

Supplementary Supporting Statement Ditton Edge: Public Benefits of the Proposed Residential Scheme and Engagement with Ditton Parish Council

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The East Malling Trust (EMT) has submitted an Outline Planning Application (App Ref. TM/18/02966/OA) to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) for residential development on land to the south of Brampton Field, Ditton Edge, to provide up to 300 dwellings (Use Class C3) with new access off Kiln Barn Road. All other matters are reserved for future consideration.
- 1.2. It is considered that the proposed development at Ditton Edge would provide significant public benefits that will result from residential development coming forward at the site. This supplementary supporting statement sets these out in detail below. Details of engagement with Ditton Parish Council is also included.

2. Public Benefits

Contribution towards housing supply in the borough

- 2.1. To help boost housing supply, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and keep up-to-date a deliverable five year housing land supply. In the absence of this, planning policies for the supply of housing will be considered out-of-date. This is particularly significant given that the NPPF states that where relevant policies are out-of-date, development proposals should be approved without delay, unless in doing so, any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or other policies in the NPPF indicate otherwise.
- 2.2. TMBC does not currently have a five-year housing land supply, as confirmed in the Council's Housing Land Supply Position statement as at 31 March 2019. Based on the housing need of 846 dwellings per annum plus a 5% buffer, the Council is able to demonstrate only 2.6 years of housing land supply between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2024. Therefore, the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) applies in decision-taking on planning applications. The tilted balance is therefore engaged.
- 2.3. Ditton Edge can deliver up to 300 homes and will make a significant contribution to addressing the housing supply shortage to help TMBC achieve its housing targets for the borough. The new homes will be designed to a high quality and there will be a range of unit types and sizes. It is proposed that 25% of the new homes will be affordable. This will assist in creating a mixed and balanced community and respond to local market demand evidence.
- 2.4. In terms of housing supply, the proposal will assist to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes (NPPF paragraph 59). Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would substantially contribute to the supply and mix of housing in the borough which would amount to a considerable public benefit. Furthermore, the introduction of new residents and employees into the local area will expand the local community, providing further social and economic benefits for the public.

Provision of Affordable Housing

- 2.5. The scheme proposes 25% onsite affordable housing to be provided with a tenure split of 70% affordable rented (capped at the Local Housing Allowance) and 30% intermediate products. This affordable housing provision accords with the emerging Local Plan Policy LP39 and is supported by a financial viability assessment. The evidence put forward in the submitted viability report is based on the same evidence as the draft Local Plan which states that 25% affordable housing provision is appropriate at this part of the Borough. Therefore, owing to the timing of the submission, there are material planning considerations that indicate the provision of 25% to be acceptable in this instance. The affordable housing is to include the onsite provision of 3 wheelchair adaptable homes. The level of provision, including the precise mix and tenure split will be ensured

through a S106 agreement which is currently being reviewed by TMBC and Kent County Council (KCC) legal advisors.

- 2.6. The inclusion of 25% affordable housing will see the Ditton Edge scheme deliver up to 75 affordable units providing an important public benefit to people in need of affordable rented and low cost home ownership housing.

Supporting the advancement of science and local skilled jobs

- 2.7. The East Malling Trust is a registered charity. Its primary objectives are the support of horticultural research and the advancement of science for public benefit at a local and national level. The Trust own and manage the East Malling Estate and the East Malling Research Campus.
- 2.8. EMT is seeking to make substantial and much needed improvements to the Research Campus, in particular by providing new state-of-the-art research facilities. These are required to ensure the long-term success of the research and development undertaken at the Campus. EMT also support accommodation for 63 businesses based on the Estate as well as maintaining the Grade I listed Bradbourne House and historic parkland.
- 2.9. The great majority of the Trust's income is used to support horticultural research on the East Malling Research Campus. Public funding for such research remains very fragile. The age of the existing facilities at the Research Campus mean they are inadequate and energy inefficient. Recently, the awarding of new research projects to the East Malling Research Campus have been lost due to the paucity of site facilities. Improved facilities will expand the scope of work that can be undertaken at the Research Campus and aid the attraction and retention of excellent scientist for whom the quality of facilities is of great importance. This is essential to help maintain East Malling as an internationally renowned centre of scientific excellence and innovation that local people and the borough can be proud of.
- 2.10. The Trust needs new streams of funding to support its ambitions and retain the specialist jobs at the Campus. Funding scientific research is difficult. Defra has increasingly withdrawn funds. Despite great strides in developing profitable income streams, additional financial support is needed by the Trust to maintain and develop the Campus.
- 2.11. This planning application is located on a small part of the Trust's Estate and its use for much needed new local homes will not compromise the ability to perform research. Financial receipts generated through the sale of the land benefitting from a residential planning permission will provide essential funding to enable the Trust to invest in new infrastructure, facilities and continued world-leading research, expanding the scope of work that can be undertaken and help attract and retain excellent scientists. This investment will provide leverage for central and local government capital grants. Improving the research campus is vitally important. It will maintain East Malling as an internationally renowned centre of scientific excellence and innovation, providing local people with a facility that supports highly skilled jobs.
- 2.12. Supporting the Research Station through financial receipts will help to support important scientific work. The Trust strongly believes that now, more than ever, the work for which East Malling Research is world famous is needed. The research undertaken at East Malling will help find ways to feed more people while reducing energy, water and other resource consumption. This has long term economic, social and importantly, environmental benefits. The work at East Malling is unique but has multiple direct (e.g. employment) and indirect (e.g. food security and resource efficiencies) that provide public benefits which will be supported by the approval of this planning application at Ditton Edge.

