

**PLANNING STATEMENT
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
LAND AT HAINE ROAD
RAMSGATE**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Statement considers National and Local Planning policies applicable to a hybrid planning application for residential development at Haine Road, Ramsgate. It should be read in conjunction with the other reports that accompany the application.

2.0 The site and its location.

2.1 The site, which extends to approximately 4 ha, is located on the western side of Haine Road within the Ramsgate part of the Thanet District. The site, which is featureless and mainly comprises horse grazed paddocks, slopes gently from the north and west towards Haine Road. In the south eastern corner of the site there is a derelict bungalow, called St Stephens, with an overgrown garden. Thanet Council has served notice requiring the demolition or restoration of the bungalow. There is some vegetation on the Haine Road frontage, with more extensive tree screens on the southern and western boundaries.

2.2 Spratling Lane forms the northern boundary of the site with a group of three storey houses of recent construction, known as Saddlers Mews, immediately to the north. They occupy an elevated position and are prominent in the landscape. Directly on the opposite side of Haine Road is the extensive EuroKent Business Park. To the south there is a golf driving range and to the west Spratling Court Farm and office suites, well screened by mature vegetation.

3.0 The proposed Development

3.1 This is a hybrid application for 100 houses. It comprises full details for the demolition of the bungalow and the erection of 5 houses within its curtilage. Two 2-storey semi-detached dwellings will be constructed on the Haine Road frontage with two further semi-detached dwellings and a detached dwelling within the garden area at the rear of the site. Access will be from the existing private drive to the bungalow.

3.2 The remainder of the application is in outline form for 95 dwellings with all matters reserved including access. An indicative Masterplan is submitted with the application showing how the 95 dwellings can be accommodated on the site and can be integrated with the 5 dwellings the subject of the detailed part of the application.

The scheme has been designed to facilitate the eventual closure of the private drive and gain access to these dwellings from internal site roads. Access to the remainder of the site would be to Haine Road via a new roundabout that will also serve the EuroKent Business Park. This would also involve the closure of Spratling Lane at its junction with Haine Road and its diversion, together with the access to Saddlers Mews, through the site. This will constitute a significant infrastructure improvement in terms of highway safety, replacing the present inadequate accesses to the Business Park and Spratling Lane.

- 3.3** The outline component of the application is shown on an illustrative masterplan. This is only indicative, but shows a mixture of apartments, terraced, semi-detached and detached units. 70 market houses are proposed in total and 30 affordable homes, in two blocks on the Haine Road frontage and a large area of mixed housing at the rear of the site.
- 3.3** A large Green is proposed on the Haine Road frontage, where an easement crosses the site, with smaller Greens located within the development. Vehicle parking will be provided in a combination of on plot provision and parking courts. Existing boundary screening will be retained and strengthened, in accordance with the recommendations in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, and extensive landscaping will be undertaken within the site. Further details can be found in the *Design and Access Statement* that accompanies the application.

4.0 Planning History

- 4.1** There are no recent planning applications affecting the site. Thanet Council has, however, served notice on the owners of the bungalow requiring it to be restored or demolished.

Policy Analysis

5.0 National Guidance

- 5.1** In March 2012 the Government published the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and constitutes guidance for local authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and as a "material consideration" in determining planning applications. Local Authorities are urged in the NPPF to approach development management decisions positively looking for solutions. Relevant policies are discussed below.

Sustainable development

5.2 At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development - economic, social and environmental.

An economic role – Although the proposed development does not include employment land, direct employment will be provided at the construction stage. The spending power of the residents of the 102 new homes will provide a boost to local services in this part of Thanet. The 102 dwellings will also make a modest contribution towards providing the housing necessary to support the employment growth planned for the Thanet area.

A social role – this role is concerned with providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and the creation of a high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect community needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing. It will be demonstrated that Thanet's emerging Local Plan *Preferred Options* allocates this site for housing purposes towards the 12000 dwellings required to meet the needs of present and future generations in the District. The development will create a high quality built environment, of a scale in keeping with the area, greatly enhancing its rather sterile character.

The site is in a very sustainable location accessible to local services. It is directly opposite the EuroKent Business Park, which provides a wide range of employment opportunities. The major retail and leisure complex of Westwood Cross is less than a mile to the north and primary and secondary school facilities are available locally. Regular bus services pass the site, taking passengers to Westwood Cross and the other town centres in Thanet.

