



Strategic Planning & Research Unit

For and on behalf of
Mr Edward Spanton

**Thanet District Local Plan Examination
Response to MIQ's Matter 4: Spatial Strategy**

Land at Cliffsend, West of Ramsgate, Kent

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This response to the Thanet Local Plan Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions are made by Strategic Planning Research Unit ('SPRU') of DLP Planning Ltd on behalf of our client, Mr Edward Spanton, the landowner of land west of Cliffsend, west of Ramsgate, Kent. The site is, in part, identified for housing and a new railway station in the emerging Local Plan as proposed policies HO15, HO16, HO17 and SP45. If allocated as a whole, our client's site could provide **at least 600 dwellings**, the exact number will be confirmed upon completion of the masterplan.
- 2.1 The proposed development area extends to approximately 54 hectares of land across 4 parcels of land in the ownership and control of the landowner, Mr Edward Spanton.
- 2.2 Whilst partially allocated under emerging Policies HO15, HO16, HO17 and SP45, it is considered that given the shortage of available and developable site to make provision for the full 15 year period or to meet the OAN in the early part of the plan period there is a strong justification for the whole of the site to be allocated.
- 2.3 The site has been assessed (albeit in parts rather than as a single site) and is identified below. This is adjacent to the parkway station and represents a very sustainable location to the south of the district, a location which will assist in improving the overall delivery rates within the district by adding a further sustainable choice. In particular sites such as the one below can be developed quickly and assist the plan in achieving a five-year housing land supply at the date of adoption.

Figure 1. Location Plan



2.0 MATTER 4: SPATIAL STRATEGY

a) Issue 1: Settlement Hierarchy and Housing Distribution

Q1) Does the Plan set out a hierarchy of settlements where new development will be directed towards? If so, is it clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities?

2.1 No, there is no clear hierarchy of settlements. There is a retail hierarchy of settlements but not one specifically for housing development.

2.2 While the Council identifies the three main principal coastal towns of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs, as well as the proposed development of Westwood as forming the main urban areas in Thanet, the final distribution of growth places an overreliance on a limited number of strategic sites and as such will not be able to deliver the housing requirement. This renders the plan inefficient and unsound.

Q2) How have the main urban areas of Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Westwood been defined? Do they represent a single urban area where the majority of new development is concentrated?

Q3) Does the Plan seek to direct a certain percentage, or proportion of growth, to particular areas and/or settlements? If so, where is this set out and what is it based on?

2.3 The proposed distribution of housing across the district is not soundly-based. It does however allocate 55% of the proposed housing allocations (i.e. 5,050 dwellings) to the north of the district within a 3.5-mile radius of one another. While we do not contest that Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Westwood are the principal urban areas in the district, the Council's distribution of growth, it is not an effective approach as having 5,050 dwellings anticipated to deliver simultaneously will flood the market and likely slow down the delivery of each site.

2.4 We consider that an adjustment to the spatial distribution of growth is required to reflect the potential of our client's site to deliver in the region of 600 dwellings which is within close proximity to the proposed parkway station. We consider this adjustment will still be within the general thrust of the Council's spatial strategy and objectively it will give greater certainty to housing need being delivered. The reasons for this greater positive impact is that, when assessed against the principles of sustainable development, it is the most sustainable location for reducing demand on the road network and providing future residents with sustainable public transport methods due to its location to the proposed parkway station. It is the only strategic site not reliant on the road network.

Q4) How did the Council decide on the scale and level of growth attributed to Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs, Westwood and the Rural Settlements?

2.5 It is unclear exactly how this was determined. However, it appears to be that the desire to deliver road infrastructure was the predetermining factor for these decisions as there is no clear logic flowing from the SA which would be expected to provide an evidential background to these decisions.

Q5) How did the Council consider the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile agricultural land in pursuing the growth options in the Plan?

- 2.6 It is considered that the council put too much emphasis on BMV in some locations and in other locations it appears to have been given less weight.

Q6) Is the distribution of development consistent with the Framework's Core Planning Principles which, amongst other things, seek to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable?

- 2.7 No.
- 2.8 The Sustainability Appraisal failed to recognise the importance of the new parkway station and has been used simply to justify the Council's selection of sites rather than inform the choice of sites which means that sustainable sites such as our client's site has simply been overlooked.
- 2.9 All the main strategic allocations are completely reliant on road transport and the only opportunity the Plan has of actually locating housing in very close proximity to new non-road public transport has been completely overlooked.
- 2.10 This policy in light of the missed opportunity of making an allocation adjacent to the new railway station is actually completely ineffective as it has not even managed to translate its objective into effective allocations.

Q7) What alternative options were considered as part of the Plan's preparation and why were they discounted?

