

## **Examination of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan Proposed Submission Version (December 2018)**

### **Inspector's Initial Questions for the Council**

#### Introduction

1. This note flags up some initial questions and requirements for further information that would benefit from early clarification. In answering these questions could the Council please consider whether it might be necessary to advance any potential Main Modifications to the Plan?

#### Potential Changes and Modifications

2. I note the Schedule of Amendments [SUP010a] which the Council has submitted as one of its supporting documents. Could the Council please confirm whether or not it wishes me to consider proposing any Main Modifications in order to make the Plan sound?

#### Format of the Local Plan

3. Is it appropriate that Appendices 2-6 are only available electronically despite forming part of the Local Plan?
4. Appendices 2, 3 and 4 to the Local Plan include 'design guidance' in respect of the housing, mixed use, employment and gypsy and traveller allocations. Would this be effective or should the requirements for each allocated site be included in a policy?

#### Strategic and Non-Strategic Policies

5. Does the Plan clearly identify which policies are strategic in accordance with paragraph 21 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)?

#### Supporting Evidence

6. The Local Plan refers to 'Supporting Evidence' at the start of each chapter. Please could the Council ensure that all documents referred to are placed in the Examination Library?

#### Green Belt

7. Where the Local Plan proposes to alter Green Belt boundaries, in accordance with paragraph 136 of the NPPF, could the Council please set out the exceptional circumstances for doing this?

## Housing Need

8. You will be aware that the Government published a revised NPPF in February 2019, as well as publishing revised Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Housing and Economic Needs Assessment. Reference is made throughout the Local Plan to the NPPF (July 2018) and I note that the Sevenoaks Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (September 2015) [HOU001] used the 2012-based household projections as the basis for calculating the Council's housing requirement.
9. Paragraph 60 of the revised NPPF states that a local housing needs assessment using the standard method in national planning guidance should be used to determine the minimum number of homes needed. The revised PPG states that Step 1 for setting the local housing need figure (using the standard method) is to set the baseline using the 2014-based household projections (paragraph 04).
10. The Local Plan says (paragraph 1.5) that, taking account of the standardised assessment methodology, the identified housing need is 698dpa or 13,960 homes over the Plan period 2015-2035, based on the latest published household projections. The proposed changes put forward by the Council in the Schedule of Amendments [SUP010a] suggest that the need is 707 homes each year. Has the local housing need been calculated using the 2014-based household projections and, if so, where can I find this updated calculation of housing need - has a Local Housing Need Assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance, been undertaken by the Council?
11. Does the Local Plan set out clearly the Council's objectively assessed housing need and, as this is not proposed to be met in full, the Plan's housing requirement and the level of unmet need?
12. The Plan period referred to in the Local Plan is 2015-2035, however, the Council's 5 year Supply of Deliverable Housing Sites [SDC008] refers to the Plan period being 2019-2035, with a 'requirement' for 11,312 dwellings over this time. This is confirmed by the proposed changes put forward by the Council in the Schedule of Amendments [SUP010a]. Please could the Council clarify why it is proposing to amend the Plan period and if the 11,312 dwellings referred to is the 'need' or 'requirement' for the plan period?

## Housing Supply

13. The Council's 5 year Supply of Deliverable Housing Sites [SDC008] says (in paragraph 2.1) that the Local Plan seeks to deliver approximately 10,500 units over the Plan period 2019-35. However, the Local Plan says

that this number will be delivered over the period 2015-2035. Please could the Council clarify how many dwellings the Plan will deliver over the period 2019-2035 – is it the 9,410 dwellings included in the Schedule of Amendments [SUP010a]?

14. Please could the Council prepare a position statement on each of the allocated sites? This should include:
- a) Whether or not the site benefits from OPP/PP/RM;
  - b) Whether the site has been allocated in a previous Plan;
  - c) Whether the site would be subject to a S106 Agreement and what the obligations within it would be likely to be;
  - d) The level of affordable housing to be provided;
  - e) Any constraints to development;
  - f) The likely start date, build out rate and completion date (and what these figures are based on); and,
  - g) Whether the site is in the control of a landowner, developer or housebuilder.

