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# Hearing Statement

## Stone Hill Park Ltd. – Matter 5 Strategic Sites (Policies SP13-SP18 and HO2)

### Issue 1 – Methodology

Q1. What was the process for identifying the residential site allocations, including their size, location and distribution? How were they chosen?

The submission version of the Local Plan removes the allocation of the former Manston Airport for mixed use development including 2,500 home and redistributes this housing to the following sites:

- An additional 600 dwellings at Birchington, as an extension of the previous draft allocation (albeit only 510 can be considered additional as site ST3 was already proposed for allocation through Policy HO2C);
- An additional 1,000 dwellings at Westgate, as an extension of the previous draft allocation;
- An additional 500 dwellings at Westwood, as an extension of the previous draft allocation at Manston Court Road/Haine Road;
- An additional 550 dwellings at a new strategic site north and south of Shottendane Road.

All of these sites are classified as either “Excellent” or “Very Good” in the Agricultural Land Classification, and we consider that the Council took the decision to redistribute housing allocations to these sites without a sufficient assessment of the economic and other benefits associated with preserving the most versatile agricultural land. We consider it unlikely that they will generate sufficient critical mass to deliver necessary infrastructure and are therefore likely to place additional pressure on existing facilities and services. We are not convinced that the quantum of homes proposed in these locations have a reasonable prospect of being delivered over the course of the plan period in any event as there is no evidence that they are all available, deliverable and achievable.

Q2. Was the process of allocating sites robust? Did it take into account sufficient factors?

The SA concluded that there would be ST/LT negative consequences associated with the re-distribution of housing requirements to other allocated sites on the basis that the use of greenfield land would not directly support the objective to improve efficiency in land use through the re-use of previously developed land. However, no assessment was made regarding the economic and other benefits associated with preserving the most versatile agricultural land. As a result, we consider that the draft SA Appraisal which informed the Cabinet’s decision underestimates the negative impact of the allocation of alternative housing sites in relation to this objective. This is inconsistent with the NPPF (2012), which states that “local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land” (para 112).

These sites would necessitate a more ‘piecemeal’ approach to housing delivery, and we are not aware of any assessments of the infrastructure required to support such development. We consider it unlikely development on these sites would be able to create sufficient critical mass to deliver the infrastructure necessary to mitigate their own impact and are therefore likely to place additional pressure on existing local facilities and services.

In addition, we question whether these sites are capable of delivering the quantum of homes proposed over the plan period. In particular, we consider that:

- Strategic Site SP14 (Birchington)– the full extent of the proposed extended site allocation has not been assessed in the SHLAA and has not been put forward by a developer; part of the site has been identified as having constraints and there is no evidence these can be mitigated; Site ST3 was already proposed for allocation by Policy HO2C and the quantum allocated therefore double counts by 90 homes;
- Strategic Site SP15 (Westgate)- the full extent of the proposed extended site allocation has not been assessed in the SHLAA, relying upon a Landowner submission to the 2018 Call for Sites which is not supported by any information or evidence to confirm there are no site constraints to development;

- Strategic Site SP18 – the western parcel has not been assessed in the SHLAA, relying upon a Landowner submission to the 2018 Call for Sites which is not supported by any information or evidence to confirm there are no site constraints to development; and
- Strategic Site HO2 – the site is not assessed in the SHLAA. The ‘Southern’ site has not been promoted for development by the landowner and there is no evidence that it is available, deliverable or achievable; with respect to the ‘Northern’ site the Council relies upon a Landowner submission to the 2018 Call for Sites which is not supported by any information or evidence to confirm there are no site constraints to development.

Q3. How were site areas and dwelling capacities determined? Are the assumptions justified and based on available evidence?

We do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the (extended) Strategic Site Allocations will be capable of delivering the 2,500 homes previously allocated on the former Manston Airport site over the lifetime of the plan for the reasons given in Q2.

Q5. How have the constraints of each site been taken into account and any necessary mitigation been considered as part of the process of allocating land for housing? In particular, how has the Council considered and assessed the impact of development on transport infrastructure, heritage assets and drainage? Where is this set out?

See answer to Q2.

Q6. Where the delivery of sites is dependent upon new infrastructure is it clear who will make this provision and when? Where applicable have the additional costs been factored into an assessment of viability?

See answer to Q2.

Q7. How has the Council taken into account the agricultural land classification when considering whether to allocate sites for housing? Has an assessment of each site been carried out?

