
HEARING STATEMENT
SESSION 7 – RURAL SERVICE CENTRES
08 NOVEMBER 2016

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN
EXAMINATION

EXAMINATION HEARING SESSIONS

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF
WATES DEVELOPMENTS LTD (REPRESENTOR ID REF 19218)

October 2016

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
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Prepared on behalf of Wates Developments Ltd

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Prepared by:	Emma Wreathall
Checked by:	Andrew Wilford
Authorised by:	Andrew Wilford

Barton Willmore LLP
The Observatory
Southfleet Road
Swanscombe
Kent
DA10 0DF

Tel: 01322 374660
Fax: 01322 374661
Email: andrew.wilford@bartonwillmore.co.uk

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared on behalf of Wates Developments Ltd in respect of Session 7 of the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (MBLP) Examination.
- 1.2 Session 7 relates to the 5no. settlements identifies as Rural Service Centres. This Statement is confined to comments on Staplehurst only.

2.0 RESPONSE TO SESSION 7 – RURAL SERVICE CENTRES

Issue (viii) – Whether the Local Plan and/or the Neighbourhood Plan will deliver sufficient housing in Staplehurst

Qn7.26 If the Neighbourhood Plan is made before the Local Plan is adopted, would Policies DM20 and DM21 mean that:

(a) residential development at Lodge Road would then be in conflict with the development plan by reason of S38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which in cases of conflict accords priority to the most recent development plan policy to be adopted: or

(b) could residential development be considered under the policy provisions for exceptional mixed use development such that there would be no conflict?

- 2.1 We note that Local Plan Examination Document ED010 (Proposed Modifications) now proposes, under Proposed Change PC/76 a new allocation at 'Land at Lodge Road Staplehurst' for approximately 90 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare (dph). The proposed amended policies map for PC/76 is enclosed at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 This is in direct response to the mixed-use allocation (Policy H6) within the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan (SNP), for which a Referendum is to be held on 03 November 2016. This allocation (SNP Policy H6) seeks to protect and expand the area as a mixed-use residential and employment area. Policy H6 includes an illustrative layout of how the employment provision could be accommodated (**Appendix 2**).
- 2.3 Whilst we acknowledge this position, we have serious concerns how a development at this scale and density can be delivered without it being in conflict with either SNP Policy H6 or draft Local Plan Policies DM20 (Economic Development) and DM21 (Retention of employment sites).

- 2.4 In order to achieve 90 dwellings at 30dph, approximately 3ha of land is required to be made available for residential development as part of SNP Policy H6. The red line boundary (**Appendix 1**) is approximately 12.5ha. Of this 12.5ha, approximately half is used for existing employment areas - which is to be protected. The illustrative layout supporting SNP Policy H6 identifies where it anticipates new areas of employment land could be located (to achieve employment growth as required in the SNP and as part of the draft MBC policies). In the context of the amended policies map, this results in only 1.5ha of land remaining for potential residential areas. This is not considered sufficient to achieve 90 dwellings and 30 dph.
- 2.5 Whilst we acknowledge that the layout is indicative and there is potential for some residential accommodation to be located within the new employment buildings (as advocated in supporting text 13.30 of the Neighbourhood Plan) there has been no evidence presented by MBC to demonstrate how a residential allocation for 90 dwellings in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (MBLP) would not undermine Policy DM21 (part vi), by extension Policy H6 of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.6 MBC needs to demonstrate within its own Evidence how these two competing land uses and policies will be satisfactorily delivered.

Qn7.27 Is an overall shortfall in housing delivery likely that would materially affect the Local Plan strategy?

