

M-597/P EXAMINATION STATEMENT

MATTER NO. 15C GRAVELEY

PERSONAL REF: 20521

REPRESENTATION NO. 60787

April 2017

**EXAMINATION OF THE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
SUBMISSION LOCAL PLAN**

**STATEMENT BY MARTIN PAGE OF BARFORD + CO
ON BEHALF OF MR SIMON MILLER**

M597/P EXAMINATION STATEMENT



1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 Barford + Co are retained by Mr S Miller the owner of the proposed allocation site Policy H/1: I relating to land at Toseland Road, Graveley, PE19 6PS with a site area of 0.4 ha for an indicative dwelling capacity of 6 units.
- 1.2 The following statement addresses the Inspector's question: *Is the plan unsound without the allocation of the site at Toseland Road for housing development, and if so why?*

Graveley Village

- 1.3 Although a small village Graveley has a distinct sense of place. The village has developed with properties concentrated along the High Street (C180) with further properties fronting narrow lanes and roads that radiate off the High Street. This includes a number of post WW2 small group developments, including former council properties.
- 1.4 The settlement has a village framework boundary where Proposed Policy S/11 will allow residential development and redevelopment within the framework of not more than 2 dwellings comprising:
- a. A gap in an otherwise built-up frontage to an existing road, provided that it is not sufficiently large to accommodate more than two dwellings on similar curtilages to those adjoining; or
 - b. The redevelopment or sub-division of an existing residential curtilage; or
 - c. The sub-division of an existing dwelling;
 - d. The conversion or redevelopment of a non-residential building where this would not result in a loss of local employment.
- 1.5 However, examining the Graveley Proposals Map (Appendix A) it is evident this is tightly drawn around the settlement core area with few undeveloped areas that could enable further development. The lack of scope for growth is reflected in the declining village population, in 1951 the population was 220 and rising slowly to around 240 by mid-1991 and 250 by mid-1996. However, the County Council mid 2012 estimate identifies this had fallen to 210.

The Subject Property

- 1.6 The proposed allocation area extends to 0.4ha and contains a series of portal buildings having a total floor area of 1,249 sq. metres. The surrounding area is hard surfaced for parking and service areas. To the north the site adjoins a residential property Vine Cottage and to the south is the residential property 87 Toseland Road.

- 1.7 The buildings were originally erected for the storage and retail of agricultural produce. Over time the retail element expanded and by the early 1980s the premises were being used as a cash and carry store open to the general public. In 1995 a Lawful Development Certificate was granted for the use of land and premises for retail use (Class A1) (Reference: S/1133/94/LDC). In 1996 the then owner decided to sell the property and to enable alternative uses planning permission was obtained for uses falling within Classes A1 and/or B1, and/or B2, and/or B8 (Reference: S/1637/95/F).
- 1.8 In late 1999 the site was let and later sold to Mr S Miller for his business involving the importation and retail of ceramic tiles to the trade and public. With the downturn in the economy in 2007 Mr Miller sought to 'down size' the tile business and in 2007 planning permission was granted for change of use of part of the site for '*vehicle repair and servicing of motor vehicles (Class B2) whilst keeping the original lawful use*' (Reference: S/2352/06/F). The vehicle repair business vacated in 2012.
- 1.9 The premises are currently used for the storage and retail sale of ceramic tiles to the trade and general public as part of a network of outlets in Huntingdon, Peterborough, Thetford, Dry Drayton, Hitchin and Oxford. Two staff are employed on the site and these commute into the village from Hertfordshire and Sawtry. The premises generally receives around 5 HGV deliveries per week.

2.0 **Proposed Modification**

- 2.1 Proposed modification PM/SC/7/B proposes the inclusion of the site within a new parish council led allocations section in Policy H/1, to provide for the following:
H/1: I Land at Toseland Road, Graveley Area (ha.) and indicative dwelling capacity:
0.40 ha. 6 dwellings
Development requirements:
- Consider if there could be impacts on residential amenity from the Cotton Wind Farm and design to mitigate as appropriate.
 - Retention of mature trees and hedgerows and creation of a landscape buffer along the rear of the site to provide a soft green development edge.
 - This is a Parish Council led proposal which has been included in the Local Plan because it has demonstrated local support. Developments should seek to fulfil the aspirations of the Parish Council for the site including a contribution to benefit the wider village community.

2.2 The inclusion of the site was the consequence of the Graveley Parish Council promoting two small scale housing developments through the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan process to meet identified local housing needs, as an alternative to taking forward a Neighbourhood Plan. Local people were consulted by leaflet about whether the sites should be developed and there was clear evidence of local support for the Toseland Road site. The site was brought forward just before the submission of the Local Plan for examination and was later identified as a Major Modification that was the subject of consultation between 2 December 2015 and 25 January 2016. The Council's justification for the allocation refers to:

- It provides part of the Council's housing supply, responds to the localism agenda, provides additional rural housing as supported by the DEFRA 'Towards a one nation economy: A 10 - point plan for boosting productivity in rural area' publication of August 2015, and provides flexibility in housing land supply.
- Parish Council led proposal pursued through Local Plan instead of Neighbourhood Plans.
- To ensure that the Local Plan is positively prepared and effective.
- To ensure that the Local Plan is consistent with national policy set out in the NPPF at paragraphs 14, 17 (bullet point 1), 47, 150 and 155.