There is no reference to the Agricultural Land classification of proposed housing land in the alternative Strategic Site allocations in the Sustainability Appraisal or any other evidence base document. No assessment was made regarding the economic and other benefits associated with preserving the most versatile agricultural land. This is inconsistent with the NPPF (2012), which states that “local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land” (para 112). As a result, we do not consider that it has been demonstrated that the chosen spatial strategy is the most appropriate one when considered against the reasonable alternatives, as the tests of soundness require.

Q9. Are there any factors which indicate that a site(s) should not have been allocated for development? Are all the sites developable within the plan period?

The proposed (extended) Strategic Site Allocations would require development of agricultural and greenfield land predominantly classed as ‘Excellent’ in the Agricultural Land Classification, the full effects of which have not been taken into consideration by Members in their decision to delete the proposed allocation of the former Manston Airport site.

We are not convinced that the quantum of homes proposed in these locations have a reasonable prospect of being delivered over the course of the plan period in any event as there is no evidence that they are all available, deliverable and achievable. See also response to Q2.

We are not aware of any assessments of the infrastructure required to support such development and we consider it unlikely that they will generate sufficient critical mass to deliver necessary infrastructure and are therefore likely to place additional pressure on existing facilities and services. Like Officers, we consider that the redevelopment of the former Manston Airport Site for one comprehensive development is preferable to this ‘piecemeal’ approach.

SHP’s position remains that the former Manston Airport should be allocated for comprehensive mixed use redevelopment including at least 2,500 homes over the plan period. The development potential of this vacant, brownfield site should be optimised in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

We consider that the decision to delete the proposed draft allocation to be flawed for the following reasons:

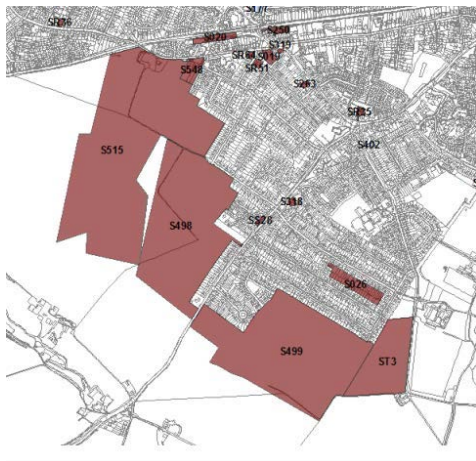
- It is driven by the desire not to ‘prejudice’ the DCO application, which will be determined through a separate legislative process in any event;
- The mere submission of a DCO Application cannot be relied upon as evidence to inform the Local Plan Process as its outcome remains uncertain;

- The Council's own up-to-date evidence base confirms that "airport operations at Manston are very unlikely to be financially viable in the longer term and almost certainly not possible in the period to 2031" (AviaSolutions Report, paragraph 2.5);
- This is consistent with our client's own expert aviation consultants, York Aviation and Altitude Aviation, both of whom conclude that there is little prospect of the re-opening of Manston Airport being a commercially viable proposition over the plan period;
- There has been a to explain and justify why Draft Policy SP05 has been rejected;
- The allocation of the former Manston Airport for mixed use development forms a reasonable (indeed preferable) alternative however a fair and public analysis of it as a development option has not informed the spatial strategy carried forward in the Local Plan;
- In light of the acute housing need in the District and the Secretary of State's confirmation that a review of the Local Plan will be required 6 months following adoption (where the standard methodology will require a significant increase in the OAN required over the plan period) the need for proper planning of the District's largest, redundant brownfield site becomes even more critical.

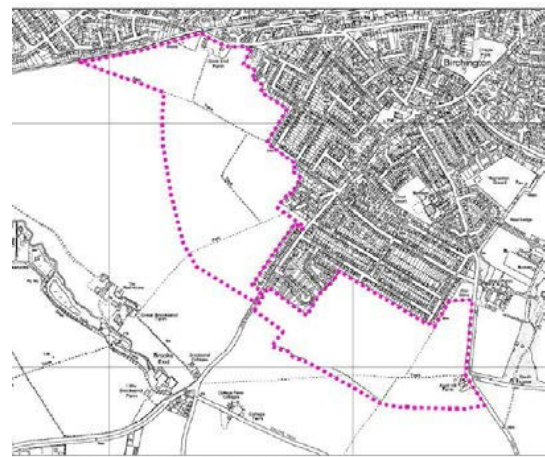
### **Issue 3 – Birchington Strategic Housing Site – Policy SP14**

Q1. How was the site boundary defined and what is it based on? Are there any ownership constraints likely to affect the deliverability of the site?

