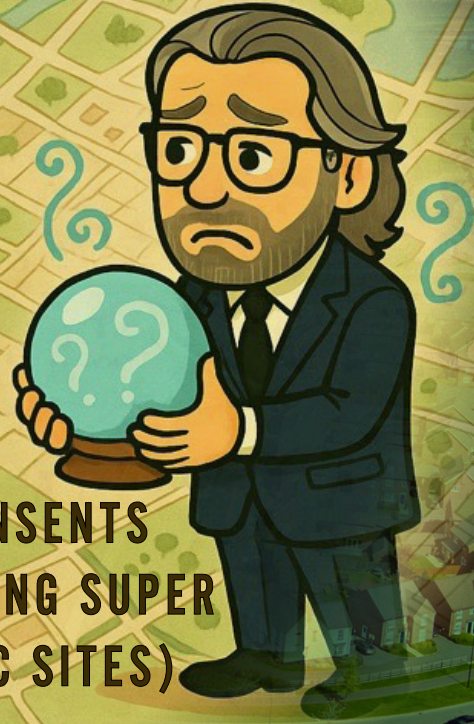


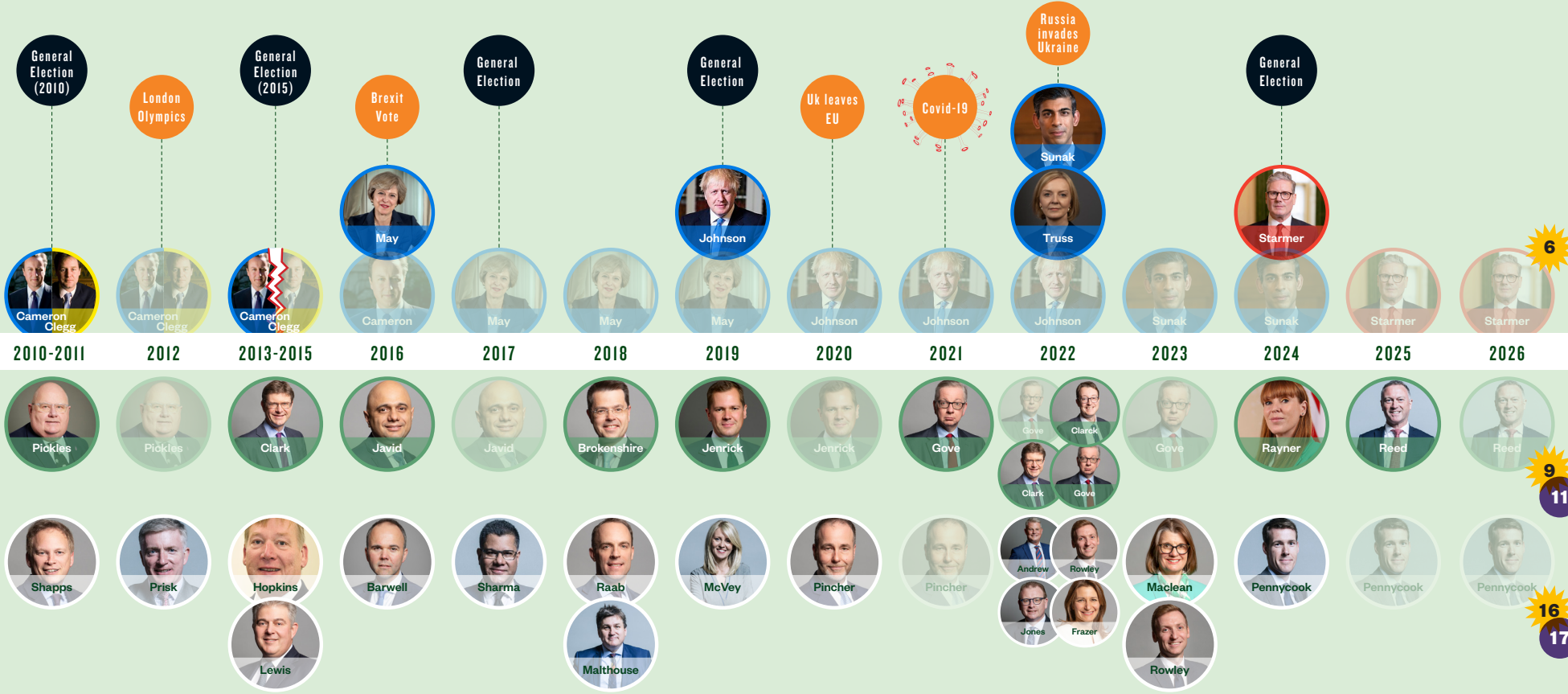
FLEXIBILITY

