

Birmingham City Council's response to EXAM88 – Savills evidence of annual completions on major urban extensions

EXAM88 was submitted (unheralded) by Savills during the second session of the Examination to illustrate delivery rates on major urban extensions. The submission consisted of two tables.

The first table provided details of completions on five sites (in Bristol (2), Swindon, Gloucester and Weston-Super-Mare). The table shows the annual average completions (over an unspecified number of years) on each of the sites. The City Council wish to draw attention to the fact that on four of the five sites the annual average completions were less than those anticipated by the City Council on the Langley SUE¹. Additionally, it is noted that none of these sites appears to adjoin immediately another of the sites.

The second table in EXAM88 examined one of the above sites (Emersons Green, Bristol) in more detail with the completions broken down by outlet over the pre-recession period 1996/7 to 2003/4. This site had twenty one outlets operated by twelve different developers and delivered 2,865 completions at 358 per annum. Again this is less than the annual average completions anticipated on the Langley SUE. In respect of this table the City Council would like to draw attention to the fact that although there were twenty one outlets and twelve developers this did not increase overall delivery beyond, or even to, the levels of housebuilding assumed on the Langley SUE. This demonstrates that increasing the number of outlets does not increase the number of dwellings built, rather it distributes the completions more widely across the site with the potential to impact on the critical mass of development to deliver infrastructure in any given location.

It is also notable that several of the house builders referenced in this historic data no longer exist, reflecting the enormous contraction in the house-building industry which has occurred as a result of the recession.

In conclusion, this data does nothing to establish that development of the immediately adjoining Areas B and C at Sutton Coldfield could take place simultaneously and deliver a significantly greater number of homes for Birmingham within the plan period.

It is noted that this commentary is all without prejudice to BCC's primary case, that Area B should not be released from the Green Belt (and that the highways and transportation impacts of doing so on Birmingham's heavily stressed network - at the same time as 6,000 houses on the immediately adjoining Area C - are wholly unproven on the evidence before the Examination in any event).

¹ PBA 'Housing Delivery on Green Belt Options' / SHLAA 2014.