2.3 Proposed paragraph 7.7a clarifies *'The Parish Council led village residential development sites in Policy H/1 have been proposed by Parish Councils to meet local aspirations for growth and as an alternative to their preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. These have been included in the plan as an exception to the sustainable spatial strategy for the district set out in Policy S/6 as local support has been demonstrated through local village consultations. Developers should work closely with the relevant Parish Council, and seek to fulfil the aspirations of the Parish Council for the site'*

3.0 **The Matter**

Is the plan unsound without the allocation of the site at Toseland Road for housing development, and if so why?

Response

3.1 The NPPF aims are reflected in the National Planning Practice Guidance, which notes:

- *'It is important to recognise the particular issues facing rural areas in terms of housing supply and affordability, and the role of housing in supporting the broader sustainability of villages and smaller settlements. This is clearly set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, in the core planning principles, the section on supporting a prosperous rural economy and the section on housing.'*

- *A thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. **Rural housing is essential to ensure viable use of these local facilities.***
- *Assessing housing need and allocating sites should be considered at a strategic level and through the Local Plan and/or neighbourhood plan process. **However, all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas – and so blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence.***
- *The National Planning Policy Framework also recognises that different sustainable transport policies and measures will be required in different communities and opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.*

3.2 As previously noted the Graveley Proposals Map is tightly drawn around the settlement with few undeveloped areas that will enable further development within the village. As the proposed policy framework does not include any flexibility for housing outside of village framework boundaries (excluding exception sites) the result is there will be a restriction on further housing development in the village, contrary to the national guidance that all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas. The plan is therefore unsound and to correct this the allocation of a site is necessary.

3.3 The local desire to accommodate some growth in the village is reflected in the Parish Council's response to the Local Plan and its decision to consult the village on whether sites should be developed and if so, what site. This resulted in the village expressing a desire for the redevelopment of the Toseland Road site.

3.4 One of the core planning principles in paragraph 17 (bullet point 1) of the NPPF is that plan-making should empower local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area. Paragraph 150 also refers to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities. Given the local village support the proposed allocation clearly accords with these statements, enabling local new development and growth to be realised through an alternative route to a Neighbourhood Plan.

- 3.5 In relation to the sustainable development objectives, a principle in paragraph 17 (bullet point 8) of the NPPF is to encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed, provided that it is not of high environmental value. In this instance the site is previously developed land, as defined in the NPPF Annex 2.
- 3.6 Paragraph 55 of the NPPF notes that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and the proposal will provide additional housing that will contribute to the vitality of Graveley and help support local facilities. Paragraph 55 (bullet point 3) of the NPPF also emphasises the opportunity to significantly enhance the immediate setting in the design of new dwellings in the rural area. In this instance the proposal offers the opportunity to replace the current utilitarian building with development having a more appropriate design and mass for this rural location.
- 3.7 Having regard to the above we consider the failure to include the site at Toseland Road as a residential allocation, which has local support, would undermine the soundness of the plan in the following ways –
- Positively Prepared – Omitting the Toseland Road site would mean that the plan would not be deliver objectively assessed local development requirements. The site has demonstrated that it can achieve a sustainable form of development, as such it would meet NPPF and local plan objectives.
 - Justified - It was entirely appropriate for the Parish Council to canvass local opinion. When tested locally against a reasonable alternative this site was deemed to be most suitable. The results of this consultation has contributed to the subsequent amendments to the Sustainability Appraisal.
 - Effective – The plan would not be effective if it failed in its strategic objective (Policy 2 Para.c) to provide land for housing in sustainable locations that meets local needs and aspirations.
 - Consistent with National Policy – As the failure to allocate the site would contradict Paragraphs 17, 55 and 150 of the NPPF.
- 3.8 In relation to the policy development requirements:
- Consider impacts on residential amenity from the Cotton Wind Farm - *this can be addressed in the detailed design stage and be mitigated through the layout and orientation of properties;*
 - Retention of mature trees and hedgerows and creation of a landscape buffer along the rear of the site to provide a soft green development edge - *this can be addressed in the detailed design stage and be mitigated through the layout and orientation of properties;*

- This is a Parish Council led proposal which has been included in the Local Plan because it has demonstrated local support. Developments should seek to fulfil the aspirations of the Parish Council for the site including a contribution to benefit the wider village community - *this can be addressed at the application negotiation stage.*

APPENDIX A