Open space and children's equipped area of play

- 2.13. The illustrative masterplan submitted with the application and accompanying parameter plans propose approximately 1.35 hectares of formal public open space across the scheme for new and existing residents to enjoy and use for recreation. In addition, a green space network of approximately 1 hectare surrounds the scheme creating a soft natural environment to encourage outdoor activity and promote healthy living.
- 2.14. In addition, the intention is to provide a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) and 9 Local Areas of Play (LAP) across the scheme. It is envisaged that these equipped areas of play could be used by existing

residents as well as new residents of the scheme. Full details of the on-site open space will be provided at reserved matters stage.

3. Significant package of financial contributions

Off-site open space provision

- 3.1. It is not practical to provide on-site provision of parks and gardens or outdoor sports facilities. Consequently, a financial contribution of £365,883 has been agreed to be put towards Leybourne Lakes Country Park. This will ensure the existing Country Park can continue to support existing and new residents.
- 3.2. A further financial contribution of £671,268 will be made towards the provision of enhanced outdoor sports facilities in the local area. EMT, in conjunction with TMBC, is further liaising with Ditton Parish Council for it to identify specific existing or new local outdoor facilities that this significant amount of money could be used to support.
- 3.3. These financial contributions to the provision of off-site open space will be secured via a S106 Agreement.

Support to education infrastructure

- 3.4. The scheme will make a financial contribution of £4,535 for each house and £1,134 for each flat towards the build costs of a new primary school in Aylesford. This will cover the scheme's potential to give rise to up to 84 additional primary school pupils. The scheme will also make a contribution of £3,208.18 for each house and £802.05 for each flat towards the cost of land acquisition for the new primary school. This will be secured via a S106 Agreement. The S106 will include a clear mechanism to ensure that the provision of primary school places arising from the proposed development are met in the event that the proposed primary school does not come forward as envisaged.
- 3.5. There will also be financial contributions of £4,115 for each house and £1,029 for each flat made to cover the proposed development potential to give rise to up to 60 additional secondary school pupils. This money will support an enhancement of teaching space at Aylesford School.

Supporting community services and doctor surgeries

- 3.6. To mitigate the potential effect new residents may have on the delivery of community services, the following financial payments have been agreed:
 - £9,770.80 towards the Aylesford School Adult Education Centre for additional equipment for new learners
 - £4,041.06 towards Aylesford Youth Club
 - £15,116.04 towards Larkfield Library enhancement and additional book stock for the new borrowers
 - £16,770.00 towards the Aylesford Priory Changing Place facility
- 3.7. These payments will be secured and detailed within the S106 Agreement. Further, the S106 Agreement will also make a payment of £252,720 to mitigate the impact of the scheme's potential to generate 702 new patient registrations. This financial figure will go towards the refurbishment, reconfiguration and/or extension at Thornhills Medical Centre, Watlington Surgery and/or West Malling Group Practice.

4. Engagement with Ditton Parish Council

- 4.1. Prior to the submission of the outline planning application, EMT and its team met with Ditton Parish Council on 15 October 2018 to present its emerging proposals of its residential scheme and to seek feedback and input to the emerging design. On 1 November 2018, EMT held a public exhibition to present its proposal for Ditton Edge, along with its proposals for Parkside, at Ditton Community Centre. Ditton Parish Councillors were invited to a session with EMT and its representatives for 1 hour prior to opening the exhibition to the wider

public. Details of these meetings are set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (December 2018) prepared by Maxim submitted with the application.

- 4.2. Following the submission of the outline planning application, EMT offered to meet with Ditton Parish Council to discuss the submitted details and provide any further clarification that councillors may have. The Parish Council declined to meet.
- 4.3. As set out at paragraph 3.2 above, Ditton Parish Council has been contacted to discuss specific existing or new local outdoor facilities that S106 contributions could be used to support. The Parish Clerk has confirmed that options will be discussed at a Parish Council meeting on 5 October 2020. Following this, the council will advise of its preferred outdoor projects.

5. Summary

- 5.1. The proposed development at Ditton Edge has the significant public benefit of delivering up to 300 much needed new homes, of which 25% (up to 75 dwellings) will be affordable homes. Currently, TMBC can only demonstrate a 2.6 year supply of housing. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies. The provision of 300 new homes would make a much needed and significant contribution to TMBC's housing land supply providing substantial public benefits.
- 5.2. Further, the additional public benefits of this scheme also extend to supporting the long-term future of the East Malling Research Station, the advancement of horticultural research and development and the support of valuable highly skilled local jobs.
- 5.3. In addition, the scheme provides a package of benefits including onsite formal open space and children's equipped areas of play and a green network to encourage healthy living. A substantial amount of financial contributions will also be made to support education, a wide range of community services and doctor surgeries. This would mitigate the potential effects of new resident numbers generated as people move into the scheme. It would also help the long-term viability and sustainability of these services for existing residents.
- 5.4. EMT, has sought to engage with the local Parish Council prior to and during the determination of the application. Engagement is ongoing in respect of identifying outdoor facilities that S106 contributions could support.
- 5.5. It is concluded that the direct and indirect public benefits of the Ditton Edge proposal are multiple, as set out in this supplementary supporting statement. There would also be indirect benefits generated through the creation of new jobs through construction, local spend as new residents move in and benefits to the local economy.
- 5.6. It is requested that these public benefits are considered in support of this planning application.