- 3.1 No proper consideration has been given to the reasonable alternatives and it is noted that 'reasonable alternatives' has only been mentioned twice in the 2018 Report and not at all in the 2016 SA. The 2018 SA Report therefore does not provide reasons for not taking forward reasonable alternative sites. Reasonable alternatives are referred to in paragraph 5.4.2 of the Scoping Report (2013) but this is in the context that these **will** be assessed, rather than have been.
- 3.2 The methodology for site selection is also unclear and not properly explained. For example, in Section 5.4 of the 2018 SA it states that:
"The objectively assessed need in 2014 was 12,000 dwellings based on migration trend based population projections and labour requirement. Following release of sub national population data, projections rose in January 2016 to 15,660 and again in September 2016 to 17,140. Following this increase it was decided that further SA work was required to look again at the option of a new settlement and whether the negative effects of the option could be mitigated against."
- 3.3 The report goes on further to explain that *"due to the increased housing need, it was decided that a review of a potential new settlement options should be undertaken"*. It is clear that the only option considered for increasing the housing requirement from 12,000 to 17,140 was a new settlement. No proper explanation is given for the identification of a new settlement and the rejection of reasonable alternatives.

- 3.4 The Council subsequently published a document entitled "*Omission sites put forward at Publication Stage (CD4.5)*" in January 2019 although there is no justification for not considering these sites either.

Q8) What is the rationale for pursuing growth on larger, strategic sites, rather than smaller site allocations to meet the housing requirement?

- 4.1 It is not clear.
- 4.2 It is implied in paragraph 3.17 of the draft Plan that large strategic allocations will "*provide the opportunity to deliver development that will serve both to facilitate a step change in delivering the type of homes required to meet need **and secure the infrastructure required to support them***" (DLP Emphasis). However, given that the Plan Viability report does not take into account individual infrastructure costs (paragraph 18) as "*cost estimates are in some cases not yet available*" and that "*In addition to testing CIL across a range of 'trial rates', an allowance has been made for potential site-specific planning mitigation through a s.106 contingency*", it is difficult to understand how these 'trial rates' can confirm viability of the strategic sites if the costs of a required infrastructure are unknown. Thus, the reasons for selecting strategic sites is flawed as there is no certainty that they sites will deliver the infrastructure required; particularly as there are some key pieces of infrastructure such as a bypass and relief road which large items with large costs that have apparently not been considered.
- 4.3 The overreliance on a few large sites to the north of the district and the inadequate approach of the SA means that the LPA has failed to recognise the potential of Cliffsend and the proposals to develop a sustainable community around the new 'parkway' railway station. The provision of this new railway station which is an important piece of public transport infrastructure should have been properly considered and reflected in the proposed spatial strategy.

Q9) Is the spatial strategy justified? Does it represent the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives?

- 2.11 No.
- 3.5 It is not possible to assess whether the spatial strategy is the most appropriate one because reasonable alternatives have not been considered.
- 3.6 No proper consideration has been given to the reasonable alternatives and it is noted that 'reasonable alternatives' has only been mentioned twice in the 2018 Report and not at all in the 2016 SA. The 2018 SA Report therefore does not provide reasons for not taking forward reasonable alternative sites. Reasonable alternatives are referred to in paragraph 5.4.2 of the Scoping Report (2013) but this is in the context that these **will** be assessed, rather than have been.
- 3.7 The PPG (Paragraph 018, Ref ID: 11-018-20140306) requires all reasonable alternatives to be assessed against the same baseline environmental, economic and social characteristics as the preferred options. The SA process has considered mitigation of the preferred options, but not of the reasonable alternatives and the role of the SA is described on page 2 as being "*to communicate to interested parties the results from the SA of draft Local Plan preferred options*". This is wholly inadequate, and the site selection and SA processes are flawed in this respect. Furthermore, it makes it clear that reasonable alternatives must be assessed to the same level of detail:

"The Sustainability appraisal needs to compare all reasonable alternatives including the preferred approach and assess these against the baseline

environmental, economic and social characteristics of the area and the likely situation if the Local Plan were not to be adopted... The sustainability appraisal should identify any likely significant adverse effects and measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as full as possible, offset them. The sustainability appraisal must consider all reasonable alternatives and assess them in the same level of detail as the options the plan-maker proposes to take forward in the Local Plan (the preferred approach)"

- 3.8 Furthermore, Table 5 of the 2018 SA is entitled "*rationale for policy's not assessed as part of reasonable alternatives*". This table clearly states that for policies SP13 to SP18 "*these sites were assessed under broad housing locations as well as being assessed via the SHLAA*". This suggests that these sites were not selected as part of the consideration of reasonable alternatives in the SA but were assessed under "broad housing locations". This is contrary to the required approach of the SA and the approach taken by the Council is flawed in fundamental respects and does not follow the Regulations/the SEA Directive.