The NPPF also places great emphasis on widening the choice of good quality housing (para 47). This medium sized site will provide a contrast to the larger sites such as Manston Green and North Haine Road allocated in the emerging Local Plan; thereby widening the choice of good quality homes in the Thanet District.

An environmental role – this requires development to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, helping to improve bio-diversity and using natural resources prudently.

The site is in horse grazing use at the present time and there is little habitat for wildlife within the site, apart from the treed areas on the boundaries.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal describes the site as being of limited ecological value. The proposed dwellings will have gardens, which together with the extensive Greens to be located within the site and the implementation of the recommendations in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, will provide opportunities for enhancing biodiversity, compared with the rather sterile horse grazing undertaken at present. The development will not have any adverse impacts on any heritage assets.

- 5.3** It can therefore be concluded that this is a very sustainable development in economic, social and environmental terms and the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development must take precedence. This means that where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, as is the case here, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole. It will be demonstrated that the development would not give rise to any significant adverse impacts and that planning permission should be granted without delay.

The Five-year housing land supply

- 5.4** The NPPF also places great emphasis on local planning authorities identifying and updating annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to maintain five years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional 5% buffer or 20% where there has been persistent under provision. (NPPF para. 47). Thanet has consistently underprovided. At a Public Inquiry in August 2014 into an application for a mixed development including housing at New Haine Road, the Appellants produced evidence that the housing requirement in Thanet was for 830 dwellings per annum and that on this basis Thanet only had a 1.9-year land supply. Whilst the Council disputed this evidence, they were not able to supply any alternative housing requirements and accepted that it could not demonstrate that it had a five-year housing land supply. Both the Inspector and the Secretary of State, who decided the appeal, saw no reason to disagree with the Council's view. (Sec of State ref: APP/Z2260/A/14/2213265). Later figures are not available. Although the position may have improved since the Inquiry, the Council accepts that Thanet does not have a 5-year housing land supply.

- 5.5** Paragraph 49 of the NPPF makes it clear that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. This will apply to the housing policies of both the adopted and emerging Local Plans.
- 5.6** The application site is capable of making a useful contribution towards achieving a 5-year housing land supply. The site is “deliverable” within the definition in the footnote to paragraph 47 of the Framework. It offers a suitable location for development (it is allocated for housing purposes in the emerging Local Plan) and is viable and can be delivered within 5 years.

Brownfield land

- 5.7** The bungalow and its garden come within the definition of previously developed land (brownfield) in Annex 2 to the NPPF. The Framework sets out a number of Core Planning principles. Core Principle 9 is particularly relevant to this brownfield site:

“Encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value.”

The bungalow site is not itself of high environmental value, nor is it within an area of high landscape value. It would not constitute the effective use of land to merely restore the bungalow or demolish it altogether; when the site is capable of accommodating 5 much needed dwellings.

6.0 Local Policy considerations

The Thanet District Local

- 6.1** The Thanet District Local Plan was adopted in 2006. Authorities were given until the 31st March 2013, to have an “NPPF compliant” local plan in place, which Thanet has not achieved. The NPPF requires that, thereafter, for Local Plans adopted since 2004 due weight should be given to their policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework (the closer the policies in the Plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.2 The New Haine Road Appeal referred to above, established that the main housing policy of the adopted Local Plan saved policy H1, which restricts new housing on unallocated sites to brownfield land within urban areas, is out of date, in the absence of a five year housing land supply and carries little or no weight. On the adopted local Plan Proposals Map the application site is shown as being within Policy Area CC2 *Landscape Character Areas*, as part of the Central Plateau.

It is debatable whether this policy, which blankets large parts of the District with a landscape designation, is NPPF “compliant.” In any event this undistinguished grassed field, which is enclosed on three sides by development, contributes little to the wider Central Plateau Character Area. Thanet clearly takes the same view and has allocated the site for housing development in the emerging Local Plan *Preferred Options*, whilst maintaining the policy (now SP22) for the remainder of the Character Area. The proposals generally conform to other saved policies of the adopted Local Plan in so far as they are relevant.

Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 Preferred Options

6.3 In January 2015 the Borough Council consulted on its *Draft Thanet Local Plan to 2031 Preferred Options*. The Council was considering representations received with a view to consulting on a Pre-Submission Local Plan in February 2016. There is however at present no indication when the pre submission draft Local Plan will be published, which may be due to the situation at Manston Airport.

6.4 The Preferred Options document allocates the application site (SR60) for housing development in the period 2021 to 2026. The Council has therefore accepted the principle of development of the site. A notional capacity figure of 85 dwellings is suggested. However the indicative Masterplan clearly demonstrates that the site is capable of accommodating 100 dwellings, whilst maintaining normal standards for garden space, parking etc, together with significant areas of open space. Given the absence of a five-year housing land supply, there is no justification for holding the site’s development back to the 2021 to 2026 period.

6.5 Draft Policy HO2E *Land at Haine Road and Spratling Street* sets out the Council’s requirements for the site. It is interesting to note that, although there were a number of objections to this policy, mainly on traffic grounds, in the *Preferred Options* consultation, the CPRE specifically stated that they did not object to the allocation of this site for housing.

Given the early stage in plan preparation that has so far been reached, this policy carries very limited weight but the Applicants have sought where possible to meet its objectives. An illustrative Masterplan accompanies the application and the Design and Access Statement contains the Design Brief for the site. A Transport Assessment also accompanies the application and 30% affordable housing is proposed as required by the draft policy. It has been established that utility services are available to the site.

- 6.6** The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes that it is unlikely that the development will have any direct impact on Thanet's protected sites but that increased recreational pressure cannot be ruled out. The applicants are willing to make any reasonable contribution towards the management and monitoring of Thanet's SPAs. The applicants are also providing garden areas and extensive open spaces on site, in accordance with draft policy SP23. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal also identifies some limited potential for the presence of reptiles in the small areas of semi-improved grassland on site. Further surveys and possible mitigation are required. It is considered that this is a minor issue and can be dealt with by condition. The applicants are also willing to make any reasonable contribution towards community or educational facilities. It is considered that these matters can also be dealt with by condition or planning agreement.

7.0 Prematurity

- 7.1** Because the emerging Local Plan has not yet reached the submission stage, it is necessary to consider whether this planning application is premature. Government advice is contained in a 2005 policy document "*The Planning System General Principles*" This states in paragraph 17 that refusal on prematurity grounds may be appropriate where a proposed development is so substantial or where the cumulative effect would be so significant that granting permission could prejudice the Local Plan by pre-determining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development which are being determined in the Local Plan.
- 7.2** The *Preferred Options* document makes provision for Thanet to accommodate 12000 dwellings by 2031. The 102 dwellings proposed on the application site represent less than 1% of this total. The application site is not identified as a Strategic site in *Preferred Options* and does not have any landscape or ecological designations affecting it. This is a stand-alone site and there will be no cumulative effects.

The applicants would therefore argue that the development couldn't be considered to be so substantial or to have cumulative effects that would prejudice the Local Plan by pre-determining decisions about the scale or location of development in the Thanet District. There is therefore no justification for refusal on prematurity grounds.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1** Thanet's adopted Local Plan predates the NPPF and many of its policies; particularly those related to housing are out of date and carry little or no weight. The replacement Plan has not reached the submission stage, although in its 2015 *Preferred Options* draft, the Council does accept the principle of the development of the site by allocating it for housing.
- 8.2** Thanet does not however have a five-year housing land supply, a further requirement of the NPPF. In these circumstances the NPPF makes it clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied and that unless the adverse impacts of the development outweigh the benefits, planning permission should be granted. It has been demonstrated that this is a sustainable development and the very fact that Thanet has allocated the site for housing purposes in its emerging Local Plan *Preferred Options* indicates that the development will not have adverse impacts, which would outweigh the benefits of the scheme in terms of its contribution towards Thanet's Five-Year Housing land supply, the improvements proposed to local highway infrastructure and the provision of much needed affordable housing.
- 8.3** The site is available, viable and developable in the short-term. It has also been established that there is no justification for withholding permission on prematurity grounds or, in the absence of a 5-year housing land supply, are there any grounds for holding the development back to the 2021 to 2026 period. The Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development must therefore take precedence and the application should be approved without delay.