

ID 1996

Supplementary Statement to Session 13A. Land at South Lane, Sutton Valence.

Issue (i) -Whether the alternative site would be suitable , sustainable and deliverable.

Qn13.1 Does the site have any relevant planning history?

Details of the site have been submitted to the Council in response to its “Call for Sites”. It had the reference HO-64

Qn13.2 What is the site’s policy status in the submitted Local Plan ?

It lies just outside the village envelope of Sutton Valence, but is not subject to any other policies.

Qn13.3 What is the site’s policy status in any made or emerging neighbourhood plan

The Sutton Valence Neighbourhood Plan is at a very early stage, and no draft has yet been published.

Qn13.4 Is the site greenfield or previously developed (brownfield)land according to the definition in the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework ?

It is a greenfield site.

Qn13.5 What previous consideration by the Council has been given to the site’s development (eg inclusion in a Strategic Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessment (SHEDLAA) and does the representor have any comments on its conclusions ?

The site had the ref.no. HO-64 in the Council’s SHEDLAA.

In terms of access and sustainability it was considered suitable for housing. Indeed, it was within 500m of many facilities. However, despite the admission that there may be no overriding consultee objections to development, the Council took the view that it would transform the existing character of the area; there would be significant encroachment into the countryside that would harm the landscape and go against the pattern and grain of development in the surrounding area.

In addition to these points the assessment also stated that the site was on greenfield land; it did not have easy access to a railway station. A local service centre, employment site or secondary school.

There are numerous flaws in this assessment:

The fact that it is a greenfield site is not, in itself a reason to reject it, given the quantity of housing allocated in the submitted local plan on greenfield sites.

It is only 3 miles from Headcorn railway station. Moreover, the Council designated Sutton Valence itself, along with the villages of Coxheath and Boughton Monchelsea as "Larger Villages" at which sites were being allocated and permitted, none of which have railway stations.

The site is in both reasonable and close proximity to employment sites and to a secondary school.

Finally, the Council permitted a residential proposal at a site known as Brandy's Bay, just a short distance south of this site.

Qn13.6 What is the site area and has a site plan been submitted which identifies the site ?

The site is 2ha.

Qn13.7 What type and amount of development could be expected and at what density.

Initial proposals produced by a house builder are for 33 dwellings on the southern part of the site, with open space on the northern portion. The development would provide 40% affordable housing in accordance with the Council's policy requirement.

Qn13.8 When could development be delivered and at what rate ?

The development could begin reasonably soon after permission was granted, since there is no reason why it need be delayed.

Qn13.9 What evidence is there of the viability of the proposed development ?

Assessment of the viability of the site by the developer has not revealed any problems of this nature.

Qn13.10 Has the site been the subject of sustainability appraisal and does the Representor have any comments on its conclusion ?

The URS Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan (March 2014) describes Sutton Valence in para. 12.17.1. It explains that the Council has identified Sutton Valence as a Larger Village and lists its facilities. These comprise what it describes as good education facilities (a pre-school, a primary school and a boarding school.) The village has pubs, a church, a village hall, mobile library services and good playing pitches. It adds that it has a GP surgery but no dentist or pharmacy. It then says that public transport connections to Maidstone and Headcorn are good due to the regular bus service.

(It omits to mention the post office, farmshop, tea room, garage, estate agent, hairdressers and that there are two doctors' surgeries- with pharmacies)

The SA explains that larger villages are categorised as being sustainable rural settlements that have a level of services and facilities to provide for day to day needs of local communities. As such the larger villages are capable of receiving a limited amount of housing development. The five rejected sites are all divorced from the village and are located in open countryside. Development at these locations is considered unacceptable and does not conform with the spatial strategy.

The SA then adds -with a degree of surprise-in para. 12.17 3 that no dwellings are proposed despite five sites being submitted.

The Inspector need to be aware that two of the sites have been granted permission on appeal, while the Council itself granted permission at the Warmlake Business Park.

The subsequent Sustainability Appraisal be AECOM, of February 2016, re-iterated the previous description of the village.

The SA then listed sixteen sites that had been submitted for consideration, including this one at South Lane.. It stated that seven of the sites (one of which was South Lane) were divorced from the village centre and were at locations that were unacceptable.

The SA added that, (in para.12.17.3) that forty dwellings were proposed for allocation at one site -the site being HO3-216 Brandy's Bay.

The Inspector needs to be aware of the fact that permission had already been granted for Brandy's bay, on 1st December 2015.It should not, therefore, have been described as a proposed allocation. The Council presumably used this as an opportunity to show that it had actually agreed for some residential development to occur in Sutton Valence -although it had never allocated any site for this purpose.

All of this demonstrates, inter alia, the inconsistency of the Council.

Qn13.11 What constraints are there on the site's development and how could any adverse impacts be mitigated ?

There are no known constraints to development.