

Mid Sussex Local Plan Examination

Inspector's comments and questions: site allocations and non-housing policies Hearings scheduled to commence on 28 February 2017

Policy DP1: Sustainable Development in Mid Sussex

The National Planning Policy Framework states that the policies in paragraphs 18 to 219 of the Framework constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development means for the planning system. With that in mind it is not appropriate for the Plan to seek to define sustainable development in Mid Sussex in the more limited terms set out in Policy DP1. Nor would it be appropriate for the plan to set these out as an alternative to the economic, social and environmental roles established in the Framework. The policy as it stands should be removed because it is not consistent with the Framework. However, would the Council prefer to include the bulleted lists as core objectives, for example in the Vision section?

We refer to our representations of July 2015. We agree that the local plan, having been prepared with reference to the NPPF, should provide the local expression of what constitutes 'sustainable development' in Mid Sussex. In preparing its local plan, the Council will have balanced the three elements of sustainable development (as demonstrated in the Sustainability Appraisal). Those residential sites that have been allocated in the Plan to meet the housing requirement are already 'sustainable' by virtue of having been assessed as being more sustainable locations for development compared to others that might have been discounted. Allocated sites, therefore, as a matter of principle, are not required to demonstrate compliance with the criteria laid down in DP1.

Policy DP11: Preventing Coalescence

What kind of development does this policy have in mind? Is it actually necessary to include this policy, given the control over the countryside exercised by Policy DP10? For the same reason, why would it be necessary to identify local gaps?

In our representations of July 2015 we questioned the realism of this policy given the housing needs of the HMA and wider sub-region. We argued that the erosion of the gaps between some settlements might be unavoidable if the needs of Mid Sussex (assuming an increase above 800dpa) or the two HMAs (i.e. Crawley and the Sussex Coast authorities) are to be accommodated. The Inspector now has all the material he needs to reach a conclusion on this question.

We agree that Policy DP10 already provides strong protection against development on land that is unallocated by the Plan (i.e. allocated sites and brownfield opportunities within settlement boundaries) and that DP11 could represent unnecessary duplication. However, the Plan does depend on a number of Neighbourhood Plans being produced that will need to provide for at least 800 homes according to the Council, or possibly 2,000 as argued by the Developers' Forum, plus a windfall allowance of 450 dwelling. It is our view that this policy may prove to be unduly restrictive especially when DP10 states that 'built-up area

boundaries are subject to review by Neighbourhood Plans or through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document”.

Policy DP25: Dwelling Space Standards

The Written Ministerial Statement of 25 March 2015 states that the optional technical standards (space, access and water) should only be required in a Local Plan if they address a clearly evidenced need. The PPG requires local planning authorities to demonstrate the need for the adoption of the Nationally Described Space Standard. This requires the local planning authority to provide evidence on the size and type of dwellings currently being built in the area. The PPG also requires the local authority to consider the impact of potentially larger dwellings on land supply and affordability.

We have been unable to locate any such analysis by the Council to justify the adoption of the Nationally Described Space Standard.

Policy DP26: Accessibility

(a) What evidence does the Council have about characteristics in its particular area to support its policy that the more onerous Building Regulations Approved Document M Requirement M4(2) must be applied to all dwellings, as opposed to standard M4(1)?

(b) What evidence does the Council have that Requirement M4(3) should be applied to 5% of affordable dwellings?

We refer to our representations of January 2016 and July 2015 and reference to the tests set out in the PPG.

The Written Ministerial Statement of 25 March 2015 states that the optional technical standards (space, access and water) should only be required in a Local Plan if they address a clearly evidenced need. The PPG provides more guidance.

We note that the Equalities impact Assessment refers to the shortage of suitable accommodation for people with disabilities but we have been unable to locate any evidence to quantify the scale of the issue. Policy DP26 refers to evidence in “a number of studies that inform the assessment of housing and economic development needs” but we cannot locate evidence that addresses the tests set out in the PPG. We note the *HEDNA February 2015* and the later *HEDNA, August 2016 Addendum 2) Housing for Older People – Provision of Specialist Accommodation or Care*. These reports provide evidence of the need for sheltered housing, enhanced sheltered housing, Extra Care housing and Registered Care housing, but it does not address the requirement of the PPG in terms of assessing the accessibility and adaptability of the existing stock and how needs vary across different housing tenures.

Viability

In its June 2015 study: *Mid Sussex Whole Plan & Community Infrastructure Levy Viability Assessment* the Council has assessed the cost of Part M4(2) but not the

cost of Part M4(3) (page 32). According to the DCLG report *Housing Standards Review: Cost Impacts* the cost of building 5% of new homes to Part M4(3) is significant (it varies between £7,764 for a 1 bedroom apartment to £23,052 for a four bedroom detached home. See table 45. In addition to the build cost there is a professional processing cost. See tables 46-48).

These costs are likely to have a material effect on the viability of residential schemes had these costs been factored into the viability assessment. The Council is required to assess this cost if it is to stipulate compliance with Part M4 (3) as local plan policy. We have referred the Council before to the DCLG report *Housing Standards Review: Cost Impacts*.

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