

## **LEEDS SUBMISSION DRAFT SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN**

### **PRE-SUBMISSION CHANGES**

#### **REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF ABERFORD AND DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

This representation relates to the following three Pre-Submission Changes:-

- #440/After paragraph 3.6.8/MX2-39/Parlington
- #450/Outer North East Housing Allocations/MX2-39/Parlington Estate, Aberford/page 23
- #451/Outer North East Housing Allocations/MX2-39/Parlington/pages 24 and 25

Given that #450 and #451 simply duplicate site and site requirement changes as set out at #440, comments made in respect of #440 should be deemed to apply equally to #450 and #451 with regard to those matters.

##### **SUMMARY REITERATION OF PREVIOUS COMMENTS**

On 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Aberford and District Parish Council made representations to the Leeds Site Allocations Plan Revised Publication Draft (Section 3: Area Proposals: 6. Outer North East) in respect of the proposed allocation of Site MX2-39 Parlington Estate, Aberford.

Many of the objections lodged and comments made in respect of that proposed allocation have not been addressed by the above Pre-Submission Changes. As such, this representation reiterates all previous detailed objections/comments, in that they still relate either to the proposed new phase 1 allocation or the overall proposed settlement or indeed to both. It also reiterates previous comments in respect of legal compliance.

##### **PRE-SUBMISSION CHANGE #440**

###### **New Policy MX2-39 – Parlington**

This change allocates a reduced area of Parlington for the first phase of a new sustainable settlement (c 1,850 dwellings/114ha/5ha of general employment), involving the release of a smaller area of land from Green Belt within the plan period. A larger area of land, equal to that previously allocated for a new sustainable settlement in the revised Publication Draft consulted on last year, continues to be identified in the plan, providing for up to 5,000 homes total. This land is to remain in Green Belt pending a future plan review.

The immediate effect of this change, ie within the plan period, is a reduced loss of Green Belt, however with the very real prospect of the same ultimate loss, certainly beyond the end of the plan period (if not before), albeit delayed.

As such, it is considered that the allocation within the policy fails the following tests of soundness:-

## **Positively Prepared**

The allocation does not fit with Core Strategy Spatial Policy 10: Green Belt, in that:-

- Parlington is not a sustainable location;
- It has not been demonstrated that it is able to provide a full range of local facilities and services;
- It has not been demonstrated that it is more appropriate in meeting the spatial objectives of the plan than the alternatives within the Settlement Hierarchy, within the relevant Housing Market Characteristic Area.

As such, review of the Green Belt in this location should not have been considered in order to ensure that its general extent in the Parlington area is maintained.

Furthermore, in assessing the Parlington site in the Green Belt review, the criteria in respect of the NPPF Green Belt purpose of “assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment” has not been properly applied. Indeed, by Leeds City Council’s (LCC) own admission (ref LCC DPP Report 19/7/15) “Development of the site would create a significant incursion within the Green Belt and the site currently performs an important role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment”. Further, from the same report, “it would reduce the Green Belt gap between (the) settlements (of Aberford, Barwick-in-Elmet and Garforth)”. While it is accepted that the loss of Green Belt proposed in the plan is, in the short term, less than that considered in the DPP report, the incursion remains significant and will ultimately, ie beyond the plan period if not before, be the same.

It is noted that there appears to be no formally published Green Belt review/assessment of the Parlington site in support of this proposed Green Belt deletion.

## **Justified**

The council has not provided sufficient justification or evidence for the release of the Parlington site from Green Belt or to discount alternatives within the Settlement Hierarchy, within the relevant Housing Market Characteristic Area.

## **Consistent with National Policy**

The proposed release of the Parlington site from Green Belt is contrary to the NPPF Green Belt purpose of assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

In defining a new Green Belt boundary around the Parlington site, the Council has clearly not satisfied itself that this boundary will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period (NPPF para 85). On the contrary, the policy states that land for subsequent phases of the new sustainable settlement will remain in Green Belt unless and until a future review of the plan provides for its release. The identification of a new settlement boundary (Plan 41Aa) encompassing further areas of current Green Belt would seem to constitute a clear indication of future intended Green Belt release, necessitating a further alteration of the Green Belt boundary.

