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Your Ref:

Our Ref: PINS/T1410/429/5 & 6

Date: 13th March 2012

Dear Iona and Lisa

Further to receiving additional documents in support of the Eastbourne Plan submission document, I am now writing to set out my concerns regarding housing land supply. I am raising these concerns at this stage as I consider more work is needed before the hearings take place in order to clarify a number of matters relating to housing land supply.

Background and overall concerns

1. The Council has taken the RS housing figure of 4,800 dwellings between 2006 and 2026 as the basis for calculating the housing target. It has taken account of the "oversupply" against the delivery target for the first 4 years of the RS plan period and has calculated an annual housing requirement of 222 dwellings for the remainder of the period. This has been projected forward to 2017 to ensure that the Core Strategy covers a 15 year period. It appears that no housing is planned to take place in the area that now lies within the South Downs National Park and that no reduction in the overall RS target has been proposed to allow for the removal of this land from the area covered by the Plan.
2. The CS Housing Trajectory (CS38) shows that whilst there is a deliverable supply for the first five years of the plan period, there is a shortfall in the projected supply of housing land for the remainder of the plan period. Paragraph 55 of PPS3 requires LPA's to identify a further supply of specific, developable sites for years 6 – 10, and where possible for years 11 – 15.
3. At Eastbourne the Council is relying heavily on windfall sites to deliver housing from year 6 of the plan period. My concerns regarding housing



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land supply at Eastbourne focus on the question of whether the Council has carried out enough work to show "compelling evidence of genuine local circumstances that prevent specific sites being identified."

4. The Council has prepared a SHLAA as well as several documents that set out detailed calculations of historic supply through windfalls and projected future windfall supply. However I am concerned that the evidence does not present a clear and coherent case to demonstrate "genuine local circumstances". My concerns fall into four areas:
 - SHLAA: the rigour with which potential greenfield sites have been assessed; the methodology for calculating future windfall provision; consistency with the spatial strategy.
 - The relationship between the SHLAA and the economic viability assessments in CS18 (External Review) and consistency with which data from CS18 has informed the assessment of SHLAA sites.
 - Lack of clarity in demonstrating the detail that lies behind the CS Housing Trajectory (CS38).
 - The justification for determining the anticipated level of housing supply that is included in the SHLAA in the two priority locations for housing growth – the Town Centre and Sovereign Harbour.

The SHLAA

5. The majority of the greenfield sites are included in CS28 (A and B): SHLAA Site Pro Formas in the section "Outside Neighbourhood Boundaries." Several of these now fall within the National Park and will presumably be omitted from updated versions of the SHLAA. Of the remaining sites the reasons for dismissing them are not clear in every case. Furthermore reasons for dismissal appear in some cases to be inconsistent. For example:

AX06 is a Local Plan allocation and is shown as being viable. However it is dismissed due to severe flood risk. This raises the questions: why was it allocated in the first place? And what has changed since it was allocated?

AX05, also a Local Plan allocation, is assessed on the Pro Forma under "Availability" (iii) as being unviable but under "Achievability" (ix) as being achievable in current market conditions.

6. The Council's letter of 29 February 2012 states that windfall analysis in paragraphs 4.38 – 4.50 of the SHLAA is replaced by submission document CS31 – Windfall Housing Delivery Briefing Note. This document is dated September 2011 so clearly provides an up to date picture of recent windfall development. It identifies four neighbourhoods that have contributed approximately 80% of housing delivery on windfall sites across the Borough in the last 6 years (Table 1). It adds "it is anticipated that these neighbourhoods will continue to deliver a high proportion of windfall development in the future". However there is little evidence in CS31 or in the SHLAA to support this assertion.
7. CS31 (page 6) explains how certain types of sites have been discounted in a revised windfall definition, in order to avoid double counting. These are:

- All new build developments across the Borough;
- Change of use on large sites (5+units) across the Borough;
- Change of use on small sites (1-4 units) in the Town Centre;
- Redevelopment on large sites (5+) across the Borough.

