

Matter 4 – Modifications to Existing Allocations

Introduction

1. This Hearing Statement is prepared on behalf of Redrow Homes South East, who have an interest in the land north of Quinton Road Sittingbourne, which forms part of the North West Sittingbourne allocation in the Swale Local Plan Publication Version, and to which Policy MU1 refers.
2. I can confirm I have seen, agree with and support the contents of the statement submitted by JB Planning Associates on behalf of Persimmon Homes South East, one of the other promoters of the North West Sittingbourne allocation.
3. To this end, I can also confirm, as set out in the statement submitted by JB Planning Associates on behalf of Persimmon Homes South East that the promoters of the North West Sittingbourne Strategic Allocation are working closely with one another and with officers of Swale Borough Council/ KCC/ other statutory providers and the local community to facilitate the delivery of what is the main strategic allocation in the Swale Local Plan.
4. To this end a Development Framework which has been produced in collaboration with those promoting the North West Sittingbourne allocation is at an advanced stages of production, and as set out in the statement submitted by JB Planning Associates this document establishes the overarching design principles that will help guide the development of the allocated site in a comprehensive and structured manner. It is anticipated that this document will be finalised in February, allowing planning applications to be submitted in Spring 2017.
5. In addition to the above, as set out in the statement submitted by JB Planning Associates the highway consultants acting for those promoting the North West Sittingbourne allocation have been working closely with Swale Borough Council, KCC and Highways England to agree the highway improvements to the Grovehurst Junction with the A249 that are necessary to accommodate the level of growth proposed at North West Sittingbourne. It is understood that the interim improvement scheme is deliverable within the highway boundary and land controlled by those promoting the North West Sittingbourne allocation; and will offer significant capacity improvements at this junction, thus accommodating the predicted traffic from the development of MU1. Further detail, including an update on progress with these discussions, will be provided in Persimmons Matter 5 Hearing Statement due by 19th January 2017.
6. As also set out in the statement submitted by JB Planning Associates the planning applications associated with the MU1 allocation are at an advanced stage, with the Environmental Impact Assessment baseline surveys complete, and appropriate mitigations measures in the process of being identified. Again the promoters are working together to share information and ensure their respective sites are delivered in accordance with the Development Framework. To this end I can concur that there have been extensive pre-application discussions with officers of Swale Borough Council and KCC Highways and Education about what is proposed.

Question 4.6 - Are the proposed modifications to existing allocations justified and necessary to ensure the soundness of the Plan?

7. We submitted, on behalf of Redrow Homes South East, a comprehensive set of representations in response to the Main Modifications that were proposed to Paragraphs 6.6.1 to 6.6.34 of the Local Plan Publication Version, including Policy MU1, concerning the mixed use allocation at North West Sittingbourne.
8. Whilst in agreement with a number of modifications proposed, we raised concern about the soundness of several of the Main Modifications and sought further amendments. As set out in the statement submitted by JB Planning Associates on behalf of Persimmon Homes South East those promoting the NW Sittingbourne allocation have since had further discussions with the Borough Council about the wording of Policy MU1 and its supporting text. The Borough Council have encouraged the promoters to seek agreement in advance of the reconvened Examination and to this end discussions have focussed on agreeing a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).
9. The latest draft of this SoCG is included as Appendix 1 to the statement submitted by JB Planning Associates on behalf of Persimmon Homes South East, and is currently with the Borough Council for comment.
10. Whilst I am unable to attend the Examination, JB Planning Associates will update the Inspector on the agreement reached with the Borough Council and provide the final SoCG for consideration at the Matter 4 hearing. Depending on the final form of the SoCG the objections submitted on the Main Modifications may well be withdrawn.

Overall Conclusion

11. The NW Sittingbourne proposed strategic allocation is deliverable within the plan period and planning applications are programmed to be submitted in the Spring this year. Redrow are submitting a detailed application for 200 dwellings. Persimmon's applications is a hybrid application to comprise of a detailed application for up to 200 dwellings and an outline on the remaining part of the site.
12. It is anticipated that the first planning permissions will be granted during 2018 and a start on the development in early 2019 with first completions that year.
13. Whilst I am unable to attend the Examination, I am aware of the fact that JB Planning Associates will be attending on behalf of Persimmon and can provide further information to assist the Inspector if required.