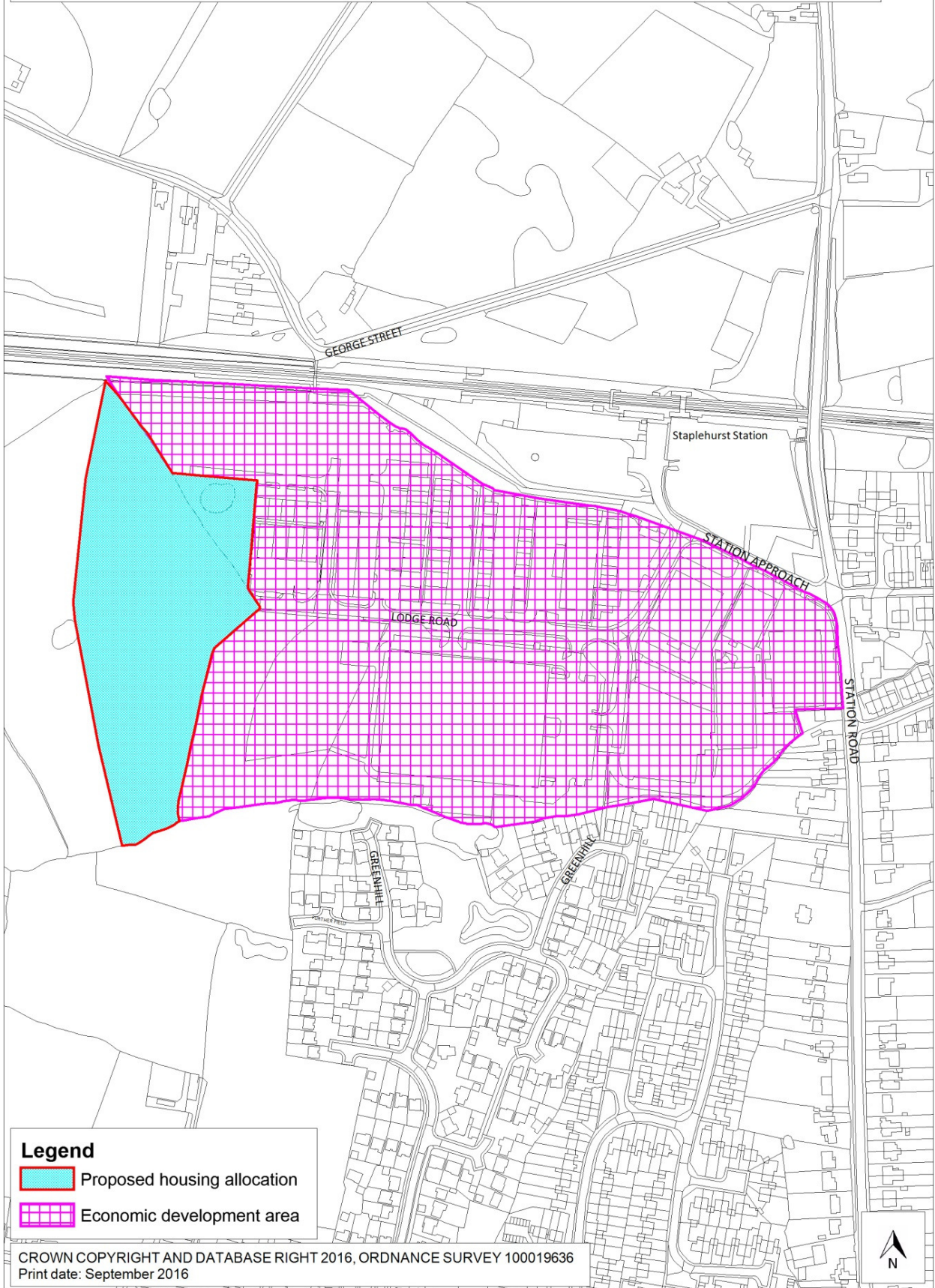
- 2.7 In respect of the Local Plan strategy, it is unlikely that the shortfall of circa 50 dwellings in Staplehurst would materially affect the Local Plan Strategy. However, a known shortfall is not considered to result in a 'Positively prepared' Plan and the Local Plan must allocate sufficient land to meet its needs. At present, the Plan does not do this for both Staplehurst and Maidstone as a whole.
- 2.8 As rehearsed at Examination Hearing Session 2A (Housing Needs (2)), we consider the overall Housing target should increase. This will require further allocations. As set out at the Hearings Session 5A, we have significant concerns with elements of the housing land supply trajectory, both in respect of the Broad Locations and the deliverability/yield of specific sites. This will also require additional allocations.
- 2.9 As a result, the shortfall in housing delivery is considerable and requires main modifications to the Local Plan to introduce additional allocations and ensure the Plan's soundness, as the above two factors result in an overall shortfall of housing that materially affects the Local Plan strategy.

