

Maidstone Borough Local Plan Examination

Session 13B Tuesday 29th November 2016
14:00 – 17:00 regarding 'Alternative Sites'

Representation R19108: Grigg Lane, Ringles Nursery, Headcorn

By

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Replies to questions set by the Local Plan Inspector are as follows:

Issue (i) – whether the alternative site would be suitable, sustainable and deliverable.

Q 13.20 Does the site have any relevant planning history?

No known recent history.

Q 13.21 What's the site's policy status in the submitted Local Plan?

Local Landscape Area, as is all the countryside around Headcorn including the proposed residential allocations.

Q 13.22 What is the site's policy status in any made or emerging Neighbourhood Plan?

Headcorn Parish Council have produced the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan and this was subject to a public hearing on the 18th October 2016. The examiner's report should be available by the end of November 2016 or early December 2016.

The Plan does not show specific allocations for housing and therefore the land is open countryside.

Q 13.23 Is the site greenfield or previously developed (brownfield) land according to the definition in the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework?

The built up, developed area is brownfield land. Approximately 6.7 hectares (16.58 acres).

Q 13.24 What previous consideration by the Council has been given to the site's development (e.g. inclusion in a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHEDDLAA) and does the Representor have any comments on its conclusions?

Surprisingly, the Council rejected the site for redevelopment notwithstanding it is predominantly a brownfield site, and as described by MBC in its review of the site 'relatively close to the village centre' (**Appendix 1**). The site is now in conformity with emerging policy DM4 which looks at such sites adjacent to Rural Service Centres. In comparison to other sites released in Headcorn, this is a good sustainable opportunity.

Q 13.25 What is the site area and has a plan been submitted which identifies the site?

The site area is 15.7 ha but the area suitable for redevelopment is 6.7 ha. See **Appendix 2**.

Q 13.26 What type, and amount of development could be expected and at what density?

Residential inclusive of a small element of B1 use and a possible small coach park. 150-200 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare or less.

Q 13.27 When could development be delivered and at what rate?

Subject to planning clearance, the site is now available in the short term and could be available in 2018. The site could yield, inclusive of affordable housing for block Housing Association, something in the region of 150-200 dwellings. These could be released at approximately 40 dwellings per annum.

Q 13.28 What evidence is there of the viability of the proposed development?

It is anticipated that there are no known abnormal costs associated with the development of this site.

Q 13.30 Has the site been subject of sustainability appraisal and does the Representor have any comments on its conclusions?

No specific sustainability appraisal has been carried out by the company. However, the village has been defined as a Rural Service Centre where housing growth can be accommodated and by definition is a sustainable location. The land availability to the west has been allocated for housing as has the bulk of the land between Grigg Lane and Lenham Rod.

Q 13.31 What constraints are there on the site's development and how could any adverse impact be investigated?

The land suitable for redevelopment has no overwhelming constraint. The open land adjacent to the river is subject to flooding.

APPENDIX 1

| 1. SITE INFORMATION | |
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| Reference Number | MX-10 |
| Site name/address | Ringles Nursery, Grigg Lane, Headcorn |
| Landowner | Douglas Hodson, Ringles Ltd, Ringles Nursery |
| Agent | N/A |
| Greenfield/PDL | PDL and agricultural |
| Proposed uses (sqm) | Housing, offices, live work units, light industry - no sqm specified. |
| Site area (ha) | c15.8 |
| Is the site urban, adjacent to urban, rural settlement or rural | Rural - adjacent to RSC |
| Site origin (e.g. Call for Sites) | Call for sites |

| 2. SITE ASSESSMENT/SUITABILITY | |
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| Site description (including topography and surrounding land uses) | <p>The site comprises an existing glass house complex located on 15.8ha on the south side of Grigg Lane. The site is located some 230m NE of the boundary of the settlement of Headcorn as defined in the MBWLP 2000.</p> <p>There are three accesses onto Grigg Lane that serve the site.</p> <p>It is flat land and the existing glasshouses closest to Grigg Lane are visible from Lenham Road to the north through gaps in the existing trees and hedgerows. They are also visible from Smarden Road again through gaps in existing vegetation and the more recent development at Locks Yard.</p> <p>In addition to the glasshouses are a number of areas of polytunnels (a vineyard having been removed from the site some years ago). There are two boiler houses and a number of associated chimneys and flues on the site together with overhead heating pipes serving the glasshouses.</p> <p>To the south of the site is a complex of mobile homes used to accommodate workers at the site (screened by conifers) and to the south of this an extensive irrigation reservoir.</p> <p>The site is now largely used for the commercial growing of raspberries and rhubarb (both the glass houses and polytunnels).</p> <p>To the north of the site close to Grigg Lane some former nursery buildings are now used as offices by separate companies (eg an estate agent and a financial consultant)</p> <p>It is clear from a visit to the site that the condition of some of the glass houses is deteriorating. The owner advises that some of the glass houses are now coming to the end of their useful life and are less efficient to use and heat and harder to maintain than more modern equivalents on site.</p> <p>There are three dwellings that front Grigg Lane that were/are still occupied by persons connected with the nursery.</p> |