This leaves the following type of sites which CS31 states have not been identified in the SHLAA and which are classified as windfall development in the land supply calculations. These are:

- Conversions (large and small sites across the Borough);
- Redevelopment on small sites (1-4 units) across the Borough;
- Change of use on small sites (1-4 units) outside of the Town Centre.

8. However the SHLAA should have assessed all sites, including garden land, brownfield sites and employment land. It is evident from the Pro Formas and from Appendix C of the SHLAA that a number of the small sites assessed (ie those that could deliver 1 – 4 units) are residential or garden land or in small scale employment use. It is clear that the SHLAA has assessed potential housing supply from redevelopment on numerous small sites. These include sites with the capacity to deliver just a single dwelling across the Borough and from change of use on small sites outside the Town Centre. Examples of the former include residential sites at CC130 – one unit, CC233 – 3 units, CC170 - one unit and brownfield site at CC20 – 3 units and examples of the latter include sites currently in employment use at CC166 – 2 units and CN18 – 3 units. The SHLAA has found similar types of site to have no potential for development, for a variety of reasons. This suggests that all potential housing supply from redevelopment on small sites across the borough and change of use on small sites outside the Town Centre have been considered in the SHLAA.
9. As the SHLAA assessed sites of all sizes it should have identified all sites that might otherwise come forward as windfall development in the early part of the plan period, with the exception of conversions. On this basis I can see no justification for assuming that such sites will appear as windfall development, certainly in the first 10 years of the plan period.
10. CS31 anticipates that an average of 110.2 units could come forward as windfall development each year up to 2027 (page 11 “Methodology for Windfall Delivery”) and that 88% of these would be conversions. It is clear that a substantial number of units has been delivered through conversions in recent years. However the supply of buildings suitable for conversion is not infinite and to project a delivery of 88 units annually for the next 20 years seems very optimistic.
11. It is unclear whether the Council has taken account of the type and size of units which are likely to emerge from conversions. The SHMA (CS29) found that the housing stock in Eastbourne already has a high proportion of small homes (39%) and a lower proportion of detached and semi detached houses than the rest of the South East. It seems unlikely that such a heavy reliance on windfall conversions will start to address the desirability, identified in the SHMA (paragraph 7) of improving economic performance by encouraging different types and sizes of homes to be built?

12. In addition, it is not clear whether the Council has assessed the environmental and amenity impact of such a significant amount of intensification (through conversions) in residential areas, particularly those areas such as Seaside, Meads and Upperton, where C31 indicate that the majority of conversions are anticipated.

Economic viability assessment in CS18 and the relationship with the SHLAA

13. Paragraph 1.18 of CS18 (External Review) states that the Council's greenfield sites have been assessed in the External Review in terms of economic viability. However these sites do not appear in Appendix 1 of CS18 (Site Viability Assessments) or in Table 5 of the same document. Is this information available as it has clearly fed into the SHLAA?
14. The External Review purports to assess "achievability" of each of the sites that the Council has identified as being suitable and available. However this conflicts with the fact that in the pro formas every site is subjected to question (ix).
15. The approach to the viability assessment of small sites is not clear. CS18 states that 147 small sites (1 – 4 units) were assessed by the Council but that a sample of 10 was considered in the external review (para 1.14). It is not clear how the sample results have been applied to the remainder of the 147 sites, whether any of the small sites not considered in CS18 have been found to be not viable and if so why.

The housing trajectory

16. The trajectory shows an equal distribution of windfall supply, sites identified in the SHLAA and commitments across years 6 – 15 of the plan period. It is not clear how the identified sites and allocations are made up. It is also unclear why it has not been possible to manage the allocations and identified sites to bring supply forward to years 6 – 11.

