

# HBF Planning Conference

Planning for large-scale sites - what  
the research tells us

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# Large developments - why are they special?

Importance in the land supply

The research

Delivery and affordability

A lengthy process (and implications)

Different skills/ different approaches

# Importance in the land supply

- ▶ More large sites allocated in plans - difficult to 'prove' but certainly looks that way
- ▶ Review of 5 up to date local plans (draft/adopted) - randomly selected - urban and more rural LAs - largest allocated sites:
  1. 3,100
  2. 470 (heavily constrained LA, green belt release)
  3. 4,800 (+ other large-scale developments)
  4. 1,500 x 2 (regen sites)
  5. 5,000 (new neighbourhood) 1,500 (garden village)

HBF Oct 2018 - *Over the course of the past 10 years, the average permitted site has increased in size by 58% from 19 units to 30. (Pipeline report)*

# Research for RTPI (SW)

- ▶ The deliverability and affordability of housing in the South West

Aim to increase....

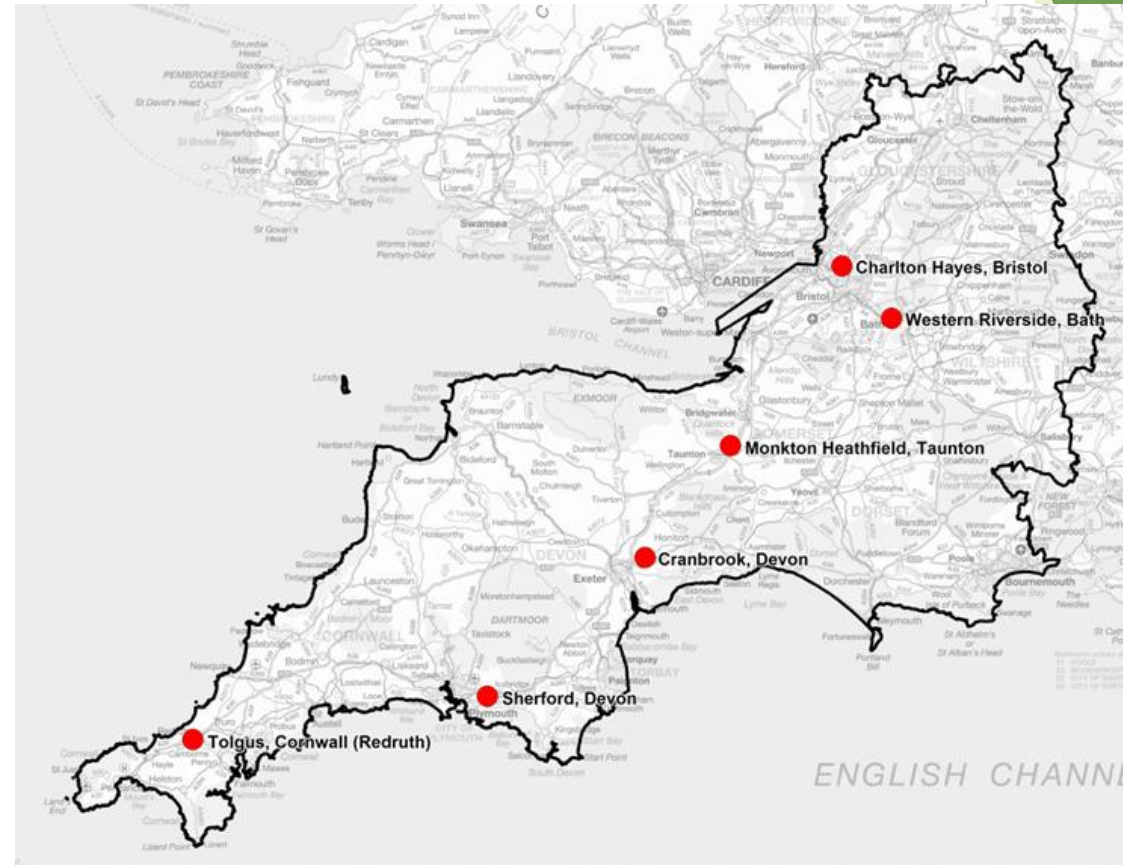
*“.....understanding about the ways in which the housing market has and is changing and.....to assist in the adoption of more appropriate approaches in the delivery of housing that is genuinely more affordable.”*