IS BETTER THAN PROPHECY



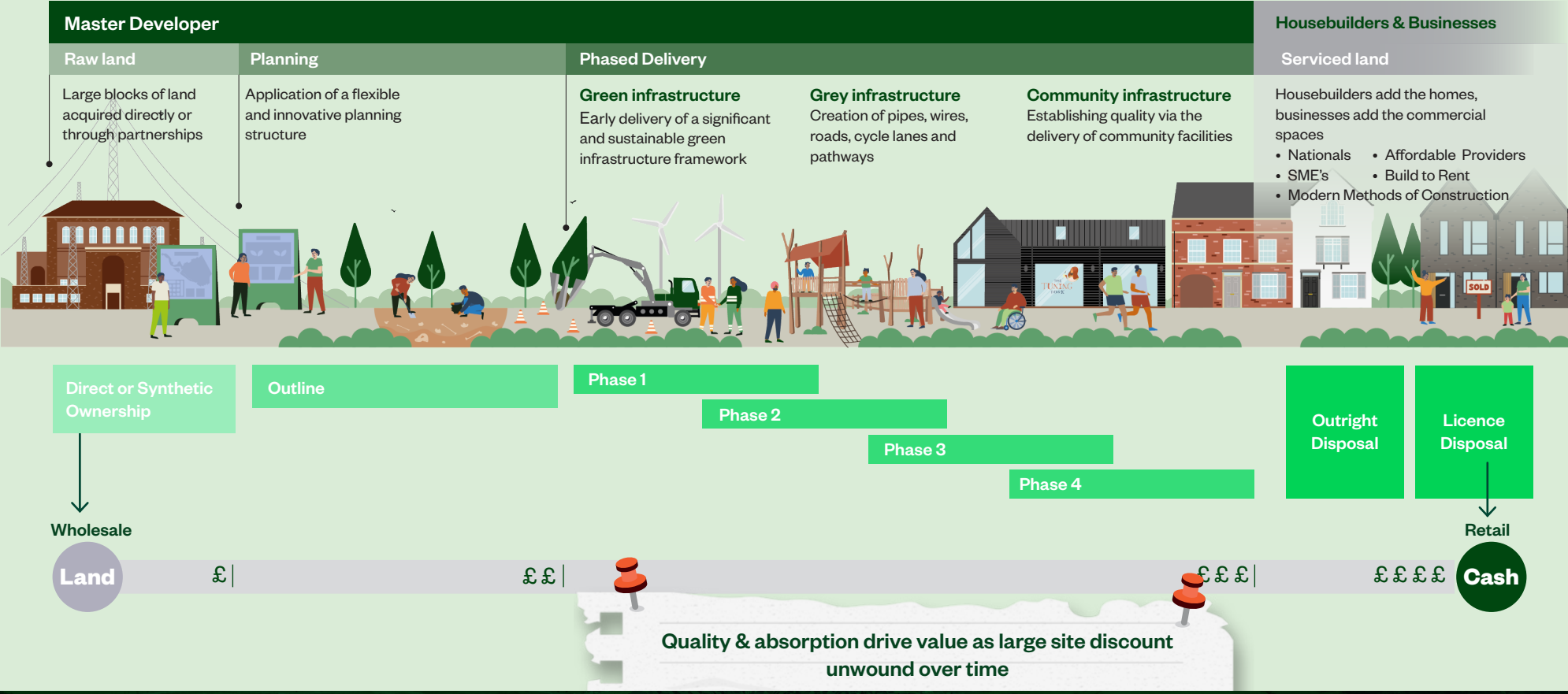
**(FOR CONSENTS
UNDERPINNING SUPER
STRATEGIC SITES)**