The additional areas included within the proposed site boundary comprise agricultural land/greenfield, the economic and benefits of which have not been assessed. The full extent of the proposed extended site allocation has not been assessed in the SHLAA and has not been put forward by a developer. Part of the land is identified in the SHLAA as having constraints to development (S515).



SHLAA (2013)



Proposed Local Plan Allocation

There are no extant planning permissions for the site and no recent planning applications have been submitted. We therefore question whether these sites are available, viable, sustainable or feasible within the plan period.

Q2. What is the justification for allocating the site for up to 1,600 dwellings? What is this based on and is it achievable?

The Submission version of the Local Plan proposes an allocation for 1,600 homes. This is identified as an increase of 600 homes compared to the previous draft of the new Local Plan, however the revised site boundary incorporates Site ST3 which was already allocated in the Preferred Options Local Plan (Policy H02C) and therefore double counts by 90 homes.

With respect to the balance 510 additional homes, it is unclear how these could be accommodated on the proposed allocation site as the proposed site boundary has changed only marginally from the previous version. The only additional area incorporated within the proposed allocation (compared to the previous version of the Local Plan which allocated the site for 1,000 homes) appears to be a 2.8ha triangle shaped site immediately west of site referenced S515 and 6.5ha of agricultural/greenfield land between S515 and S498. This triangular site is not in the SHLAA and has not been promoted for development by the landowner in the current or any previous call for sites. Deliverability is therefore uncertain.

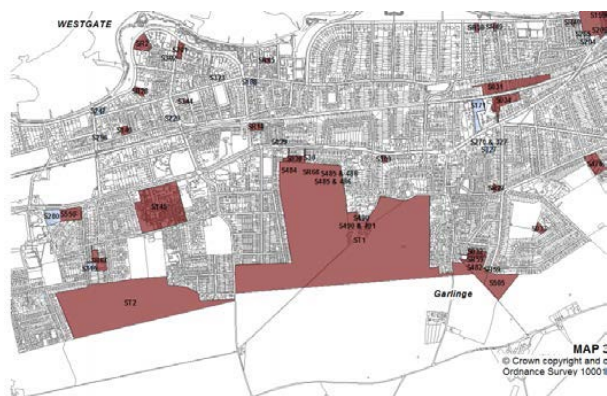
S515 Land at Gore End Farm was identified in SHLAA as having constraints: including contamination, listed buildings and potential landscape impacts. There is no evidence these can be mitigated.

The full extent of the proposed extended site allocation has not been assessed in the SHLAA and has not been put forward by a developer. There are no extant planning permissions for the site and no recent planning applications have been submitted. We therefore question whether these sites are available, viable, sustainable or feasible within the plan period.

**Issue 5 – Westgate-on-Sea Strategic Housing Site – Policy SP15**

Q1. How was the site boundary defined and what is it based on? Are there any ownership constraints likely to affect the deliverability of the site?

The majority of the proposed allocation site is classified as ‘Excellent’ in the Agricultural Land Classification, with a small portion identified as ‘Very Good’. The economic and other benefits associated with retaining this land has not been assessed by the Council as part of the site selection process. The full extent of the proposed extended site allocation has not been assessed in the SHLAA, relying upon a Landowner submission to the 2018 Call for Sites which is not supported by any information or evidence to confirm there are no site constraints to development.



SHLAA (2013)



Proposed Local Plan Allocation

Q2. What is the justification for allocating the site for up to 2,000 dwellings? What is this based on and is it achievable?

The previous version of the Local Plan allocated the site for 1,000 homes. It is unclear how an additional 1,000 homes can be achieved on site as the allocation boundary has increased only marginally. Indeed, during the most recent call for sites, the land owner suggested 2,500 homes could be delivered on a significantly larger (172ha) site bound by Park Road and Shottendane Road to the south and stretching considerably further west than the proposed allocation (see excerpt below). We therefore question whether this site is available, viable, sustainable or feasible to deliver the quantum of homes now proposed within the plan period.



