (38% of the overall London-wide 10-year target) on small sites as stated in the SHLAA. The small sites strategy is the key step change in the draft Plan compared to the current Plan and the main new source of supply that has been formally identified to achieve the 55% increase in the housing target (65,000 dpa in the draft Plan compared to 42,000 dpa in the current Plan).
2. The 2017 London Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sets out a highly theoretical approach to small sites. The SHLAA is based on the assumption that housing delivery on small sites will more than double from 104,592 to 245,280 over the assessed period (ref: Table 6.8 of the SHLAA, which compares projected 10-year capacity estimates based upon three modelling approaches). This represents a predicted uplift of 135% over the recent trends as a result of the introduction of Policy H2 and the presumption in favour of small housing developments.
3. The small sites effectively represent a windfall allowance because they are not 'identified sites' or within delineated 'broad locations', as required by NPPF1 (2012). In Table 9.1 of the SHLAA, the figures include a small sites windfall allowance as a component of future supply as well as a small sites modelled figure, despite the fact that they are essentially the same thing because small sites are not identified/allocated.

4. The SHLAA also assumes that the annual target for new homes on small sites of 24,573 can be delivered immediately once the Plan is adopted. However, the boroughs are required by Policy H2 to undertake a great deal of work in order to implement the small sites strategy, including the identification and allocation of appropriate small sites through their local plan process, and the preparation of area-wide design codes and site-specific briefs. This means there will inevitably be a time lag between the Plan being adopted in 2019 and the small sites strategy maximising its potential for delivery.
5. The other risk area to the SHLAA strategy is the time-intensive nature of the planning process for small sites. This has two implications: firstly, it may deter applicants from delivering small sites and, secondly, it may put significant pressure on boroughs that are already struggling to resource their planning departments, because they will likely have to undertake a similar amount of work to process a planning application for a small site and yet will receive a smaller application fee. These issues around proportionality are due to the fact that small sites have the potential to generate a great deal of interest from the local community due to neighbourly amenity issues and impact on local infrastructure (both physical and local).
6. We raise no objection to the use of PTALs in the SHLAA's modelling.

**b) Is it realistic to expect the small sites target to be achieved in the outer London Boroughs?**

1. The draft Plan requires 24% of the small sites target to be delivered in the outer London boroughs. Given that small sites are generally located within existing residential areas, especially in outer London, they can be complex, costly and locally contentious, causing delays and uncertainty in the planning process.
2. As stated above in response to question (a), the time-intensive nature of the planning process for small sites may deter applicants from delivering such schemes because the potential returns are not commensurate to the cost and risk. Due to their complexity to deliver, small sites can often take as long to pass through the planning system as medium and large sites, and SME developers do not necessarily have either the cash or expertise to deal with this.
3. Furthermore, the workload expectation placed on borough planning departments is not proportionate to the smaller application fee paid for small sites. It is considered that these issues become more acute in outer London, where existing densities are generally lower and small sites are likely to generate more interest from the local community in terms of amenity issues and impact on local infrastructure.

4. The Mayor will need to closely monitor delivery against the small sites target to ensure that it is being achieved and consider what steps can be taken to improve delivery in areas that are underperforming, particularly given that these applications are not referable to the Mayor. The small sites target would stand a greater chance of being met if development of this type were allowed on accessible brownfield sites in the Green Belt or MOL.

**c) Has adequate consideration been given to the cumulative impact on infrastructure, affordable housing provision and the character of some neighbourhoods as referred to in paragraph 4.2.5?**

1. Incremental intensification of existing residential areas in London is an important part of meeting the draft Plan's target for new housing. The small sites strategy needs to acknowledge that such development is taking place within existing neighbourhoods, and the boroughs will need to assess the impact of proposals on neighbouring amenities and the local townscape using relevant design policies and guidance.
2. While the approach to small sites appears to consider infrastructure in respect of public transport accessibility, the boroughs will need to assess other forms of physical and social infrastructure, and ensure that intensification can be optimised without detriment to existing communities. The borough CIL regime allows for infrastructure needs to be assessed and funds to be collected and allocated to mitigate the impacts of new development.

