Shepway Core Strategy Development Plan Document Examination in Public

Public Hearing Statement on behalf of Taylor Wimpey

(Respondent References 900 and 921)

Thursday 10 May 2012
Matter 5 - Areas of Strategic Change – and Other Matters
(Core Strategy Policies: CSD6, CSD7, CSD8, CSD9)

April 2012
Public Hearing Statement
on behalf of Taylor Wimpey

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Thursday 10 May 2012
Matter 5 - Areas of Strategic Change – and Other Matters
(Core Strategy Policies: CSD6, CSD7, CSD8, CSD9)
Issue 5: Are the Core Strategy’s proposals for other identified Areas of Strategic Change realistic, deliverable, adequately justified and consistent with national and regional policies?

5.1 Is the level of detail presented in policies CSD6-CSD9 (and supporting text and diagrams) appropriate for inclusion within a Core Strategy? For example, does the identification of “broad locations” for development prejudice the consideration of detailed sites in future DPDs? Is it clear how these proposals will be taken forward in forthcoming DPDs?

5.1.1 This statement focuses on Policy CSD9: Sellindge Strategy.

5.1.2 This statement is made on behalf of Taylor Wimpey who are in advanced negotiations with regards to taking out options to purchase two land holdings to the south of the A20 at Sellindge. These are the landholdings owned by the Royal Foundation of St.Katherine in Ratcliffe and the Trustees of the Norrington Estate. These two land holdings are labelled St Katherine (Royal Foundation of St.Katherine in Ratcliffe) and Palmer (the Trustees of the Norrington Estate) on figure 4.1: Plan showing site references in the Sellindge’s Future document (page 49 refers). It is important to stress, at the outset, that these two landholdings are considered essential to the delivery of an appropriate residential led mixed use development in Sellindge in accordance with Policy CSD9 and the Sellindge’s Future document. The fact that Taylor Wimpey are about to exchange contracts at the time of writing on option agreements on both land ownerships referred to above should bring additional comfort on deliverability given the status of Taylor Wimpey as a leading national house builder.

5.1.3 Cluttons LLP is separately making representations on behalf of the Royal Foundation of St.Katherine in Ratcliffe.

5.1.4 This statement addresses the relevant questions in the paper entitled “Inspector’s Matters, Issues & Questions” dated 14 March 2012. It is noted that a further opportunity is available to make representations on the matters raised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as far as they relate to the Shepway Core Strategy. Whilst this submission refers to the recently published NPPF, the right is reserved to make additional comments by the deadline of 27 April 2012.

5.1.5 In response to 5.1, it is considered that the level of detail in CSD9 (and supporting text and diagrams) is appropriate.
5.1.6 The level of detail is supported by considerable work that forms an important part of the evidence base to the Core Strategy. Central to this work is the Sellindge’s Future document (Sellindge Masterplan, Final Report – Consolidated – March 2011), which has closely informed Policy CSD9 and its supporting text and diagrams. This work reflects a comprehensive assessment of opportunities and constraints, considerable public consultation and the consideration of a number of options for the location of new development at Sellindge. This work, led by an independent company: Urban Initiatives appointed by Shepway District Council and the Homes and Communities Agency, is unique to Sellindge with the aim of providing a clear spatial vision. Paragraph 4.81 of the Core Strategy specifically refers to Sellindge (and policy CSD9) in terms of positive proposals that have emerged from local communities in the District. Furthermore, paragraph 5.149 of the Core Strategy states that a broad location is identified for growth (at Sellindge) to meet community-led objectives as established in the specific conclusions of the Rural Masterplanning Fund project (Sellindge’s Future document). Given the amount and nature of the consultation that has been undertaken it is appropriate to include the level of detail that is set out in the Core Strategy with regards to Sellindge.

5.1.7 The level of detail set out in CSD9 (and supporting text and diagram) reflects the role that Sellindge is proposed to play in the Core Strategy being an identified other main area of change in the District (one of only three identified on the Key Diagram) and being located in the strategic corridor outside of the AONB. Policy SS1: District Spatial Strategy is clear that the future spatial priority for new development in the North Downs area includes accommodating major new development within the strategic corridor (outside of the AONB). Furthermore, paragraph 5.146 of the Core Strategy is clear in that development in the (Sellindge) area has a strategic district wide context. The Future Vision for Shepway includes at page 32, reference to the North Downs area’s future which states that villages set at the foot of the Downs (including Sellindge) will become better served communities and that community facilities will also feature new and improved open space, most notably the new village green providing a physical focal point for the active community of Sellindge. Therefore, the level of detail in Policy CSD9 (and its supporting text and diagrams) will positively assist in delivering the vision for the District insofar as Sellindge is concerned.