Landowner submission during Call for Sites

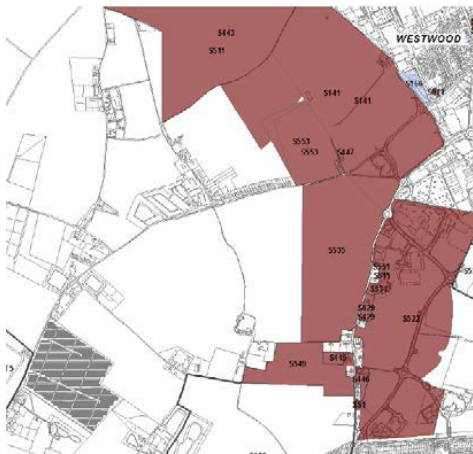
**Issue 7 – Land at Manston Court Road/Haine Road - Policy SP18**

Q1. How was the site boundary defined and what is it based on? Are there any ownership constraints likely to affect the deliverability of the site?

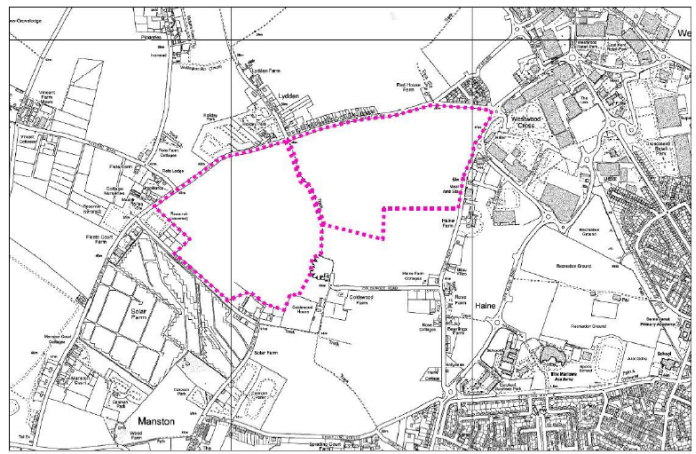
The western ‘parcel’ of the proposed site allocation has not been assessed in the SHLAA. It was promoted by the landowner in most recent Call for Sites for “Between 751 - 667 dwellings (35 dph /30 dph). Site area: 31.33ha”



however no evidence has been provided to confirm it is deliverable or achievable. The majority is classified as 'Excellent' in the Agricultural Land Classification, with a small portion identified as 'Very Good' however no assessment of the economic and other benefits associated with retention of land has taken place.



SHLAA (2013)



Proposed Local Plan Allocation

We therefore question whether this site is available, viable, sustainable or feasible to deliver the quantum of homes now proposed within the plan period.

Q2. What is the justification for allocating the site for up to 1,200 dwellings? What is this based on and is it achievable?

See answer to Q1.

**Issue 8 – Land North and South of Shottendane Road – Policy HO2**

Q1. How was the site boundary defined and what is it based on? Are there any ownership constraints likely to affect the deliverability of the site?

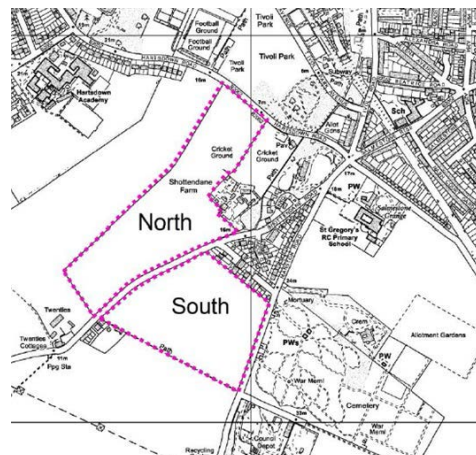
The proposed allocation is comprised of a 'Northern' and 'Southern' parcel of land on either side of Shottendane Road. Neither site is assessed in the SHLAA (2013).

The 'Northern' site was promoted for landowner in most recent Call for Sites for "maximum capacity of 364 homes at 35dph. Site area: 10.41 ha" No evidence site is provided to confirm that the site is deliverable or achievable. The site comprises land classified as 'Excellent' in the Agricultural Land Classification.

The 'Southern' site has not been promoted for development by the landowner. There is no evidence that it is available, deliverable or achievable. The site comprises land classified as 'Very Good' in the Agricultural Land Classification.



SHLAA (2013)



Proposed Local Plan Allocation

We therefore question whether this site is available, viable, sustainable or feasible to deliver the quantum of homes now proposed within the plan period.

Q2. What is the justification for allocating the site for up to 300 dwellings at land north of Shottendane Road and up to 250 dwellings on land south of Shottendane Road? What is this based on and is it achievable?

See answer to Q1.