## **Site Requirements (MX2-39)**

This aspect of the change sets out a partially revised set of site requirements, seeking to reflect the reduced size of the Phase 1 site allocation.

The key revisions relate to highway access, local highway network, ecology and education.

The following changes are also noted:-

- The reference now is to a school rather than schools;
- The reference now is to a new centre, not town centre;
- The reference to new community greenspaces now no longer includes parks;
- The reduced provision of employment land;
- The deletion of the requirement for upfront delivery of infrastructure.

These changed requirements fail to demonstrate that a sustainable settlement with a full range of services and facilities can be delivered on the Parlington site and, moreover, that the site itself is suitable for receiving any such development, in relation to their clear lack of understanding in particular of the site's inherent heritage and ecological qualities.

As such, it is considered that the site requirements within the policy fail the following tests of soundness:-

### **Justified and Effective**

#### Highways Access to Phase 1

The requirement is for two points of access with the primary access from Aberford Road, but only the Aberford Road access point is shown on Plan 41a.

It is considered that this omission creates uncertainty re the servicing of Phase 1 and leaves open the unsustainable possibility of a wholly unsuitable second access point onto Bunker's Hill or Cattle Lane, with the insupportable traffic implications for Aberford village.

#### Local Highway Network

The changed requirement 'downgrades' the impact on the network by no longer referring to 'significant' impacts. The reference to Parlington being a 'major site' has also been deleted. This change in language cannot however hide the fact that c 1,850 new dwellings (plus school, new centre and 5ha of employment) constitutes a very large development which will generate a very large volume of new traffic on surrounding roads on a daily basis. As such, Parlington remains a major site which will indeed have significant highways impacts, but for which there is still no demonstration of whether and how those impacts could be addressed.

#### Ecology

The changed requirement now includes text previously included under the 'conservation area' heading (in relation to trees, woodland and site boundaries). It now additionally includes reference to biodiversity buffers to be provided along the boundaries of the site.

The concern here is that while the requirements seem clear on measures that will need to be taken in respect of the site's boundaries, there is nothing to demonstrate that they are based on any ecological assessment and more importantly nothing to demonstrate that the development itself is suitable in ecological terms – as the plan states, an ecological assessment is still itself a requirement. Given that two regionally important wildlife sites, in Parlington Hollins and Barwick Bank, adjoin the Phase 1 site, this would seem to be a fundamental need in determining the suitability or not of the site for development.

## Education Provision

The schools requirement is less specific for the reduced Phase 1 site than for the originally proposed larger site. This leaves uncertainty as to the actual educational facility (primary or secondary?) to be delivered as part of the development and again fails to demonstrate the deliverability of a sustainable scheme with appropriate, clearly identified facilities.

## Heritage

The changed requirements again include reference to Listed Buildings and the Aberford Conservation Area, with these references essentially unchanged.

The serious concern here is that despite previous Historic England representations and evidence in the Council's own Heritage Background Paper, there remains a clear failure to appreciate and understand that it is the holistic value of the Parlington Estate which is fundamentally important here, as the context for the individual heritage assets which it contains, rather than just the individual assets themselves.

Historic England have previously stated that:-

"This (designed) landscape (associated with the former Parlington Hall), which itself is a non-designated heritage asset, provides a setting and context for a large number of designated and other non-designated assets associated with the Parlington Estate."

The Council's Heritage Background Paper states that:-

"The areas around the Triumphal Arch, former Parlington Deer Park and between the site and Aberford and the setting of Park House Farm are particularly sensitive and rely upon the high landscape character of the estate for a large part of their significance and understanding."

As such, it is considered that on this ground alone, the allocation of the Phase 1 site has not been justified and is proposed for release for development despite the strong heritage evidence that opposes such release. The site is clearly not suitable for development on heritage grounds.

Turning to the site requirements themselves, and again drawing on the Council's Heritage Background Paper, should the site ultimately be confirmed for development, an additional requirement must be inserted stating that a thorough assessment of the landscape, archaeological and historic significance of the estate be undertaken as part of the master planning of the site in order to ensure that harm is limited as far as possible. Both the assessment and detailed heritage requirements should be closely informed by the work on site requirements undertaken in the Heritage Background Paper (ref p136/7).

