

Maidstone Borough Council

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Date: 7th November 2016

Dear Mr Westwood

Inspector's Question 5.1 – Session 5A Housing Supply. Proposed Amendment PC/76 Land at Lodge Road, Staplehurst.

I am writing in response to the Parish Council's letter dated 1st November 2016 to the Local Plan Programme Officer concerning Lodge Road, Staplehurst. Please see below an explanation regarding the Council's response to the Local Plan Inspector's Question 5.1. The response to Question 7.26 is also relevant and this is attached.

In putting forward its proposed change the Council has had to consider the Neighbourhood Plan and, additionally, the Council's own evidence which underpins its Local Plan. Policy H6 of the Neighbourhood Plan aims to secure the continued employment use of the existing Lodge Road estate, and it is considered that the Council's Policy DM21 also aligns with that aim. The extent of the Lodge Road designation in Policy DM21 includes some vacant land which would also allow for expansion of the employment area which, it is considered, is also in line with an objective of Policy H6.

The Neighbourhood Plan also identifies some potential for a significant amount of residential use, and the illustrative plans for policies H4 and H6 show a residential element on part of the field at the south west corner of the H6 allocation. Policy H6 refers to a 'mixed-use residential and employment area' suggesting this could be small apartments on upper floors of business units (paragraph 13.30).

As you identify, the Council's proposed change more clearly differentiates between the area allocated for housing and the designated employment area. However, the Council's proposed Policy H1(xx) would provide a link between housing site H1(49) to the west and the designated employment area to the east, and the proposed policy criterion specifically ensures integration/connectivity and a pedestrian/cycle link between the sites, which accords with the Examiner's comments at paragraph 4.60 of his report. For the remainder of the Lodge Road site, Local Plan Policy DM21 (which designates Lodge Road for 'B' class uses) would allow for 'flexible Class B1 floorspace' as also suggested by the Examiner at paragraph 4.60. It is also considered that an element of mixed residential use such as live-work units (as allowed under policy

DM39) would be permissible as an exceptional mixed use development as allowed for under policy DM21 (paragraph 17.106 of the Local Plan), and which could achieve a mixed use area such that there would be no conflict with the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan.

Whilst I appreciate that MBC's Local Plan is possibly more precise than the Neighbourhood Plan in its approach, MBC has taken this approach based on its own evidence of the need for, and supply of, both types of land use and its assessment of the site's characteristics. Since the Cabinet and Strategic Planning and Sustainability Committee decisions in 2015, the consent for B class employment on the western part of the site has expired. If this land were developed for housing, as MBC's suggested change proposes, the Local Plan as a whole would still identify sufficient new employment land to meet identified needs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Timms', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

for Head of Planning & Development

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