#### 5 Year Supply of Housing Land

15. With regards to paragraph 73c) of the revised NPPF, does the evidence base on the 5 year housing land requirement and supply reflect the Government's HDT results and the revised definition of 'deliverable' included in the glossary of the revised NPPF?

#### Unmet Need

16. Paragraph 11.b) of the NPPF says that strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless i. or ii. applies. The submitted Local Plan identifies the requirement as 13,960 dwellings over the period 2015-2035 (which the Council proposes to change to 11,312 over the period 2019-2035 as set out in the Schedule of Amendments [SUP010a]). Given that the supply of 10,568 dwellings in the submitted Local Plan (which the Council proposes to change to 9,410 dwellings in SUP010a) would not meet the objectively assessed need for the District, does the Council consider that Paragraph 11.b) i. or ii applies in this case? If so, what is the evidence of factors which prevent the full housing need from being met within the plan area and should the housing requirement (as opposed to the housing need) in the Local Plan reflect this?

#### Housing Trajectory

17. Should the Local Plan include a Housing Trajectory in order to accord with the requirement in paragraph 73 of the revised NPPF which says that

'strategic policies should include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period'?

18. It would also be useful to include the anticipated rate of development for the allocated sites within the Housing Trajectory.

#### Employment Need

19. Has the Council considered what impact, if any, the revised PPG would have on employment need in the District?

#### Employment Land Supply

20. Please could the Council prepare an employment land trajectory which indicates when each site is anticipated to come forward for development?

#### Minerals Safeguarding Areas

21. Has the Council considered the impact of the development of the Strategic Site at Sevenoaks Quarry on the Sandstone Mineral Safeguarding Area identified in the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan?

22. Has the Council considered the impact of the other allocations on Minerals Safeguarding Areas in the District?

23. Would the development of any of the allocated sites sterilise any mineral deposits and prevent their extraction?

24. Would the extraction of minerals prevent any of the allocated sites coming forward as planned?

#### Transport, Design, Historic Environment, Air Quality and Flooding Policies

25. A number of policies in the Local Plan (Policies T1, EN1, HEN1, HEN2, HE1 and CC1) appear to defer important policy matters relating to design, car parking, heritage matters, air quality, SuDS and flood risk, to other documents such as the Kent Design Guide, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, KCC PRow Good Design Guide and relevant AONB Management Plans, and associated design guidance, the Sevenoaks District Historic Environment Review, and relevant guidance, the Air Quality Action Plan, the KCC guidance for SuDS and the Lead Local Flood Authority drainage guidance and policy statements, amongst other documents.

26. Regard should be had to Regulations 5 and 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 which prescribe, in effect, that the following is a Local Plan, rather than any form of supplementary planning document:

*'(a) any document prepared by a local planning authority ... which contains statements regarding one or more of the following –*

- (i) the development and use of land which the local planning authority wish to encourage during any specified period;*
- (ii) the allocation of sites for a particular type of development or use;*
- (iii) any environmental, social, design and economic objectives which are relevant to the attainment of the development and use of land mentioned in paragraph (i); and,*
- (iv) development management and site allocation policies, which are intended to guide the determination of applications for planning permission;*

*(b) where a document mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) contains policies applying to sites or areas by reference to an Ordnance Survey map, any map which accompanies that document ...'*

27. Where the documents referred to in Policies T1, EN1, HEN1, HEN2, HE1 and CC1 contain important policy matters which are relevant to the attainment of the development and use of land they should be before the Examination for testing. How does the Council intend to address this matter?

#### Deadline for Responses

28. I would be grateful if the Council could respond to these initial questions by Friday 28 June 2019.

29. Following my consideration of the Council's responses to these initial questions, I will finalise my Matters, Issues and Questions for the Hearing sessions.

Karen Baker DipTP MA DipMP MRTPI

Inspector

14 June 2019