Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD - Post Examination Main Modifications

Following the conclusion of the Public Examination hearing sessions into the soundness of the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD on the 17th May, the Council received an initial response from the Inspector which set out areas for which he considers ‘main modifications’ will be necessary in order for the DPD to be found sound.

Please see attached representation guidance notes for instructions on how to respond to this consultation.

We can only consider representations that are received during the 6 weeks of consultation beginning on Friday 13th July until 5pm on Friday 24th August 2012.

MM2 - Introduction (NPPF)

*Insert new paragraphs after paragraph 2.9*

**The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The Borough Council’s commitment to preparing this DPD that seeks to deliver growth consistent with the existing Core Strategy at a time when it is beginning its review of the Core Strategy is a clear indication of the Council’s commitment to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area that directly reflects the requirement of the NPPF.

The NPPF focuses on the priority of increasing the supply of new housing and hence the DPD identifies key sites critical to the delivery of the Council’s housing strategy including major sites identified in the adopted Core Strategy such as Newtown Works (U2), Willesborough Lees (U14) and Conningbrook (U22) which can deliver significant quantities of housing within the DPD timescale. These developments will deliver high quality places, improve the urban environment and contribute to the creation of sustainable communities.

The NPPF requires the planning authority to plan proactively to secure sustainable economic growth and accordingly the DPD plans for economic growth in the urban area by taking the jobs and floorspace requirements for the area and actively identifying sites for employment development, including setting out proposals for the largest new strategic employment allocation at Sevington (U19). The DPD sets out a clear economic vision and strategy for the urban area that stresses the importance of matching economic growth to the increase in residential development and in doing so seeks to protect the existing strategic employment allocations at Orbital Park (U16), Eureka Park (U17) and Henwood (U15).
The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes the achievement of sustainable development. It indicates that the development plan is the starting point for decision-making but that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Accordingly Policy U0 sets out the proposed approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the Ashford urban area.

POLICY U0 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

When considering development proposals in the urban area the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy and this DPD (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.
Policy U6B - K-College, Jemmett Road

This site is currently a further education college campus located on Jemmett Road within walking distance of the town centre, railway station and Victoria Park. The site is currently in use as an important educational facility for the borough but the College is pursuing a scheme to re-locate to a site within the town centre and hence there is the potential to redevelop this site once the relocation has taken place.

Most of the southern half of the site accommodates the college buildings and a significant amount of hard standing and car parking. The northern half of the site tapers into the former Ashford South Primary School access road and is largely overgrown scrub with a number of trees, although it was once occupied by buildings in educational use. The disused nature of this part of the site means that it has a degree of ecological value.

The principle of redevelopment to residential uses has been established on this site linked with the redevelopment of the adjoining Ashford South Primary School (Policy U6A). Residential redevelopment of the site was previously granted outline planning permission by the Council under reference.
There is a resolution to grant fresh outline permission for residential development of the site subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement. A planning condition of the permission will restrict the redevelopment to no more than 154 dwellings unless an applicant can demonstrate that any increase will comply with all adopted supplementary planning documents on parking, sustainable drainage and residential space standards and the Council agrees to such an increase in writing.

Immediately abutting the western boundary of much of the site is the public right of way, Jemmett Path, that is also part of the 'Learning Link' which is a major north-south enhanced pedestrian / cycleway route from the town centre to Stanhope referred to in the Core Strategy. Development proposals for the site must not detrimentally impact on the retention or use of Jemmett Path and must widen and make enhancements and improvements to it in order to increase its attractiveness to users.

Development of this site must facilitate the ability to bring forward development on the adjacent former primary school site (site U6A) and must be designed to be cohesive with the design approach taken on the adjacent site. As part of the development two all- movement access points from Jemmett Road shall be provided through to the site boundary adjoining the learning link for vehicular access to site U6A to be created – these are shown on the Policies Map.

The design and scale of development here will need to take account of the character of the surrounding residential areas of Noakes Meadow and Jemmett Road and any scheme proposed on the adjoining former school site. The design should ensure that the residential amenity of existing neighbouring occupiers is protected. Any development proposals would need to provide a frontage to Jemmett Path and public open space to ensure that safety through natural surveillance of this community area is achieved.

The site is within close proximity (150 metres) of Victoria Park, a strategic recreation facility providing play equipment for different age groups, areas of open space for informal play and more formal areas of planting. Therefore, a contribution towards enhancement of these facilities at the Park may be more suitable than the requirement for development of play facilities on-site. However, the site does provide the opportunity to provide more local areas of public open space, which should form part of the overall site design.

The northern part of the site contains a number of mature trees within the site curtilage, some of which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. These should be considered for retention to help provide wildlife havens, habitat links and visual softening of the development.

It will be necessary to upgrade the existing local sewerage infrastructure before development can connect into it. It is also important that existing sewerage infrastructure which crosses the site is protected and future access secured for the purposes of maintenance and upsizing. Liaison with the relevant infrastructure company at the time is recommended. Redevelopment of the site will require sustainable drainage to be provided in accordance with the Council’s supplementary planning document.
Policy U6B - K-College

Subject to the relocation of the K-College campus to elsewhere in Ashford, the site is proposed for residential development.

Development proposals for the site shall:

a) provide two vehicular routes through the site from Jemmett Road to the site boundary adjoining Jemmett Path and (Policy U6A);

b) enhance and improve the Jemmett Path/Learning Link pedestrian and cycle route and cease existing vehicular use of the Learning Link once one of the routes required under a) has been provided;

c) ensure that the scale, design and character of the development takes account of the character of the surrounding area and any scheme proposed on site U6A;

d) ensure that there is no significant impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers;

e) provide a financial contribution towards the provision and maintenance of new play equipment at Victoria Park in accordance with 'saved' policy LE7 of the Borough Local Plan 2000, or any subsequent SPD superseding that policy;

f) provide a financial contribution towards the maintenance of Victoria Park, in accordance with 'saved' policy LE9 of the Borough Local Plan 2000, or any subsequent SPD superseding that policy;

g) retain the protected trees within the site and provide appropriate additional planting; and

h) provide a connection to the sewerage system at the nearest point of adequate capacity, as advised by Southern Water, and ensure future access to the existing sewerage system for maintenance and upsizing purposes.
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