5.1.8 Policy CSD9 (and its supporting text and diagrams) is considered to strike an appropriate balance between guiding development at Sellindge (based on the considerable work already undertaken) and allowing for further community engagement. For example, Policy CSD9 seeks to ensure the delivery of a core area, i.e. the bulk of land identified to the south of the A20. This is appropriate guidance given the aspiration to improve the sense of place at
Sellindge and to provide a central village green as public open space. Furthermore, when the principal facilities at Sellindge are considered, for example, the Primary School, the village hall, the surgery and the Co-op it is clear that this core area to the south of the A20 relates extremely well to these facilities and is best placed to deliver a new focus for Sellindge alongside a more pedestrian/cycle friendly A20 through the heart of the village. This reflects paragraph 4.26 of the Core Strategy that states that opportunities may exist in other Strategic Corridor villages, although new development should be well integrated within the hearts of settlements and local community activity and is also predicated on the principles of sustainable development. In addition, the preferred masterplan identified through the Sellindge’s Future document strongly focuses on land to the south of the A20. To not recognise this in the Core Strategy would be contrary to the significant community consultation and constraint and opportunity work that has taken place.

5.1.9 The NPPF replaces PPS12: Local Spatial Planning and includes the following with regards to plan making which is considered to support the level of detail in CSD9 (and supporting text and diagrams):

- Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities (paragraph 150) – the level of detail in the Core Strategy reflects the outcome of the Sellindge’s Future document which takes account of the views of the local community;
- Local Plans should set out the opportunities for development and clear policies on what will or will not be permitted and where (paragraph 154) – Land to the south of the A20 is fundamental to the delivery of a core area and a village green/common south of the A20 which are both requirements of Policy CSD9. Policy CSD9 gives a clear steer on the core area. This is considered an appropriate criteria for development at Sellindge in the Core Strategy given the importance of the core area to the success of development at Sellindge and to the ambition of improving the sense of place at Sellindge;
- Early and meaningful engagement is essential and a wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so as far as possible, Local Plans reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for sustainable development of the area (paragraph 155) - the level of detail in the Core Strategy reflects the outcome of the Sellindge’s Future document which takes account of the views of the local community;
- Local Plans should indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land use designations on a proposals map and plan positively for the
development and infrastructure required in the area (paragraph 157) - the level of detail in the Core Strategy seeks to achieve this;

- The tests of soundness (paragraph 182) support the approach taken to Sellindge in the Core Strategy. In particular the approach to Sellindge is considered to positively respond to the ‘justified’ test of soundness, i.e. the level of detail set out with regards to Sellindge reflects the most appropriate strategy for the village when considered against the alternatives, based on proportionate evidence.

5.1.10 The identification of “broad locations” for development is not considered to prejudice the consideration of detailed sites in future DPDs. In contrast the identification of the broad location for growth at Sellindge, including specific reference to the delivery of a core area to the south of the A20, is based on significant evidence and will help to guide more detailed proposals in future DPDs within the context of a number of key principles established through the Core Strategy. This is appropriate to the role of the Core Strategy, i.e. being the overarching spatial planning document to which all other DPDs should adhere.

5.1.11 Policy CSD9 is clear that further community consultation is required to inform the proposals. However, the policy does not expressly set out how the identification of a broad location for development is taken forward to a specific site allocation. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) of November 2011 sets out the intention of Shepway District Council to produce a Allocations DPD and it is considered that the proposals at Sellindge would be brought forward through the Allocations DPD in accordance with the guidance set out in Policy CSD9. A minor addition to CSD9 would be helpful in order to make to make this expressly clear.
5.2 Notwithstanding the above, are the details of developments proposed in policies CSD6-CSD9 (such as broad locations, scale of housing and likely infrastructure needs) adequately justified by the evidence base? Why have other sites (including sites that are now being promoted by representors) been discounted?

5.2.1 Policy CSD9: Sellindge Strategy is adequately justified by the evidence base, which is also considered proportionate to the Core Strategy. A fundamental element of the evidence base with regards to Sellindge is the Sellindge’s Future document. This includes reference to a number of documents submitted in support of the land being promoted by Taylor Wimpey. These include ecological work and preliminary landscape appraisals for the Trustees of the Norrington Estate (see Appendix K – page 139 of the Sellindge’s Future document) and an initial ecological appraisal for the St Katherine’s land (see Appendix K – page 140 of the Sellindge’s Future document). Furthermore, the Sellindge’s Future document sets out significant detail on heritage assets, urban design analysis, social and community facilities, transport, landscape and environmental context and utilities.

