

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-plan/examination>

SESSION 3B – APPEARANCE BY HELEN WHATELY MP

Inspector’s Supplementary Agenda with Matters, Issues, and Questions

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This agenda supplements that issued for Session 3B Alternative Strategic Development which will now follow Helen Whately’s appearance.
- 1.2. As this additional session has been introduced at a late stage in the process, the Inspector is not expecting the advance submission of any written statements.
- 1.3. Helen Whitely is appearing in relation to the representations which she made at the Regulation 19 consultation stage under reference R19412. It is not necessary to repeat these representations, which the Inspector has read. They include points also raised by other Representors and which will inform discussion at other hearing sessions.
- 1.4. The Inspector will instead be seeking to focus discussion on precisely what changes Ms Whately is seeking to the Plan and what implications they may have for the delivery of development and for Ms Whately’s objective that concerns will be dealt with before and during the examination process.

2. The Housing Target

- 2.1. Ms Whately acknowledges that there is a need for more housing to meet needs, that the Government is seeking early local plan coverage, and that without a 5 year housing supply the county is vulnerable to unplanned and coordinated development. Ms Whately acknowledges the Objectively Assessed Housing Need for 18,560 dwellings but nevertheless considers that the target for housing delivery should be set at a lower figure because of environmental, transport and infrastructure constraints. No particular figure is suggested.

- 2.2. The Council has issued a Topic Paper with further evidence [Document SUB 005].
- 2.3. The Plan's housing target is made up of existing commitments, specific development allocations and allowances for development on unallocated sites and at the Policy H2 'Broad Locations'. To reduce the target would therefore require the modification or deletion of these proposals.
- 2.4. Reference is made to the Chichester Local Plan which does states that it is not able to meet the full objectively assessed housing needs in that District. But it also states at paragraph 7.8: *'The Council has worked constructively and co-operatively with its neighbours to accommodate unmet needs occurring both within the district and adjoining areas. To date, no arrangements have been agreed although this work is continuing.'* The Inspector's Report noted that housing provision was constrained in particular by the need for a Transport Study and recommended that the Plan be reviewed within 5 years when the results of that study were available. The Inspector pointed out that announced improvements to the A27 may enable a greater level of housing growth to be supported. The Plan contains a commitment to that review.
- 2.5. As Ms Whately's constituency includes parts of Swale Borough she will be aware that the Swale Local Plan is at an advanced stage and that, whilst Swale originally sought that some of its own unmet housing needs would be accommodated in Maidstone Borough, Swale has now proposed additional housing allocations and is no longer pursuing that objective. Like Maidstone, Swale and the other adjoining authorities are now seeking to meet their assessed needs within their own boundaries. This differs from the declared position at Chichester.

Qn3S.1 By how much should the housing target be reduced?

Qn3S.2 Does Ms Whately seek the deletion of any specific housing development proposals in the Plan in order to reduce supply to that lower target and, if so, where?

Qn3S.3 If the target is reduced below the level of assessed need, should the resulting shortfall be addressed:

- **by requiring an early review of the Plan to identify means of overcoming infrastructure constraints and then making new housing allocations within Maidstone Borough that also account for environmental constraints?**
- **by seeking that unmet needs are met in other authority areas (which may also be subject to constraints), and if so, where?**
- **by another means, if so what?**

3. Employment Development at Junction 8

3.1. Ms Whately expresses concern about the EMP1(5) Woodcut Farm employment allocation on landscape, heritage and congestion grounds and questions the justification for the selection of this site. The Council has issued a Topic Paper [Document SUB 003] which provides additional supporting evidence. However the Council's Planning Committee refused a recent planning application for employment development at Woodcut Farm on landscape grounds.

3.2. The site allocation is due to be discussed at Session 8.

Qn3S.4 Does Ms Whately seek the deletion of the site allocation and, if so, should the allocation be replaced by employment development at another site or sites and, if so, where?

4. Development for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

4.1. The gypsy and traveller policies and allocations are due to be discussed at Session 10B.

4.2. Ms Whately queries the definition used to assess needs. The Council has issued a Topic Paper with further evidence on this subject [Document SUB 004].

- 4.3. Ms Whately objects specifically to the site allocation GT1(5) at Little Boarden, Headcorn. But it appears that planning permission may already have been granted for this development.

Qn3S.5 Does Ms Whately wish to respond to the Council's position as set out in the Topic Paper?

Qn3S.6 Can the Council confirm whether or not a permanent permission has been issued for site GT1(5)?

5. Consultation at the Regulation 18 stage.

- 5.1. Ms Whately considers that the Regulation 18 consultation period was too short. The Council points out that there is no legal requirement for a longer period.

Qn3S.7 Does Ms Whately now seek any specific action on this point?