Uncertainty: 16 years of near continuous change



● Secretary of State
● Minister of State

The Master Developer Model



Super Strategic Sites are much more than just homes



Alconbury Weald

5,000 units → 6,500 units



HOULTON

6,200 units



Middlebeck Newark

3,150 units



PRIORS HALL

4,320 units



Waterbeach

6,500 units



WINTRINGHAM ST NEOTS

2,800 units



26

primary schools



7

secondary schools



28km

of cycleways



2,000+

acres of open space

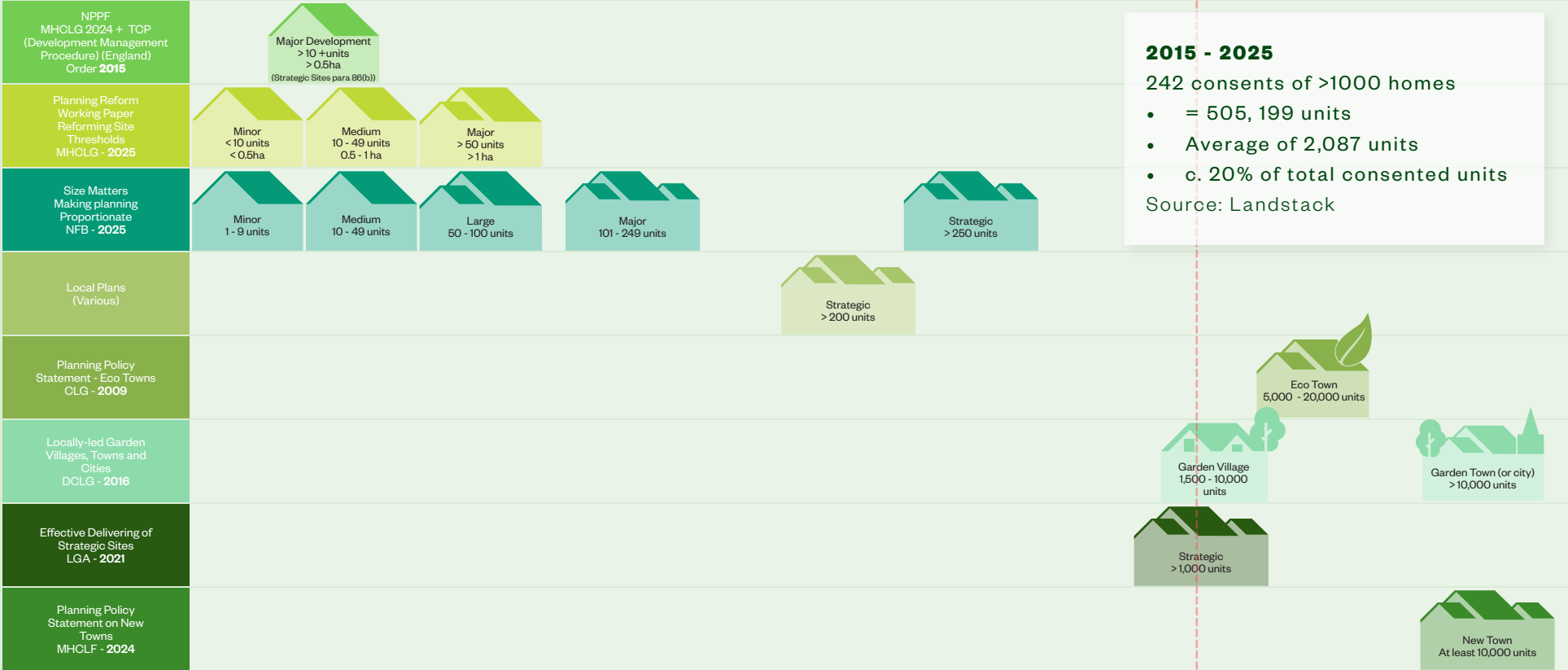
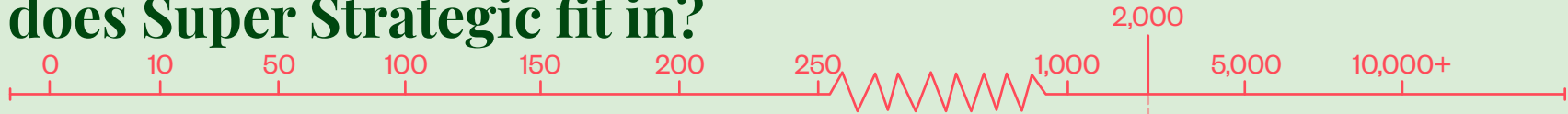


