HEARING STATEMENT

On Behalf of Ashill (Respondent ID 996072)

Matter 4

September 2019
1.0 Introduction

1.1 On behalf of our client, Ashill, CBRE is instructed to submit Hearing Statements to the Tandridge District Council ‘Our Local Plan’ 2033 (July 2018) (hereafter ‘the Plan’).

1.2 Ashill has an interest in three sites within Tandridge that they have been promoting through the Local Plan process. These include:

- GOD 001 – Godstone Reservoirs
- CAT 019 – Caterham Reservoir
- OXT 021 – Land west of Red Lane. This is Draft Site Allocation HSG13.

1.3 As discussed in more detail within the five Matter Statements (1, 2, 3, 4, 6), both omission sites (GOD 001 and CAT 019) are strategically located and offer a solution to the identified issues of soundness with the submitted plan. A separate Matter Statement has been provided in respect of the Inspector’s Questions for Site HSG13 which is allocated in the Plan.

1.4 GOD 001 and CAT 019 are both owned by Surrey and East Surrey Water, a major local employer within the wider area. Land west of Red Lane is being jointly promoted by the two landowners, Surrey County Council and Ashill.

1.5 Ashill have previously made representations during the Our Local Plan: 2033 (Regulation 19) August 2018 and Local Plan: Garden Villages Consultation 2017. The representation references for this submission is 996072.
2.0 Green Belt Boundary Alterations

**QUESTION 4.1**

Was the Green Belt Assessment undertaken on the basis of a clear methodology consistent with national planning policy for protecting Green Belts?

**Response**

2.1 From a review of the Green Belt evidence produced by the Council there is an inconsistency with the approach of the NPPF Green Belt.

2.2 In exemplifying this point we have identified the approach taken to the Green Belt review in Godstone. Following the Green Belt Part II assessment, area 017 (screenshot below) was identified for further assessment.

![Map of Godstone Green Belt](image)

2.3 At this scale of assessment, it is difficult to understand the contribution that subareas make to Green Belt and, in turn, which areas could be suitable for Green Belt release.

2.4 In light of the evidence presented at Green Belt Stage II, it would be consistent with the NPPF for Green Belt Stage III to include a comprehensive assessment of the subareas that fall within the area of search. However, from a review of Green Belt Stage III this process was not undertaken.

2.5 Instead, in Green Belt Stage III many Green Belt sites that fall within a recommended area of search do not become the subject of their own Green Belt assessment (i.e. GOD 001). The justification and methodological basis for this as proposed by the Council is shown on the flow diagram over the page. Under this approach sites are not considered further in terms of their suitability for Green Belt release if they have ecological or landscape sensitivities.

2.6 Such an approach is not consistent with Footnote 9 of the NPPF which, in effect, highlights Green Belt as an absolute constraint that needs full assessment and understanding. In adopting a methodological approach in which ecological and landscape considerations ‘trump’ the need for any further consideration of the Green Belt assessment is not justified or
2.0 Green Belt Boundary Alterations

consistent with the NPPF. To be consistent with the NPPF, the Green Belt assessment for all parcels should form the starting point with ecological and/or landscape sifting as part of the site selection process only occurring once there is a full understanding as to how the Green Belt performs.

2.7 The consequence for the Plan is that the selective approach to Green Belt release becomes more heavily focused towards ecological and landscape considerations rather than how well a site performs against Green Belt purposes.

2.8 Whilst ecological and landscape considerations are important considerations in the NPPF, if (as in the case of GOD 001) these are not formal designations (i.e. not AONB/ SSSI) there is scope for mitigation to be considered and in this respect they should not be perceived as absolute constraints to precluding further Green Belt assessment.

2.9 For the reasons set out in response to 2.1 and 2.8 it is apparent that there are shortcomings in the methodology used in the Green Belt Assessment. The outcome of this is that some site allocations are unjustified.

QUESTION 4.2

In terms of paragraph 84 of the Framework, have the proposed alterations to the Green Belt boundaries taken account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development and are they consistent with the Local Plan strategy?

Response

2.10 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF is clear that:

‘When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.’

2.11 In IM Properties Development Ltd v Lichfield DC [2014] EWHC 2440 (Admin), this was further explored. As stated:

‘Paragraph 84 is clear advice to decision makers to take into account the consequences for sustainable development of any review of green belt boundaries. As part of that patterns of development and additional travel are clearly relevant.’

2.12 With Godstone currently washed over by the Green Belt, in responding to Paragraph 84 it is important that any release is consistent with the need to promote sustainable development. The proposed alteration to the Green Belt in Godstone (Land West of Godstone) does not account for this. The proposed access road is located at the furthest point from the settlement centre and there are limited opportunities for access to be improved as a result of the development.

2.13 The comparison table below extracted from the note prepared by iTransport compares GOD 001 and GOD 010. For key ‘destinations’ such as Godstone Village School HSG13 is located almost 3 times further than Godstone Quarry (GOD 001). Furthermore, across all other factors GOD 010 is almost double the distances to local retail and amenity facilities.
2.0 Green Belt Boundary Alterations

Table 2.1: Walking Distances Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenity/Facility</th>
<th>Betchingly Road Site</th>
<th>M&amp;G Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell Petrol Garage (ATM)</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindley Stores</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Plus Supermarket</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Londis</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower Farm Shop</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>1380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coughland Bakery</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Barbers</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Green Rooms of Godstone</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godstone Village School</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>1630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare and Hounds Pub</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godstone Green Park and</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis Courts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godstone Golf Club</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godstone Farm</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>2230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Old Forge Café and Deli</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bell Inn</td>
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<td>1350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lloyds Pharmacy</td>
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<td>1120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pondtail Surgery</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The White House Dental</td>
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<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godstone Mercedes Benz</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>2430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consultants Measurements

Key:
- 500: Closest
- 2000: Furthest
- Comfortable walking distance (1.6km)
- Reasonable walking distance (2km)
- Maximum walking distance (3.2km)
- Beyond maximum walking distance

2.14 Within Godstone there are other suitable sites for release that are sustainably located contiguous to the village centre and provides an opportunity for a greater proportion of trips to the local settlement centre and local school to be made on foot. This is summarised in the appended iTransport note.