Priority locations for housing growth

17. In the Town Centre an annual windfall supply from conversions of 38 units is assumed. I am particularly concerned that the Plan takes such a reactive approach to housing supply in the Town Centre, where the focus of the Plan is on regeneration and housing growth balanced with improvements in the provision of community services and facilities. The heavy reliance on windfalls (largely through conversions) in the Town Centre appears to contradict the Council's desire to take a pro-active approach as evidenced by its preparation of an Area Action Plan. AAPs are a vehicle for managing change and they should identify the distribution of uses, their inter relationships and as far as possible the timetable for delivery. Proposals for housing delivery in the Town Centre, as shown in Table 2 of the Plan (701 identified units and 541 windfall units) is therefore inconsistent with the stated spatial development strategy.
18. Similarly I have seen no evidence to indicate why the housing supply in the priority location for housing growth at Sovereign Harbour has been restricted to 150 dwellings. In responding to representations which argue that there may be potential to increase this figure in CS10a the Council states that the remaining development sites at Sovereign Harbour have

been assessed in the SHLAA. However the SHLAA Pro Forma for neighbourhood 14 (Sovereign Harbour) assesses the entire 12.22 acres site on a single sheet with no detail as to how the figure of 150 units has been reached. This is presumably a summary of more detailed work. In contrast, CS18 breaks Sovereign Harbour into a number of smaller sites and considers these individually. In view of the failure to allocate sites for the first 10 years of the Plan period, these individual sites may need to be considered in detail through the examination process.

Conclusions

19. In the absence of identified sites for years 6 – 11 of the Plan period the Council should provide a more rigorous assessment of sites considered in the SHLAA, detail information that supports the trajectory and explain why delivery of commitments, identified sites and windfalls is spread so evenly over the last 10 years of the Plan period.
20. If, after further work, it is not possible to identify sufficient sites for first 10 years, or to show compelling evidence that prevent specific sites being identified, then it may be necessary for the examination to consider in some detail the omission sites proposed in representations.
21. This letter is based on guidance in PPS3 and other current planning legislation and guidance. However we are all aware that the NPPF is expected to be published by the end of this month and as a result the issues referred to above may need to be re assessed.
22. I set out below a summary of the main questions raised in this letter. The letter and questions should be placed on the Council's examination website as soon as possible.
23. I have suggested 8 May 2012 as a date for the start of the examination hearings. After consideration of this letter, please would the Council inform me within 14 days if it wishes to proceed on this basis?

Summary of key questions

- a) Can the Council confirm that it has taken account of the transfer of land from the Eastbourne Plan area to the South Downs National Park area and has decided that this change has no impact on the capability of the Council to plan for the RS housing target?
- b) What testing and assessment have greenfield sites that were allocations in the existing Borough Plan been subject to before being dismissed as having no potential to contribute to housing land supply in the Eastbourne Plan?
- c) Have all other greenfield sites been subject to rigorous assessment to before being dismissed as not capable of contributing to housing land supply?
- d) If the SHLAA has been a thorough exercise in considering the potential of all sites across the borough to deliver housing, as appears to be the case, what is the justification for assuming that any windfall sites other

than conversions will come forward in the first 10 years of the plan period?

- e) What evidence is available to demonstrate that existing building stock in the borough has the potential to supply 88 units annually through windfall conversions for the next 15 years?
- f) Will such heavy reliance on unplanned windfall conversions enable the type and size of units which the SHMA identifies as needed in Eastbourne to be provided?
- g) Is such heavy reliance on unplanned windfall development consistent with the Plan's objective of creating sustainable neighbourhoods?
- h) Has the effect of intensification through conversions on residential and environmental amenity been assessed?
- i) Has the application of economic viability assessment in CS18 to all of the sites assessed in the SHLAA been consistent and transparent?
- j) Has the application of sample viability assessment in CS18 to all the small sites assessed in the SHLAA been consistent and logical?
- k) Has the Council thoroughly explored the use of phasing and all other tools to bring forward delivery of committed and identified sites from the later years of the plan to address the shortfall in years 6 – 11?
- l) Is the reliance on windfall sites to deliver 541 out of 1,242 housing units in the Town Centre consistent with the spatial strategy designation of the Town Centre as a priority location for housing growth?
- m) Is the reliance on windfall sites to deliver housing in the Town Centre consistent with the pro-active approach implied by the preparation of the Town Centre Area Action Plan and the proposed designation of development opportunity sites with target dwelling figures?
- n) On what evidence is the maximum figure of 150 units referred to in C14 (Sovereign Harbour) based?

Yours sincerely,

Sue Turner RIBA MRTPI IHBC

Inspector