11m ft² +

employment floor space

2,000+ Homes
=
c. +10 years of delivery

Where does Super Strategic fit in?



2015 - 2025
 242 consents of >1000 homes
 • = 505, 199 units
 • Average of 2,087 units
 • c. 20% of total consented units
 Source: Landstack

But beyond 2000 units the list of requirements continues to grow:

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
|  <p>GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Formal and informal play provisionAmenity and natural greenspaceTracks and trailsAllotments and orchardsHabitat creation (BNG) |  <p>EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre-school provisionPrimary SchoolsSecondary SchoolsSixth Form CollegeSpecial Education Needs ProvisionSkills training facilities |  <p>HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">GP surgeriesRegional Health Centres |  <p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Community meeting spacesLibrary provisionPlaces of worshipCemeteries |  <p>FORMAL SPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">PitchesCourtsAssociated facilitiesSport halls |
|  <p>UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sub stationsWater treatment facilitiesImproved broadband infrastructureEnergy centres/microgridsFlood Alleviation |  <p>WASTE MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recycling centresBin Storage |  <p>COST BENCHMARKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Infrastructure: £35,000 per plotS106/ CIL: £20,000 per plot (excluding affordable housing) |  <p>MOVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Off-site highway improvementsNew rail/rapid transit infrastructureTravel hubs/public transport stopsPark and rideCycle hireCar clubs |  <p>COMMERCIAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">NurseriesRetailFood and drink outletsEssential services – eg. Banking, pharmacy, opticians, veterinary surgeries, garages |

Infrastructure Delivery/Management Plans
LPA + Infrastructure/Service Providers

Best Practice Guidance
Government Departments/ALB's
Non Strategic Bodies

Topic Specific Requirements
Eg. Natural England Heritage England
Environmental Agency