- 2.10 Staplehurst is identified as a Rural Service Centre and a suitable settlement to locate development to meet the needs of Maidstone Borough. Notwithstanding that the SNP has been brought forward in advance of the MBLP, the SNP acknowledges that the Local Plan can allocate additional land if required to meet the need. This is demonstrated in the H1(51) Henhurst Farm allocation for 60 dwellings in the Local Plan, but not the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.11 It is therefore acceptable that additional housing land can be allocated in the Local Plan (MBC itself is seeking to add an additional 90 units through PC/76) and it would not undermine the SNP as the Neighbourhood Plan itself does not prescribe an upper limit to development. The extension of the Henhurst Farm site (Policy H1(51)) is considered a logical extension to the existing strategy and assist rectifying the shortfall in housing.
- 2.12 The merits of alternative/omission sites is for discussion at the relevant Hearing Sessions, and is therefore not rehearsed here.
- 2.13 The need to identify additional allocation sites by way of Main Modifications (and subsequent delay to the adoption of the Plan) would not result in the delay to the delivery of sites in the Borough. As stated in MBC's Opening Statement to the Examination, the Local Plan strategy is already being implemented in that a number of the proposed allocation sites have planning permission or resolution to grant awaiting a signed Section 106 Agreement. A delay to the Local Plan would not delay the delivery of much needed housing, but would ensure that the MBLP provides sufficient housing sites to meet its full housing need, as required by National policy.

APPENDIX 1

Proposed Allocation Plan – Land at Lodge Road, Staplehurst

Proposed allocation - Land at Lodge Road, Staplehurst



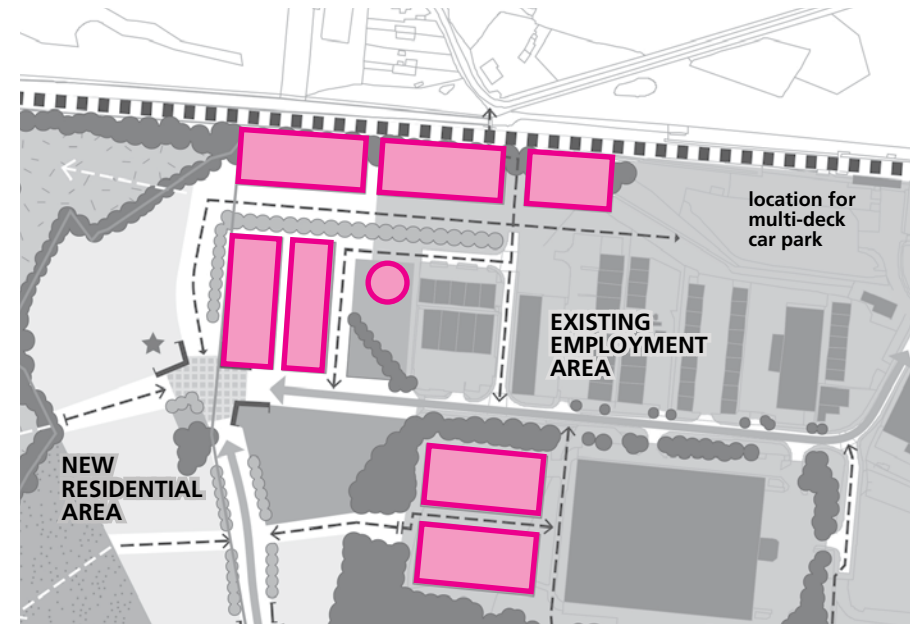
APPENDIX 2

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan – Policy H6 Illustrative Layout



Policy H6 Location of the land for employment and housing.

Illustrative Layout Policy H6



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This plan shows an illustrative layout for the land that lies between the existing employment area and the new allocated residential area. The blocks shown in pink could be developed as rural courtyard employment areas, similar to those shown in the photographs (page 58).

This diagram has been prepared to provide guidance to potential developers. It represents many of the comments received through the consultation process. It is a preliminary design sketch only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.