It should also be noted that four sites identified as 'Potential Non-Statutory Heritage Assets' in the emerging Aberford Neighbourhood Plan, and currently subject to detailed assessment, fall within the Phase 1 boundary (Gamekeepers Lodge/Cottage; Home Farm, Old Staith Cottage, Wakefield Lodge) with further such sites within the wider new settlement boundary. These serve to add additional weight to the argument re the unsuitability of the Parlington site for development and the lack of justification/evidence provided in respect of its release.

### New Centre

The site requirements fail to demonstrate what facilities/services the new centre will provide and how/where such a centre will be provided, relative to the wider new settlement proposal, such that in time it could serve the whole rather than just the Phase 1 settlement. Such integration and holistic thinking would be integral to the sustainability and success of any new settlement in the long term.

### New Community Greenspaces

The site requirements fail to demonstrate what/how much new community greenspace will be provided as part of any Phase 1 development or to guide the location of any such spaces relative to the wider new settlement proposal. Any such spaces should be located relative to an overall landscape/open space framework for the wider settlement rather than simply for the benefit of the Phase 1 community/development if a sustainable settlement is to be delivered.

### Employment Land

Aside from the simple reference to 5ha of employment land, no more detailed site requirements are provided in respect of that land. As such, the plan fails to demonstrate how employment is to be delivered as part of a sustainable settlement.

The reference to employment land being “anticipated” casts further uncertainty as to whether such land will in fact ultimately be provided. Any such provision should be a firm requirement of development, together with an indication of where such provision will be provided, relative to Phase 1 site access and the development of any wider Parlington New Settlement.

### Upfront Delivery of Infrastructure

The deletion of the requirement for upfront delivery of infrastructure, in the words of the Revised Publication Draft, in order to “make the development a sustainable location for development from day one” clearly lessens the chances of the Phase 1 development achieving that sustainability aim.

## **Consistent with National Policy**

### Sustainable Development

The proposed delivery of the Phase 1 development at Parlington, as set out in the Site Requirements, will not enable the delivery of a sustainable development in accordance with NPPF ‘Achieving sustainable development’ policies.

The detailed comments made under the ‘Justified and Effective’ heading above collectively demonstrate that on the one hand the development would be detrimental to the environmental dimension of sustainable development (in terms of harm to heritage and ecology), while on the other hand failing to show how the economic (eg jobs, infrastructure) and social (eg local services) dimensions will be delivered. Taken together these comments make it clear that the plan fails to demonstrate the joint and simultaneous delivery of economic, social and environmental gains required by the NPPF (para 8), failing in turn to achieve a sustainable development solution.

NPPF paragraph 9 states that “pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life”, including:-

- Making it easier for jobs to be created
- Moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature

- Improving the conditions in which people travel

The Parlington Phase 1 development has not demonstrated that it is in accord with this policy, proposing as it does a development which does not currently firmly require employment land, is likely to achieve net losses of biodiversity and is very likely to worsen local travel conditions for all.

### Heritage

The proposed delivery of the Phase 1 development at Parlington, as set out in the Site Requirements, is not in accordance with NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' policies.

The detailed comments made under the 'Justified and Effective' heading above, in respect of heritage matters, argue strongly that given its clear holistic heritage value the site is not suitable for development and that its release has not been properly justified or evidenced.

NPPF paragraph 126 states that local planning authorities, in setting out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their Local Plans, should "recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance". Furthermore, in so doing, they should take into account:-

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

In releasing the Parlington site, the plan takes no account of its holistic heritage value and in so doing is contrary to the above stated NPPF policies, in that the release for development:-

- will not sustain or enhance the estate as a heritage asset;
- will not bring the wider benefits by failing to conserve the totality of the heritage environment;
- will destroy the character of Parlington to which its history and heritage are vital.

### **PRE-SUBMISSION CHANGES #451**

See 'Pre-Submission Changes #440' above in relation to 'Site Requirements (MX2-39)'.

### **PRE-SUBMISSION CHANGE #450**

See 'Pre-Submission Changes #440' above in relation to 'New Policy MX2-39 – Parlington'.