Green Space is properly multi-functional when operating at scale



And community infrastructure creates place



Nursery

Community Building

Cafe

Sports Hall

Secondary School

Primary School

David Lloyd

Go-op

The co-operative food

Super Strategic Sites - The Planner's Dilemma

SCALE + DURATION = UNCERTAINTY

SEEK
PROPHETIC
CERTAINTY

APPLYING
SMALLER SITE
LOGIC CREATES
DELAY & FIXES

VIABILITY
ISSUES &
VARIATIONS

DEADLOCK



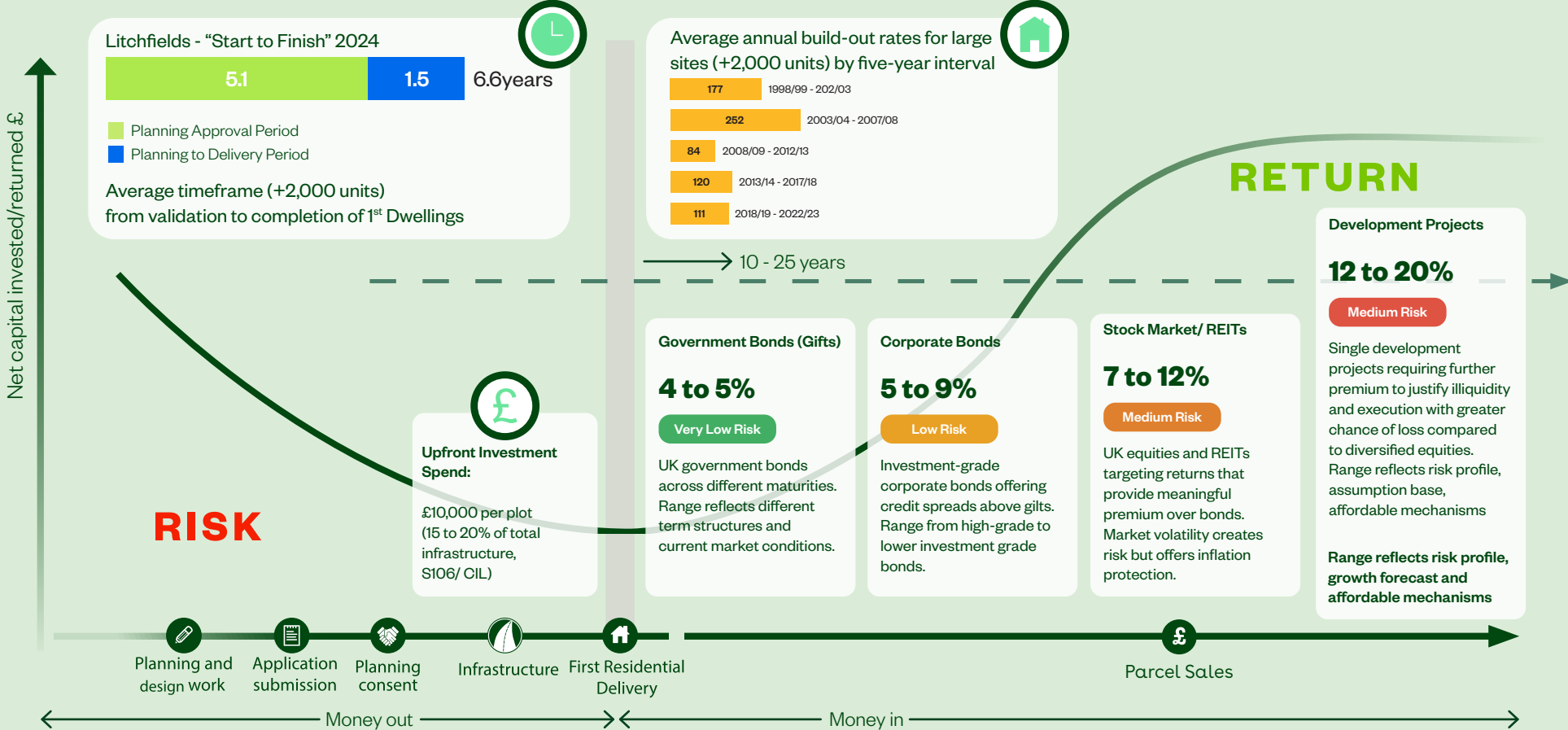
ACHIEVE
ADAPTIVE
CERTAINTY

AGREED PROCESS
& PRINCIPLES
CREATE ONGOING
COLLABORATION

JOINT
SOLUTIONS &
EVOLUTION

DELIVERY

Super Strategic Sites - The Developer's Dilemma



Flexibility is Better than Prophecy (for Consents Underpinning Super Strategic Sites)

James Scott

☞ Nationally significant infrastructure projects; Planning policy; Residential development

With this Government's commitment to 1.5 million new homes and increasing support for large sites, in part evidenced through the work of the New Towns Taskforce, I am grateful for this opportunity to consider the planning and delivery mechanics for large residential led sites.¹ Thresholds are notoriously difficult to define but, in the context of this paper, a large residential led site, which I describe as a "super strategic site", is one of over 2,000 homes that will take more than 10 years to deliver and which requires material onsite green, grey and community infrastructure.

