

Rushden Neighbourhood Plan

Questions from the Independent Examiner

Prepared by

JOHN SLATER BA(Hons), DMS, MRTPI

John Slater Planning Ltd

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Answers prepared by officers of Rushden Town Council and East Northamptonshire Council

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Introduction

Two questions have arisen from my site visit, upon which I would request comments from the Town Council and also the LPA.

Question 1

- a) I note that there are two housing sites which can only proceed if replacement sports facilities are provided which will be outside the settlement boundary. I note that the supporting text for Policy CL5 refers to a multi sports hub but a site has not been found. Is it possible for any further reassurance can be provided, that there are viable locations for the re-provision, is it part of the eastern sustainable urban extension proposals?

A [Principal Planning Policy Officer, East Northamptonshire Council]: *I am aware, from previous discussions, that the Town Council had considered the concept of developing a new sports hub, possibly along the Bedford Road. When reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan for the Regulation 14 consultation last year, my initial thoughts were that enabling policies such as CL5 and CL6 could be sufficient to allow for the relocation of relocation of the football club (Rushden and Higham FC), rugby club and associated playing fields, as the sites could not be developed in any event until suitable new site(s) are forthcoming. However, I accept that to be demonstrably deliverable it would be helpful for the Plan to designate specific location(s) for the relocation of these sports facilities.*

A [Rushden Town Council]: *The proposed site for the new sports hub is directly behind the existing golf club and driving ranges on Bedford Road.*

- b) Who is taking forward the identification of a site for the new facilities, what are the time frames for possible relocation and who is responsible for taking these forward?

A [Principal Planning Policy Officer, East Northamptonshire Council]: *The relocation of sports facilities could be led by either the Town Council or the emerging Rushden East Masterplan. While the Neighbourhood Plan is now at an advanced stage of preparation, it may be that we [as the Local Planning Authority], through the emerging Local Plan Part 2 (site specific policies), could take a lead in the event that no progress is made in relocating the football club*

(Rushden and Higham FC), rugby club and associated playing fields within the next 2-3 years.

A [Rushden Town Council]: *Rushden Town Council is taking this project forward we are in process of agreeing Heads of Terms for a 60 acre site to accommodate the sports hub. The Rushden East Masterplan does not include this land and the relocation of sports facility from Manor Park will be wholly undertaken by Rushden Town Council.*

- c) I need to be confident that the housing allocations will deliver the housing number of 610 referred to in the Plan. In addition I note that there is a restrictive covenant on the Rushden and Higham United FC site – could the Town Council – does this covenant fall away so long as the facilities are re provided?

A [Principal Planning Policy Officer, East Northamptonshire Council]: *I accept that for site H3(B) to be demonstrably deliverable, the Neighbourhood Plan would need to be supported by relevant evidence that the covenant could be easily overcome once an alternative site/ location for the football ground has been identified.*

A [Rushden Town Council]: *At our Call for Sites Rushden Sports expressed a desire to relocate their sporting facilities in the future and have discussed with Rushden Town Council the possibility of locating to the new sports hub site thus satisfying the covenant.*

Question 2

Could I ask whether the LPA's Environmental Health Officers would agree with that conclusion and also whether they consider an appropriate remediation scheme could allow the site to be developed for housing as per Para 121 of the NPPF?

A [Principal Planning Policy Officer, East Northamptonshire Council]: *From my understanding, the former Rushden Gasworks site was redeveloped for housing around 10 years ago (Peter Crisp Way, Regency Court). The proposed Shirley Road site (H3(C)) is mainly greenfield, although the southern part of the site consisted of former railway sidings for the Gasworks and a coal yard (both adjacent to the railway line) so both of these former uses could present some risks of contamination.*

A [Senior Environmental Health Officer, East Northamptonshire Council]: *There is no reason why the H3(C) Shirley Road site cannot be brought forward for housing. The area has been used as a coal yard, scrap yard and railway sidings. With suitable investigation and agreement of a remedial scheme, if required, contamination should not be an obstacle in bringing the land back into use.*

However, of concern is the existence of the historic railway line that extends along the eastern and southern boundary. There have been proposals to extend it further towards Prospect Avenue and increase usage.

Question 3

Does the LPA consider that Policy 30 of the Joint Core Strategy to be one of the strategic policies of the development plan?

A [Principal Planning Policy Officer, East Northamptonshire Council]: *All policies in the Joint Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1) must be regarded as strategic. Policy 30 is the strategic policy regarding affordable housing, and housing size, mix and tenure.*

Question 4

Can you confirm that there is a typo error in Policy EJ2 and the policy should refer to Policy 24 of the Core Strategy not Policy 22?

A [Rushden Town Council]: *I can confirm that RNP Policy EJ2 should be referring to NNJCS policy 24 – Logistics. This should read “...ensure the criteria of NNJCS Policy 24 are satisfied”.*

Concluding Comments (Principal Planning Policy Officer, East Northamptonshire Council)

Overall, the Examiner’s email of 26th February 2018 raises some questions as to the deliverability of sites H3(B) (Hayden Road); H3(C) (Shirley Road) and H3(D) (Manor Park). The answers to the Examiner’s questions 1 and 2 should address these queries.

The answers to questions 3 and 4 are factual only, with responses duly provided.

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