## Research

- ▶ Desk based analysis - tracking issues of affordability and housing supply
- ▶ Case study review - 6 sites from across the SW
- ▶ Views expressed are my own (and am drawing on experience from other projects)

# 6 case study sites

- ▶ Selected to give....
  - Range of market values
  - Different site types (greenfield and brownfield, urban extension or freestanding)
  - Different scales of development - 500 dwellings - over 2,000 - up to 8,000
- ▶ Desk based analysis + c30 interviews (LAs, developers, RPs, development agencies)



# Themes from the research

- ▶ Delivery (and affordability)
- ▶ A lengthy process (and implications)
- ▶ Different skills/ different approaches

# Contribution of strategic sites

- ▶ Rate of completions fluctuate over time
- ▶ But c 250/300 pa for the case studies - 40/50 per 'flag'
- ▶ Planning system cannot force the pace
- ▶ Letwin Review - June 2018 - different metric

Median % of site built out each year = 6.5%

(130 per annum on 2,000 dwellings, 520 on 8,000 site)

But larger sites - more dws per annum but lower %

# Contribution of strategic sites to 'affordability'

- ▶ Promoting a set of larger sites for additional development ...may be expected to lead to improvements in general housing market affordability (but similar impacts if same nos. on smaller sites)
- ▶ ...as well as the potential significant additions to the affordable housing stock (but may be less than policy)
- ▶ AH nos. roughly 'on target' for sites but below overall LA target



# A lengthy process...

- ▶ 10 + years from formal plan to 1<sup>st</sup> completions (+)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> thoughts earlier
- ▶ Once get into the 1000s, length of process not related to scale
- ▶ Maybe it just takes this long ....reasons given (but no one cause is universal)
  - ▶ Land ownerships - at start and later
  - ▶ Agreeing master plan/design guides and negotiating PP/s106
  - ▶ Need for and securing external funding (viability)
  - ▶ National policy changes (e.g. introduction AR)
  - ▶ Economic environment

# A lengthy process... Letwin Review

- ▶ We said .....10 + years from 1<sup>st</sup> mention in a plan to 1<sup>st</sup> completions
- ▶ Letwin - not measuring the same thing but.....
- ▶ Time from outline application to 1<sup>st</sup> detailed pp - roughly 2 to 4 years - size of scheme not directly related to length of time (Annex A - AX10)
- ▶ Pretty quick then to 1<sup>st</sup> starts (say a year) (Annex A - AX20)
- ▶ Looks like the 10 year rule holds..... 5 years 1<sup>st</sup> mention to outline pp, 5 years OPP to 1<sup>st</sup> start.....
- ▶ Is this properly understood by plan makers and landowners/developers?

# A lengthy process... External changes faced

## ▶ National planning policy

“... the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies .....” (*NPPF 2019 - para 61*)

## ▶ Wider national policies - carbon reduction agenda

## ▶ Changing housing products (e.g. what is affordable housing, rise of PRS, rise of co-living, specialist housing for older people, rise of Custom and Self-build....)

## ▶ Changing economic circumstances

# A lengthy process... dealing with change

- ▶ Master plan/design guides setting standards
- ▶ Once 'standards are set' - how to respond to changing policy/funding environment (e.g. of AH reviews)
- ▶ Role of reserved matters - keeping a pipeline of supply - planning authority is reactive

## Skills needed (by the LA)

- ▶ Place making and design assessment
- ▶ Viability and funding - balancing infrastructure required / AH wanted / funding available - when to update
- ▶ Success in obtaining external funding.....
  - ▶ Responding to funding opportunities
  - ▶ Clear 'single voice' to funders
- ▶ + Identifying and understanding potential LA interventions

# Different approaches?

- ▶ Different organisational models
  - ▶ ‘Traditional’ DM approach
  - ▶ Bespoke team within the LA
  - ▶ Cross authority/cllrs/developers - ‘task force’

(Whatever model - can be capacity/skills ‘gaps’ to meet)

# How to ..guidance

- ▶ We said - there is no 'how to guide' - RTPI produced one.....

## *Delivering Large Scale Housing - Practice Advice, March 2019*

- ▶ Site identification and assembly
- ▶ Viability
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Leadership and governance
- ▶ Masterplanning and design
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Community engagement
- ▶ Skills

- ▶ But - even with guidance - will take time for best practice to impact.....

# Thank you

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