



Joint Position Statement with Eton College

Land between Plumpton Green and South Chailey

Context

This joint position statement has been prepared by Lewes District Council (LDC) and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and agreed with Eton College. It relates to land amounting to approximately 206 hectares that is owned by Eton College and located between the settlements of Plumpton Green and South Chailey. The main landholding is situated to the north of the railway line, with a smaller area lying to the south of the railway line, within the South Downs National Park. The land is identified as 11PL in the Lewes District Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2014 and identified accordingly on the attached SHLAA extract map.

Eton College submitted a representation on the Focussed Amendments consultation in which it objected to the draft Part 1: Joint Core Strategy (specifically Section 6.12 to 6.33, Spatial Policy 1 – Provision of housing and employment land' and Spatial Policy 2 – Distribution of housing' [REP/309 refers].

The College's long standing policy is to work with local authorities in areas where it has landholdings to help create vibrant and sustainable communities. 11PL forms part of Eton College's diverse portfolio of property. As a registered charity, the College is obliged by charity law to maximise the use of its assets in the interests of fulfilling its charitable purpose and it is within this context that has led them to explore the development potential of this land. At present the College has made no decisions about its future intentions for the land and it recognises that any large-scale development would only be deliverable in the longer term working in partnership with the local planning authorities and other parties. It currently has no intention to either actively promote the land for short-medium term development or to submit a major planning application at this time. The College has submitted a representation on the Joint Core Strategy Focussed Amendments consultation as a 'reminder' to the local planning authorities that the land is available for consideration as a future development option.

SHLAA 2014

The local planning authorities first became aware of the site when it was submitted for consideration in the 2012 SHLAA. The site has been assessed through the

SHLAA, for a potential site yield of 5,000 homes, as not suitable, deliverable or developable¹.

Key concerns related to how a proposal of this scale might be achieved without unacceptable impacts on local services and the environment; and adverse impacts on landscape, including the setting of the National Park.

New Settlement Scoping Report 2012

In early 2012 the local planning authorities prepared a scoping report considering the potential for accommodating a new settlement in Lewes district². While this report did not include any detailed site assessments, it identified significant environmental and infrastructure constraints for a development of this magnitude. The Scoping Report therefore concluded that it would not be appropriate to take further consideration of a new settlement through the Core Strategy.

Meeting sub-regional housing needs

Work undertaken through duty to cooperate partnership working to identify the objectively assessed housing needs of Lewes district and the Sussex Coast Housing Market Area (HMA), together with subsequent work with other local planning authorities, concludes that it will not be possible to meet the identified level of need within the HMA based on the Core Strategy's spatial strategy for the scale and distribution of housing. In recognition of this and acknowledging the requirements of the NPPF regarding housing supply, the Coastal West Sussex and Greater Brighton Strategic Planning Board has signed a Memorandum of Understanding and agreed terms of reference as a framework for cooperation (setting out how the authorities will work together to seek a longer term solution to meeting the sub-regional housing needs). The Duty to Co-operate Housing Study identifies potential options that should be considered as a solution for meeting sub-regional housing needs. Such options include exploring the potential for a new settlement(s) within the sub-region to meet some, or all, of the identified housing delivery shortfall.

The Joint Core Strategy plan period is to 2030. It is recognised that, even if the 11PL land was selected as the preferred option for a new settlement today, the timeframe necessary to prepare for, secure and implement planning permission for a new settlement of 5,000 homes would be such that the full settlement would not be deliverable within the Joint Core Strategy plan period³.

¹ http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/plan_2014_SHLAA_Appendices_FINAL.pdf

² Assessing the potential for accommodating a new settlement within the Lewes District: Scoping Report
http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/plan_new_settlement_study.pdf

³ The College considers that, in the event that sub-regional work in the next few years identifies 11PL as appropriate for a new settlement, it is possible that some housing completions could be delivered before 2030.

Next steps

Whilst acknowledging the findings of the SHLAA and the New Settlement Scoping Study, and given the significant shortfall in housing need in the sub-region, the two local planning authorities and Eton College agree that the 11PL land should be included for consideration as an option for a longer term solution to meeting some of the sub-region's housing needs. This consideration will be through the formal mechanism of the Coastal West Sussex and Greater Brighton Strategic Planning Board. This is appropriate because the scale of development could exceed the housing needs of Lewes district alone (potentially serving to help meet wider sub-regional housing needs in the HMA) and a new settlement in this location would inevitably have cross-boundary implications, particularly with regards to infrastructure and landscape.

Without prejudice, the two local planning authorities agree to put the 11PL land forward as an option for consideration by the Strategic Planning Board, together with such other options as may be presented in the sub-region⁴. The local planning authorities will also provide such appropriate and relevant information to this process as they have available. However any detailed and technical information and reports that may be required to facilitate consideration of 11PL by the Strategic Planning Board would be the responsibility of Eton College to provide. The information provided by the College so far dates from 2000 and as such is unlikely to be fit for purpose, other than as background information. The College indicates that it would be willing to provide reasonable evidence when required.

Headline matters to be addressed are likely to (not exhaustively) include:

- Infrastructure and access to services
- Transport (private and public transport)
- Landscape and the setting of the National Park
- Impacts on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC.

Summary

Whilst the District Council and National Park Authority have made every attempt to meet the district's housing needs to 2030 in the Joint Core Strategy, it is agreed that it is appropriate to commence work seeking a strategic solution for meeting housing needs in the longer term. It would not be appropriate to consider such options on a single authority basis and therefore a sub-regional partnership approach needs to be taken. One such option that the two local planning authorities, in partnership with the Sussex Coast HMA authorities, are committed to exploring is a new settlement on and around land under the current ownership of Eton College.

⁴ . For clarity, while it will be for the Strategic Planning Board to consider the suitability of the Eton College option, as well as other housing options within the sub-region, it will be for the relevant Local Planning Authority(s) to make any formal decision as to whether such an option is taken forward in a development plan.

11PL Site Map