2.15 With respect to Caterham, this is identified within the Settlement Hierarchy as a Tier 1 settlement but only one Green Belt site is proposed for release in this location – Land off Salmons Lane West. This is compared to Smallfield which is located as a Tier 2 Settlement yet has four sites include for Green Belt release. Smallfield in the Settlement Hierarchy document scores 0 for both ‘Access to the Strategic Road Network’ and Railway Station.
2.0 Green Belt Boundary Alterations

2.16 By contrast omission sites as CAT 019 are identified as well performing in sustainability terms but are not considered for release. As stated in Submission Document GB2 respect of CAT 019:

‘The site comprises undeveloped land located on the edge of a Tier 1 settlement and as such is in a preferred location on sustainability grounds, being within close proximity to a GP surgery, primary schools, employment and public transport. In addition, the site is considered, in principle, suitable for development from a landscape and ecology perspective subject to mitigation measures including the provision of buffers.’

2.17 The proposed Green Belt releases in Smallfield are not consistent with Paragraph 84 of the NPPF. It would be more appropriate and consistent with the NPPF for Green Belt released to be focused upon higher order settlements such as Caterham in the first instance.

QUESTION 4.4

Is the site selection methodology for sites to be released from the Green Belt robust and are the proposed alterations to the Green Belt boundaries justified?

Response

Land West of Godstone

2.18 Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that when reviewing the Green Belt, regard should be had ‘to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the Plan period.’ Within the Green Belt Assessment Part III in respect of GOD010 it is noted that the temporary quarry access road along the north western boundary provides a defensible boundary for the site. We understand that haul road is the subject of a full scheme of restoration following the completion of the extract works and thus query the adequacy of this boundary in providing a long-term boundary to the Green Belt.

2.19 The flow diagram over the page is included at Paragraph 3.46 of the Green Belt Assessment Part III. The approach taken to Green Belt release is reliant upon the landscape and ecology assessment being justified. As part of the responses made to other Matter Statements, we do not consider that the ecology evidence is justified which, in turn, has implications for the way in which the Green Belt review and exceptional circumstances have been undertaken.

2.20 In the case of GOD 001, the site is classified as ‘minority ecologically suitable’ but this does not reflect the Council’s Ecologists conclusion for the site in which it is stated:

‘TEP [Council’s ecologist] accepts that a higher development yield may be possible, but even so, it is unlikely that more than 50% of the total 21.67ha area would be ecologically suitable for development.’

2.21 Whilst we disagree with the assessment that 50% of the site is ‘ecologically suitable’ even if the Council’s position was assumed it would continue to leave 50% of the site as suitable for development, significantly more than the ‘minority’ of the site.

2.22 The site also has significant opportunities for biodiversity improvement and enhancement which is not accounted for in the assessment process of ecology.
2.0 Green Belt Boundary Alterations

2.23 In respect to the highlighted section as it relates to landscaping, GOD 010 is assumed to have landscape capacity for development and is located in the AONB. Other sites are excluded at this stage on landscape grounds but are not covered by the AONB. In reaching these conclusions it is unclear how the Council has exercised ‘great weight’ in the protection of the AONB.

2.24 Notwithstanding this and as set out in response to Question 4.1, the sequence of the methodology is not consistent with the NPPF which should focus on Green Belt release in the first instances before continuing to see how relevant ecological and landscape factors interplay with sites that have been assumed suitable for release on account of their Green Belt performance.

Caterham Sites

2.25 For the reasons set out in response to Question 4.3, we question the approach that has been taken to Green Belt release in Smallfield and the relationship of this to the settlement hierarchy. In the assessment, more sustainable sites (such as CAT 019) are discounted in favour of sites lower down the hierarchy.
2.0 Green Belt Boundary Alterations

QUESTION 4.5

In overall terms, are there exceptional circumstances for the proposed alterations of the boundaries of the Green Belt, to accommodate the level development proposed?

Response

2.26 As acknowledged by the Council, it is clear that (1) the acuteness/intensity of the objectively assessed need for housing, (ii) the inherent constraint on the supply/availability of land suitable for sustainable development (94% Green Belt) and (iii) the inability of the Plan to deliver sustainable development in line with the NPPF without Green Belt release confirms that exceptional circumstances exist.

2.27 Through the responses set out in other Matter Statement it is considered that the extent of alterations to the Green Belt does not go far enough in delivering sustainable development.
3.0 Main Modifications Required for Matter 4

3.1 In order to address the soundness issues identified in response to Matter 4 the following amendments are required to the Plan:

1. Full reassessment of the Green Belt in Tandridge to ensure a sound and justified basis to the site allocations process.

2. The approach to Green Belt release does not reflect a pattern of sustainable development as set out in Paragraph 84 of the NPPF. In ensuring consistency with Paragraph 84 of the NPPF, it would be justified for a more appropriate spatial distribution of Green Belt release.
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