

RNOTP

Resumed Examination Hearings

29th April – 1st May 2009

Opening Statement for ENDC

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1. Introduction

As you will be aware a great deal of work has been undertaken since the initial hearing sessions which were adjourned on Friday 17th November 2008. The template for that further work has been your letter of 31st October 2008. That letter confirmed the Council's belief that it would be able to complete the process by the end of March 2009, and the Council did indeed manage to meet that timetable. All new evidence and the further suggested changes have been made publicly available as if they were submission documents. The further changes have been subject to formal deposit and you have before you the further representations made in respect of the deposited changes.

I make now some brief comments under the headings of the various matters listed in the timetable for further examination.

2. Affordable Housing

The principal new piece of work is the Affordable Housing Model undertaken by EDAW on behalf of the Council which deals essentially with viability in the light of the "Blyth Valley" Court Judgment. The revised policy reflects the EDAW finding that currently 20% is affordable across the District as a whole, sets that figure as a minimum and sets a target of 40%, The finally negotiated figure will depend on individual specific site viability. This is for sites of 15 dwellings or more. The policy has therefore been informed by a viability testing exercise and complies with PPS3 advice. Furthermore the policy itself ensures that in each case a viability assessment will have to be undertaken.

The other important work is the Atis Review of the EDAW Affordable Housing Model prepared by Anthony Lee for the Planning Inspectorate, in response to your brief.

3. Policy 11 – Housing Mix

There are no proposed changes to Policy 11, but you have raised the question of the justification for the thresholds and percentages. The consultant in developing the SHMA used the best available material, which was, and is, the 2001 census. That material has been adjusted for revised ward boundaries inhouse. We believe that a high degree of confidence can be placed in that material in generating broad guidelines for a housing mix. It is always difficult to justify a precise percentage figure by reference to an evidence base. The purpose of the percentage figures are to give guidance to the development industry in submitting applications.

4. Oundle Site Allocations, Housing Land Supply etc.

You have raised specific queries about the SHLAA, on the HLS calculations and windfalls. We have responded to those requests.

New allocations have been made for Oundle, pursuant to the Roger Tym further work. As a result of the representations received to the deposited

proposed changes we have prepared further changes which could be made by you to meet those representations. There is now no formal proposed phasing of sites in Oundle. There is now no longer a gap in provision to meet the overall strategic provision of 610 dwellings for Oundle for at least 10 years from the date of adoption, i.e. to 2019.

The Roger Tym work is a rigorous assessment of all sites to support the allocations in the plan. Sufficient land has been allocated in Oundle, Thrapston and King's Cliffe to meet the overall targets for these settlements, while the current rate of new housing land coming forward at a District level will ensure that the PPS3 five year housing land requirements will be met up to 2021, at least.

5. Settlement Boundaries

There has been a comprehensive review of the representations received in respect of settlement boundaries. Only three changes are proposed. All of them are to make factual corrections to include land with extant planning permission.

6. Settlement Hierarchy

The Rationale for the decision to define separate Category A and Category B villages has been explained, and the methodology developed to include availability of services, development, constraints, population, and built form and historic interests. As a result Lowick and Wadenhoe are redesignated as Category A villages and Luddington-in-the-Brook is redesignated as "open countryside".

7. Policy 12 Important Open Space

The Council has chosen to delete Policy 12 as it is a saved Local Plan policy and there is no need to repeat it in the DPD.

8. Policy 22 Open Space Sport and Recreational Facilities

Changes have been made to clarify how the policy is to be implemented and to reflect PPG17. Individual reassessments have been undertaken and two changes are proposed, again to make factual corrections.

R A Jameson