"The only constant in life is change."—Heraclitus (Greece—late 6th/early 5th Century BC).
"The pace of change has never been this fast, yet it will never be this slow again."—Justin Trudeau (World Economic Forum, 2018).²

Over the last 15 years, as part of Urban&Civic's founding team, I have been responsible for shepherding a number of these super strategic sites through policy and development control. In so doing, one thing that has become increasingly evident is that "flexibility is better than prophecy". Indeed, colleagues and consultant teams alike would be surprised if there was a meeting at which I didn't raise this pragmatism driven mantra.

In my experience, the default expectation by local planning authorities (LPAs), county councils, viability consultants, statutory consultees and indeed Government, is that super strategic sites are like smaller sites and should therefore be subject to similar certainties and detailed controls around the manner, timing and costs of delivery.

In practice, this prophetic certainty is fundamentally misguided for a super strategic site. Smaller sites, once consented and if done properly, do not have delivery periods which extend from 10-25 years or beyond. Consequently, they do not have to navigate through multiple economic and political cycles, as well as significant changes in technology, funding and regulatory regimes. Worse still, applying a small site desire for certainty via fixes in a super strategic site, only creates delays in approvals, unviable consents and a breakdown in trust, with promises made being broken via inevitable and increasing convoluted revisions.

Successful large-scale residential led sites over the last 15 years have recognised that flexibility is better than prophecy and have had honest, realistic, delivery focused conversations during the planning process that build trust. This approach does not pretend to have all the answers on day one and does not rob decision makers of certainty or controls. Rather, it focuses on establishing principles and processes within the Outline with reviews and details being brought forward for subsequent phase by phase approval, linked to ongoing viability assessments. In essence, it creates adaptive certainty.

Through this paper, I seek to make the case for the flexible approach to super strategic sites by master developers and stakeholders alike. I explain how and why Urban&Civic came to adopt

¹ I am equally grateful to everyone who has contributed and reviewed this paper throughout its genesis, in particular U&C's Julia Foster and Andrew Fisher of DLA, Tom Dobson of Qued and Beverly Frith and Alex Rowland of Mills&Rees. JPLC committee have also been both enlightening and entertaining. As ever, all views expressed remain my own in a personal capacity.

² Trudeau: "The pace of change has never been this fast", <https://youtu.be/711N7N86g>.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system

December 2025

HO13: Build out of residential and mixed-use development

1. To significantly boost the supply of homes, it is important that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. Proposals for major residential and mixed-use development should be capable of bringing housing forward within a reasonable period, taking into account the proposed housing tenure mix for the development, local market conditions (including absorption rates) and the development history of the site.
2. Consideration should be given to whether to impose a planning condition requiring that development begins within a timescale shorter than the relevant statutory default period, where this would expedite the development without threatening its implementation or

37

viability.

3. Where there are development proposals for large scale residential and mixed-use development which will be implemented through multiple phases across development plan periods, the consenting framework for the proposal should:
 - a. Secure the approach to design, infrastructure and other site-specific requirements for the development, including the scale of affordable housing; and
 - b. Be flexible enough to respond positively to changing circumstances as phases are brought forward, including changes to housing need, viability and design.
4. Development proposals affecting sites for large scale residential and mixed-use development set out in emerging development plans should not be inconsistent with the proposed scale, location and phasing of those emerging proposals.

Seeing is believing