5.2.2 The Sellindge’s Future document appraises four options: central focus, a dispersed model, central/northern and central/eastern. The document explains that the central/western option and central/eastern option performed best overall and also had the widest support from the village team at the Options Appraisal Workshop.

5.2.3 These two options renamed Option A (central/western option) and Option B (central/eastern option) were taken forward for further testing. Option A includes all the land being promoted on behalf of Taylor Wimpey and additional land to the north of the A20. Option B includes the St Katherine’s land being promoted by Taylor Wimpey and an element of the Bucknell Trust land. These options were the subject of a separate public consultation in Sellindge in December 2010. Paragraph 5.2.2 of the Sellindge’s Future document recommends Option A (Central/western) to Shepway District Council as the preferred masterplan for Sellindge.

5.2.4 The above is a summary of a detailed and ongoing process which, as a key element of the evidence base, is reflected in the illustrative masterplan set out in Figure 5.8 of the Core Strategy and is also reflected in the criteria listed within policy CSD9.

5.2.5 Other sites (than those shown in Option A of the Sellindge’s Future document, reflected in Figure 5.8 of the Core Strategy) have been thoroughly considered through the Sellindge’s Future process and the Core Strategy process, including the Sustainability Appraisal, as it has progressed. The Sellindge’s Future document explains why the preferred option was selected.
and also why other alternatives are not considered to be the most appropriate land to be taken forward through the Core Strategy. It is considered that a thorough, appropriate, independent and transparent process has been undertaken that sets out why the preferred option at Sellindge has been reflected in Policy CSD9 and why other sites have been discounted.

5.2.6 Fundamentally the preferred option for Sellindge, reflected in Figure 5.8 of the Core Strategy and compliant with the criteria set out in Policy CSD9, provides the most sustainable solution to providing an improved sense of place to Sellindge and providing a village green close to the principal existing facilities in the village whilst providing the best opportunity to improve the A20 (and best access onto the A20) thereby successfully integrating the new facilities (and existing facilities to the south of the A20) with the bulk of existing residential development at Sellindge which lies to the north of the A20.

5.2.7 Land to the south of the A20, being promoted on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, has two other significant advantages. Firstly, the land is well contained by built features on all sides, but particularly the A20 and M20/CTRL that provides natural containment in the wider landscape. Secondly, Taylor Wimpey, a national house builder is about to exchange contracts at the time of writing on option agreements on both land ownerships on the land to the south of the A20. The presence of Taylor Wimpey, who are committed to continue to work with the local community with regards to the final form of development, sets the land to the south of the A20 apart in terms of delivery credentials.

5.2.8 Given all of the above, the broad location for growth at Sellindge, set out at Policy CSD9 and including the core area of land to the south of the A20, is strongly justified by the evidence base.

5.2.9 The level of housing proposed by Policy CSD9: Sellindge Strategy, i.e. not exceeding approximately 250 units is justified by the evidence base. Much of the District is subject to flood risk and/or is covered by landscape designations such as the AONB. Sellindge is not subject to these constraints, but is located in the strategic corridor within the North Downs Area of the District. The only settlement in the North Downs Area higher in the Settlement Hierarchy is Hawkinge (a Service Centre within the AONB), which has seen considerable growth in recent years. Sellindge, along with Elham and Lyminge (both in the AONB) are the next highest settlements in the North Downs area in the Settlement Hierarchy, classed as Rural Centres. Given that Sellindge is not in the AONB, allied to its status in the Settlement Hierarchy and the fact that the aspiration for development to facilitate an increased sense of
place and improved facilities has come from within the community, it is considered that the amount of development proposed at Sellindge is supported by the evidence base. It is also clear that there is sufficient land at Sellindge on which to deliver approximately 250 units with the vast majority of those units being deliverable to the south of the A20.

5.2.10 The strategy for Sellindge has been developed so as to deliver infrastructure, for example a central village green/common and other community infrastructure and to improve existing infrastructure, i.e. a more pedestrian/cycle friendly Ashford Road. As with all major development, infrastructure will need to be delivered alongside development to ensure that it is available to serve residents of the development. This is clearly set out in policy CSD9: Sellindge Strategy and Appendix 2 (Table 6.2 Strategically Necessary Infrastructure) of the Core Strategy. The proposed infrastructure is also an integral part of the Sellindge’s Future document, a key part of the evidence base. Payment for infrastructure is clearly linked to the number of houses being proposed. Therefore, any reduction from the housing figure in Policy CSD9: Sellindge Strategy (i.e. not exceeding approximately 250 units) risks non delivery of some of the infrastructure or a change in the form of the infrastructure envisaged.

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