

**MATTER 4**

**Mick Drury: for Persimmon Homes South East Limited**

**Representor ID: 874636**

**LP Refs: 2201, 2205, 2207**

**Policy AX6**

**Modification Numbers: 160 and 161**

**CONTENTS:**

**1 – 1.3 Summary**

**4.1 – 4.5 Responses to the Inspector's Questions**

**Matter 4****Summary:**

- 1.0** The principle of the AX6 housing allocation in the Main Modification 160, 161 etc is accepted and welcomed. We have reviewed the Council's assessments of our objections together with its responses to all other objections to the modification and proposed policy, comprised in its '*Chapter-6-summaries-and-responses-Nov-17-2016-v1-FINAL*'. We regard these to be a reasonable response and commend them to the Inspector. It is noted that 32 representations were submitted through the Main Modifications Consultation exercise, representing just 1.4% of total submissions. It can be concluded that this modification is comparatively un-contentious and with no objections raised by statutory consultees.
- 1.1** The objectors have undertaken substantial and detailed analysis of potential impacts, including the suitability of existing infrastructure and have assessed the measures required to accommodate the development proposed, in order to support the Hybrid planning application submitted in March 2016. This application has evolved to meet the emerging draft policies comprised in the Main Modifications.
- 1.3** The adoption of policy AX6 and supporting text will add significantly to the soundness of the Plan, particularly since the development allocation is capable of commencement during 2017 and providing full delivery well within the next 5 years

**Matter 4 Inspector's Questions.*****Is the (AX6) Allocation:***

- 4.1** ***Justified by robust evidence, including landscape character assessment, sustainability appraisal and consideration of countryside gaps?***
- 4.11** A hybrid planning application for the allocation site (ref: 16/501266/HYBRID) was lodged in March 2016. This covers the entire allocation area comprised within MM policy AX6. Submission of this application followed extensive research into all constraints and opportunities as well as public consultation, to ensure that all the development impacts were known and understood. The final submission development proposals have been modified to address many of the concerns raised through pre-submission consultation.

- 4.11** In particular, and to support the planning application, the application was accompanied by a Landscape Architect's review of the site's characteristics and surroundings as well as its setting within the wider landscape. This review concurred with the Council's Landscape Character Assessment and dictated which parts of the site could be developed to cause minimal impact on the surrounding landscape and setting of the village. In accordance with draft policy CP4 (MM 161), a substantial area comprising the eastern portion of the site is to remain undeveloped, planted and maintained. In addition, proposals are included within the application to reinforce the site's boundaries with indigenous tree and shrub screen planting. The development will sit within a shallow valley, almost completely screened from the open countryside where it might be visible, by an embanked rail line to the north and higher ground to the east.
- 4.12** The Important Countryside Gap between the eastern end of the built-up area at Newington and the urban area of Sittingbourne will not be eroded or compromised by the development of the site. This results from the site's physical containment as 'rounding-off the existing settlement pattern at Newington, where the site lies behind an established ribbon of London Road frontage development.

**4.2** *Deliverable within the Plan period?*

- 4.2.1** Yes. The current planning application, submitted in March 2016, has now been substantially amended to meet the draft policy requirements set out in Policy AX6 and the more detailed requirements of the Development Management Policies (DM policies). In particular, the application has been amended to accord with proposed policy DM8, which required village developments including at Newington to provide affordable housing at 40%, rather than the 30% rate applicable at the time of the application's submission.
- 4.2.2** The application is now at a stage where officers are preparing reports to the Council's Planning Committee. This is currently scheduled for 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 and will be recommended for approval. Moreover, the objectors have already prepared an Agreement under section 106 of the Planning Acts to expedite the issue of planning approval soon after the Council's resolution to grant permission during March 2017.
- 4.2.3** Since the hybrid (some matters in outline, some in detail) application contains details of house-types, layout and access, development is likely to commence on site well before the end of 2017 and will be completed in less than 5 years. A copy of the planning application layout plan is attached – **Appendix MD-N1**

**4.3 *Supported by robust infrastructure planning? Have all the infrastructure implications been identified and addressed in appropriate detail?***

**4.3.1** Yes. The Planning application followed 'Pre-App' discussions with the Council in order to establish all infrastructure requirements. These have also been identified in the draft AX6 Main Modifications policy and preceding paragraphs. The validation reports and assessments have been the subject of extensive consultation with all relevant agencies and are known to meet in full the requirements arising from the development. Some of these are to be provided on-site (e.g Affordable housing, Public Open Space, surface and foul drainage) and others by way of financial contributions towards off-site infrastructure. The commitment to provide all infrastructure in timely fashion is to be contained within a s106 Agreement.

**4.3.1** Both the applicants and the LPA, to ensure compliance with emerging policies comprised within Main Modifications 160 and 161, have reviewed the application since its submission. The application has been adjusted where necessary to meet the draft policy requirements including those in policies CP3, CP4, CP7, DM8, DM 17, DM 28, DM32 and DM33.

**4.3.2** The draft planning application was the subject of public consultation and an exhibition was held in the village hall adjoining the site. This consultation helped identify the availability and adequacy of local services and facilities, which were within the village and accessible nearby.

**4.4 *Supported by clear and deliverable measures to address transport implications of the proposed development?***

**4.4.1** A fully detailed Transport Assessment (TA) provided with the application has been the subject of consultation with the Highway Authority, which raises no objection to the proposals, subject to appropriate mitigation measures. These have been the subject of detailed analysis and consideration and will be the subject of appropriate planning conditions and legal Agreements.

**4.5 *Have the heritage, wildlife and biodiversity aspects of the site been taken into consideration?***

**4.5.1** The Planning application is supported by an Archaeological Assessment and a Heritage Statement. Both have been the subject of full consultation with the relevant authorities, with agreement on methodology, scope and mitigation.

Ecological Surveys of flora and fauna underpinned an Ecological Assessment of potential impacts, submitted with the application. The report proposes appropriate mitigation and measures to safeguard and enhance biodiversity. The existing monoculture of arable field cropping has resulted in a lack of habitat and biodiversity across the site, with only the peripheral field margins containing potential habitat for wildlife.

Conversely, the proposed development including private gardens, amenity and landscape buffers, retention and reinforcement of the peripheral hedges and screen planting, along with a substantial area of natural 'Greenspace' to be provided on the eastern portion of the site, will significantly enhance local biodiversity. The relevant authorities have been consulted and do not object to the application.

- 4.5.2** The Council's Sustainability Assessment (SA) for the site including its 'SA report Addendum Erratum' (**Appendix MD-N2**) identifies the potential impacts at a relatively high level of assessment. The Newington land is identified as SW/407. The more detailed assessments of impact undertaken by the applicants for the planning application, confirm the SAs findings to be accurate.