**d) Is the policy support for infill development within the curtilage of a house consistent with national policy in paragraph 53 of the NPPF which refers to resisting inappropriate development of residential gardens?**

1. No comment.

**e) Will the provisions of Policy H2 provide an effective strategic context for the preparation of local plans and neighbourhood plans? Are the detailed criteria necessary and would they provide an effective basis for development management? Are the qualifications at Policy H2 HA-HC justified in themselves and would they effectively eliminate the positive presumption for small housing developments?**

1. The further clarification provided in respect of Policy H2 through the GLA's minor suggested changes is welcomed, in particular new footnotes 37A and 37B and the amendments to H2F, all of which provide greater clarification on the application of the H2 presumption in favour of small housing developments.

2. It is considered that Policy H2 does provide an effective strategic context with H2 B1) being a particularly positive change that recognises that local areas do not remain static and that residential density should respond appropriately to the broader challenges facing the capital.
3. The detailed criteria, like much of the draft Plan, is in some instances overly prescriptive, and the qualifications given in H2 HA-HC are a good example of this. Furthermore, as stated above in response to question (a), Policy H2 places a significant workload burden on the borough planning departments in order to implement the small sites strategy. H2 requires them to identify and allocate appropriate small sites through their local plan process, as well as to prepare area-wide design codes and site-specific briefs. This will inevitably result in a time lag between the Plan being adopted in 2019 and the small sites strategy maximising its potential for delivery.

**f) Based on the historic delivery from sites below 0.25 hectares (whether allocated or windfalls) how will the Plan's expectations for delivery be achieved?**

1. It is considered that inadequate justification for the target has been provided in the GLA's evidence base. Thirty-eight per cent of the draft Plan's housing target is expected to come forward on small sites and, taking into account historic delivery, the draft Plan's expectation for small sites delivery is considered to be overly optimistic. Realistically, other sources of land, such as accessible brownfield land in the Green Belt will need to be brought forward.
2. It is also surprising that the GLA's minor suggested changes did not seek to lower the 38% target given that the national position was reviewed by MHCLG in response to consultation feedback on NPPF2. In the March 2018 consultation draft of NPPF2, it stated that planning authorities should ensure that at least 20% of sites identified for housing should be of less than 0.5 hectares in size. In the final version of NPPF2 published in July 2018, this was revised to require planning authorities to identify land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare (paragraph 68a).
3. The boroughs, through their representations, appear to be deeply concerned about the expectations placed on them and the emphasis on this source of supply to achieve the ambitious new homes targets. These concerns seem particularly relevant when other policies in the draft Plan (e.g. D6: Optimising Density, D8: Tall Buildings and HC4: London view Management Framework) have the potential to restrict delivery more than their equivalent policies in the adopted Plan. Greater flexibility should be given to the boroughs as to how they achieve their overall borough target for new homes and their reliance on small sites.

**g) What will happen in the interim pending the work to prepare area-wide design codes referred to in Policy H2 B 2)?**

1. No comment.

**h) Are the provisions of Policy H2 H) relating to affordable housing requirements for minor developments justified, notwithstanding that they are inconsistent with national policy?**

1. Yes, the provisions of H2 H) are justified. It is sensible to adopt a tariff-based approach to off-site contributions and to encourage flexibility about when the payment is made.
2. For major applications on small sites (i.e. those schemes of 10 to 25 units), the boroughs should have discretion over whether to apply the threshold approach to affordable housing and what level that threshold might be. As these applications are not referable to the Mayor, the boroughs should be given the flexibility to tailor their affordable housing policy to local need and local circumstances. It is not appropriate for the Mayor to apply the Policy H6 threshold approach in this Policy H2H for small sites.