

Build out rates in the Garden Communities

North Essex Authorities



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11. Summary of Findings

11.1 The ***Start to Finish* report**, focuses primarily on housing building during a recessionary and post-recessionary period. Economic cycles are cyclical but it is **not a sound approach to base the build out rates of the Garden Communities** solely on data which is skewed towards the post-recessionary period. The report, however, highlights a number of factors which drive build out rates.

11.2 The Letwin Review considers further the key drivers of build out rates, and the constraints affecting the achievement of high build out rates. The Letwin Review identifies the absorption rate – the rate at which newly constructed homes can be sold, or are believed by the house builder to be able to be sold successfully into, the local market – to be the fundamental driver of build out rates. That absorption rate is largely determined by the type of home being construction, in terms of size, design, context and tenure.

11.3 The size and scale of **the Garden Communities allow for significant variation in the design and character of different neighbourhoods**. That will be secured through a Strategic Growth DPD for each community. This will ensure that numerous sales outlets are able to operate simultaneously whilst reducing the risk of direct competition (through the offering of different housing products).

11.4 The **Garden Communities’ policies require them to deliver a wide array of housing types and tenures** including affordable rent, affordable ownership, social housing, private rented, supported living housing, and key worker housing as well as housing for market sale.

11.5 The Letwin Review supports a **more involved public sector in the delivery of large residential sites** to ensure the diversification of housing products. This matches the intended delivery approach of the Garden Communities. **This collaborative approach to public and private working is enshrined in Policy SP7.**

11.6 The **comprehensive planning and delivery of the Garden Communities, secured by the DPDs, will ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure**, land remediation, utilities installation and site logistics.

11.7 The potential establishment of a **development corporation would substantially reduce risks** associated with planning approvals and infrastructure delivery.

11.8 Historically, **development corporations have delivered housing at rates far higher** than sites delivered by private developers. More recently, **the accelerating effect of development corporation status is demonstrated by recent housing delivery** at Ebbsfleet Garden City.

11.9 The Garden Communities are situated in a housing market area characterised by **strong housing demand**. Furthermore, adjacent strategic housing sites in North Essex have seen high build out rates despite being delivered a way less conducive to the accelerated delivery approach that is advocated in the Letwin Review. The strength of the local housing market in **North Essex therefore provides an excellent basis to maximise market absorption of new housing in the Garden Communities.**

11.10 **Strategic sites around the country have been planned and delivered at rates significantly higher than 250dpa**, most notably at sites in and around Milton Keynes, Otterpool Park, and Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. All of these developments have similarities with the North Essex Garden Communities which are conducive to accelerating build out rates, meaning that delivery rates of 300dpa are reasonable.

12. Conclusion

12.1 In conclusion, and following a review of the original evidence, current literature and additional evidence from other strategic sites, this Topic Paper has demonstrated that the build out rates anticipated for the Garden Communities are realistic and achievable.

12.2 Despite the evidence contained in this Topic Paper, the NEAs do not propose that the higher end of the evidenced build out rates (>500dpa) should be used for modelling purposes, but consider that adopting the 250dpa figure proposed by the Inspector would be overly cautious based on the evidence available and the context and attributes of the Garden Communities themselves.

12.3 Within Section 1 of their shared strategic Local Plans, the NEAs have committed to an approach that involves the public sector working pro-actively and collaboratively with the private sector to design and bring forward these Garden Communities (Policy SP7).

12.4 That approach, combined with the specifics of the scale and location of these communities, means the Garden Communities have the potential to deliver at far higher rates than other strategic developments. This model will likely not be unique to North Essex given the emerging support for more public sector involvement in the delivery of residential developments.

12.5 In light of this and taking account of the specifics of each Garden Community, the NEAs consider the following build out rates to be a reasonable basis for modelling purposes:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Onwards
West of Braintree Garden Community	100	200	300	300	300	300	300
Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community	150	300	300	300	300	300	300
Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community	100	150	200	250	300	300	300

12.6 The NEAs have therefore modelled build out rates at an achievable, albeit conservative, figure of 300dpa although the authorities are in agreement that this figure could be substantially increased over time.