

Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan Examination

Hearing Statement prepared by Sevenoaks District Council for Issue 6: Housing and Mixed Use Site Allocations

The following statement provides the Council's response to the questions raised in respect of Issue 6 of the Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan hearing sessions, which relates to ST2-46 – Highways Depot, Tonbridge Road, Chiddingstone Causeway. The Council will expand on these responses at the hearing sessions, if it is appropriate to do so.

Q268. Is the proposed housing allocation deliverable and/or developable in accordance with the housing trajectory? In particular, is it:

- a. **confirmed by the landowner involved as being available for the use proposed?**

This information will be provided in the updated Deliverability Schedule.

- b. **supported by evidence to demonstrate that safe and appropriate access for vehicles and pedestrians can be provided?**

KCC Highways have provided comments on this site in relation to highways and access matters [SDC005a Policy ST2 Sites – see comment LPS1973]

- c. **deliverable, having regard to the provision of the necessary infrastructure and services, and any environmental or other constraints?**

There are no constraints which would prevent the delivery of this site within the plan period, once the Local Plan is adopted, and no concerns have been raised by infrastructure providers. The site is within close proximity to existing services and lies within Chiddingstone Causeway. For further information, please see the Site Appraisals [SUP017a].

Q269. What are the exceptional circumstances for removing this proposed site from the Green Belt?

Please see the Council's response to Inspector's Initial Question 7 (ED3).

The Council's approach to exceptional circumstances is set out in the Development Strategy Topic Paper (SUP008a). Section 3.3 of the Topic Paper sets out how the Council has first explored all potential non-Green Belt sources of housing supply and section 3.4 outlines engagement with neighbouring authorities, under the Duty to Co-operate.

To summarise, in relation to housing and mixed-use allocations, the combination of the following factors are suggested to constitute the exceptional circumstances required to propose Green Belt amendment:

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Factor	Site Commentary
The district-wide scale and intensity of housing need (including for affordable homes)	This is a District-wide consideration and is common to all sites
Previously developed or brownfield land in sustainable locations, close to services and facilities	This site consists of a storage building and area of hardstanding and constitutes Previously Developed Land within the Green Belt. It is situated within Chiddingstone Causeway.

Q270. Has full consideration been given to the impact of this development on the Green Belt?

In relation to the performance of the site against the Green Belt purposes, the following chart summarises the assessment

Purpose	Commentary
1 – checking urban sprawl	Level of existing development therefore site already impacting upon the openness of the Green Belt / positive re-cycling of land / sites already have associated impacts e.g. vehicular movements
2 – towns (settlements) merging	Limited role in preventing the merging of settlements, as existing development already on site
3 – safeguarding countryside from encroachment	Open countryside already comprised to an extent by existing built form
4 – preserving historic towns	Site does not abut an identified historic settlement core, therefore does not contribute to historic preservation
5 – urban regeneration	Urban regeneration and brownfield land considered as part of wider strategy. Common to all sites and not scored as part of GBA.
Boundary	Formed by extent of developed land

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The contribution of this site to Green Belt purposes is considered compromised by the level of existing development on the site. This assessment has fed into the site appraisal process and site selection. The design guidance for the site sets out that the existing trees and hedges along the railway line should be retained, and that there should be careful design and layout to minimise impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Therefore, any future planning application on this site would be required to demonstrate how the proposed development integrates into its wider setting and how landscaping can provide a buffer and defensible boundary to the development.

Q271. Has full consideration been given to the impact of this development on the character and appearance of the local area and existing local infrastructure?

The design guidance at Appendix 2 considers the impact of this site allocation on the character and appearance of the Local Area, and sets a requirement for the development to have careful design and layout to minimise impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

The Sevenoaks District Transport Assessment [TRA001] have given full consideration of the existing road network in relation to this development. Likewise, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan [INS001] has considered the existing local infrastructure and what mitigation measures would be required.

Q272. Is the number of dwellings proposed on this allocated site appropriate?

Yes. No density for Highways Depot has been informed by the site's close proximity to existing services and its location in the existing settlement of Chiddingstone Causeway. The site is brownfield land and it is considered that the number of dwellings proposed is appropriate for this site. For further details, please see the Site Appraisals [SUP017a].

Q273. Is the completion of all 8 units in 2021/22 achievable given that the site is in the control of the landowner, rather than a developer or housebuilder, and does not benefit from planning permission?

This information will be provided in the updated Deliverability Schedule.