

POLICY H 1 (23)

I refer to my submission to the Regulation 19 document - Comment ID R1922; Response date 12/03/16 16:39. I note that I referred to Housing policy site H1(35) . This is incorrect and I apologise for my error. Reference should have been to site H1(23).

I continue to have concern with the intended development of this site.

Firstly I query as to whether this site is needed for any development, but appreciate that Maidstone currently has to provide a certain number of houses, and only if national government think differently, and require Maidstone's allocation to be altered, will that change. I would query a national strategy that requires more housing in the south following Brexit, but appreciate that national concerns are probably beyond the Inspector's remit. If I am mistaken then the nature of this site on what is currently countryside should be taken into account, bearing in mind its rural nature, and that the land is of agricultural grade 2. In addition the rural nature of Barming is being degraded by the developments being built and also for which planning permission has been granted along Hermitage Lane and at the back of nearby roads in Barming.

The Regulation 19 document has policy SP1.2 which appears to be all there is as to development policy in what Maidstone now regards as the urban area at a site like this. This requires development to ensure that *"Maidstone will continue to be a good place to live and work. This will be achieved by:*

- i. Allocating sites at the edge of the town for housing and business development;*
- ii. The development and redevelopment or infilling of appropriate urban sites in a way that contributes positively to the locality's distinctive character*
- iii. Retaining well located business areas;*
- iv. Maintaining the network of district and local centres, supporting enhancements to these centres in accordance with the overall hierarchy of centres;*
- v. Retaining the town's green spaces and ensuring that development positively contributes to the setting, accessibility, biodiversity and amenity value of these areas as well as the River Medway and the River Len; and*
- vi. Supporting development that improves the social, environmental and employment well-being of those living in identified areas of deprivation."*

There appears to be use of a standardised space per housing plot which is used across Housing Sites in Maidstone. At this site 35 houses is cramming, and SP1 2 ii and v are not being properly applied. Existing properties on the west side of North Street Barming have larger than average plots and to place the number of plots that are now required will only be achieved with a double row and with properties that are smaller and do not complement what already exists here, and will not contribute positively to the locality's distinctive character on the west side of North Street. The effect is over urbanisation. There has been one recent planning application - 14/506419/FULL - which was refused - and where the planning committee refusing required a hedge line bordering North Street to be retained. This has led to the Regulation 19 document moving the edge of the urban area 5 metres back into the field behind the site. The developer has realised the difficulties that they are under and its new application - 16/505427/FULL - actually pushes back the area for development by a further 5 metres. A total of 10 metres creep. This all shows that 35 housing plots is not achievable on this site.

There are also three listed building affected by this site and in refusing 14/506419/FULL the planning committee centred on one of these buildings, not needing to consider the others. However having three listed buildings and a need to accommodate their needs adds to the number of properties proposed being unsustainable. Again a breach of what Maidstone proposes as its own policy.

Being on the edge of countryside there is a query as to how much by way of green space there should be. Consideration needs to be given to SP1 2 v. The site is currently a green space - there is no definition of what a green space is or is not -and therefore needs to be maintained. Therefore there should be plenty of open space and more than 0.77 ha.

Further given Maidstone's own officer's initial view in 2012 that "*In conclusion, although this site is open and in itself would be developable, its location in a semi-rural setting with limited access means that if it were allocated, the existing character of the area would be negatively affected. Mitigation measures to improve access to the site would in themselves urbanise the character of this location beyond an acceptable level. Heath Road is an inappropriate route to access the site, however, in reality it would be substantially used. The site is therefore not allocated.*" There should be no development on this site.