Q10) What was the process for identifying the residential site allocations, including their size, location and distribution? How were they chosen?

- 3.9 The methodology for site selection is unclear and not properly explained. For example, in Section 5.4 of the 2018 SA it states that:

"The objectively assessed need in 2014 was 12,000 dwellings based on migration trend based population projections and labour requirement. Following release of sub national population data, projections rose in January 2016 to 15,660 and again in September 2016 to 17,140. Following this increase it was decided that further SA work was required to look again at the option of a new settlement and whether the negative effects of the option could be mitigated against."

- 3.10 The report goes on further to explain that "*due to the increased housing need, it was decided that a review of a potential new settlement options should be undertaken*". The only option considered for increasing the housing requirement from 12,000 to 17,140 was a new settlement. No proper explanation is given for the identification of a new settlement and the rejection of reasonable alternatives.
- 3.11 Similarly, at the Full Council meeting on 16th July 2018, the decision was voted through by Members to not allocate the airport for a specific use and to reallocate 2,500 dwellings to sites selected from those submitted to the Council throughout the Local Plan process.
- 3.12 This is illustrative of the SA simply reviewing the impact of sites following on from the site selection process rather than the SA being a tool to inform the site selection process.

b) Issue 2 – Housing Development – Policies HO1 and SP12

Q1) What is the justification for requiring proposals on allocated housing sites to be consistent with the indicative phasing schedule in Appendix B? How will this be determined, and is it clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities what is expected of proposals for new development?

- 2.12 The proposed strategic allocations all expect to start delivering completions in 2019/20 despite Westwood, Birchington and Westgate all not having a planning application lodged or determined. Lead-in times from submission of an application to first completion

on site are in excess of 3 years according to local evidence such as Savills (2014)¹ or NLP (2016)². Therefore, the consequence of such failures by the Council to prepare a housing trajectory with suitable assumptions is that these sites are unlikely to deliver the level of completions proposed by the Council in the Plan period.

- 2.13 It is difficult to understand how allocated sites can be “*subject to consistency with indicative phasing*” when it is exactly that, indicative. It is not clear what the penalty will be if proposed allocations do not proceed with the timescales proposed by the Council, nor are they based on any evidence in terms of delivery rates and lead-in times to confirm such assumptions are realistic and deliverable.
- 2.14 What is clear, is that the Local Plan is already currently unsound as the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-Year Housing Land Supply but there are also serious doubts that it will deliver sufficient dwellings across the plan period to meet the Objectively Assessed Need. Therefore, the Council should consider allocating further sites for housing which can be delivered earlier in the plan period, including the land at and to the east of Manston Business Park.

Q2) What is the justification for restricting proposals on non-allocated sites to only previously developed land? How would a decision-maker be expected to react to a proposal for residential development on a greenfield site within one of the main towns?

- 2.15 The justification for such an approach to development is not clear. However, development on non-allocated sites should not be limited to only to previously developed land. This is for two reasons:
- a. Previously developed land can in some circumstances be quite costly to deliver and are not always viable;
 - b. There is not an infinite supply of available previously developed sites. If the strategic sites are delayed in coming forward and there are no available brownfield sites being brought forward for development, the housing requirement will not be met in full.
- 2.16 It is also not clear how the Council propose to deal with to be adopted. This in itself could hinder sites from coming forward or make site inviable if the greenfield element funds the previously developed land element of a site.

Q3) What is the justification for specifically referring to residential gardens under Policy HO1(3)? Does this apply to all residential gardens, regardless of location? Is this sufficiently clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities?

- 2.17 No comment.

Q4) Is the final requirement of Policy HO1 consistent with the strategic site allocations, some of which seek to promote alternative uses as part of new mixed-use developments? Is the policy effective?

- 2.18 No comment. What is a housing implementation strategy referred to in paragraph 11.8 of the Plan? Is the purpose of this strategy clear? Who will be responsible for the

¹ <http://www.barrattdevelopments.co.uk/~media/Files/B/Barratt-Developments/materials-and-downloads/savills-delivery-rates-urban-extensions-report.pdf>

² <https://lichfields.uk/media/1728/start-to-finish.pdf>

strategy and what outcomes does it seek to achieve?

Q5) What is the justification for having separate criteria for housing developments over 10 units in Policy SP12?

2.19 No comment

Q6) Does the Plan provide sufficient support for self-build and custom housebuilding? Has a need been identified, and if so, how does the Plan seek to meet this need?

2.20 No comment.

Q7) How will the Council ensure that developments make every reasonable effort to accommodate self-build needs as required by Policy SP12?

2.21 No comment.

Q8) What is the justification for requiring a Statement of Social Impacts to be provided on developments of 50 or more dwellings? Is it clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities what is required?

2.22 No comment.

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