SHEDLAA Appendix B: Employment and mixed use site assessments

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| Current use | Commercial nursery and offices |
| Adjacent uses | Residential, agriculture and football ground |
| Planning and other designations (e.g. AONB, MGB) | Low Weald SLA (MBWLP 2000 ENV34) |
| Planning history | <p>11/0317 - An application for a certificate of lawfulness to consider whether or not the proposal of replacing glass panels to the southern roof slope of 1no. greenhouse with photovoltaic panels is lawful as described in 11/0317 was granted on 27/4/2011.</p> <p>08/1007 - Certificate of lawful development for an existing use being the use as a dwelling house which began more than four years before the date of this application was refused on 22/9/2008.</p> <p>06/0423 - Construction of portable Spanish type polythene tunnels – 2/5/2006.</p> <p>90/0499 - Erection of new glasshouses to replace existing was granted on 15/5/1990.</p> <p>78/1433 - Erection of new glasshouses to replace existing was granted on 15/5/1990.</p> <p>76/1395 - Irrigation reservoir, extraction from River Sherway and ancillary pumping and piping equipment as amended by the landscaping proposals – 26/1/1977</p> |
| Has site previously been considered in Local Plan Inquiry, if so, record Inspectors recommendation | No |
| Landscape/townscape impact – including reference to Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (inc. long distance views); cumulative landscape impact; existing screening | <p>The site is located within the Beult Valley area and partially in the Headcorn pasturelands area of the Landscape Character Assessment 2012.</p> <p>Existing topography in wider area is relatively flat. The existing large greenhouses can be seen from Smarden Road (to S) and Lenham Road (to N) and from the more recent development at Locks Yard and Sharps Field/Downs Close (to SW).</p> <p>They are tall alien structures in the landscape.</p> <p>Close to the site along Grigg Lane the taller buildings on the site are very visible and intrusive.</p> <p>Key characteristics of the Beult Valley area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low lying broad shallow valley of the meandering River Beult and Hammer Stream within the Low Weald • Many ponds and watercourses with important ecological interest • Species rich native hedgerow field boundaries with mature oak trees as imposing hedgerow trees and sometimes within fields where boundaries have been removed • Mixed agriculture with large fields supporting arable |

SHEDLAA Appendix B: Employment and mixed use site assessments

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| | <p>cultivation and small riverside fields with pasture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparsely scattered small woodlands • Historic north-south crossing points with ragstone bridges over the River Beult <p>The condition assessment is <i>Moderate</i> and the sensitivity assessment <i>High</i>.</p> <p>The Guidelines for this area are to Conserve and Restore</p> <p>Key characteristics of the Headcorn Pasturelands area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald • Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge • Drainage ditches running southwards towards the River Beult • Enclosed pasture • Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets • Dominance of mature oaks within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees <p>The condition assessment is <i>Good</i> and the sensitivity assessment <i>High</i>.</p> <p>The Guidelines for this area are to Conserve.</p> <p>.</p> |
| <p>Ecological impacts (inc. SSSI and local wildlife sites within or adjacent to site)</p> | <p>Reservoir at the south of the site abuts the River Sherway and adjoining ponds LWS.</p> <p>A Local Wildlife Site is adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. The majority of the site is poly tunnels, hard standing and buildings. However the southern section of the site is a large reservoir and is surrounded by rough grassland and patches of scrub, mature trees border the western and eastern sections of the site. A hedgerow separates the North and the South sections of the site. The greatest potential for protected/notable species to be present are in the southern section of the site including GCN, reptiles and bats.</p> <p>Ecology Constraint Level 2 - potential for moderate ecological impacts.</p> |
| <p>Trees (inc. TPO, ancient woodland within and adjacent to site)</p> | <p>Tree protection status: Whilst there is currently no TPO covering the site there appear to be some significant individual trees and groups of trees on field boundaries.</p> <p>Ancient woodlands (<i>from 'a revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Maidstone borough, August 2012'</i>) There are no designated Ancient Woodlands.</p> <p>Hedgerow status: There may be 'important' hedgerows on some field boundaries.</p> |
| <p>Agricultural land quality</p> | <p>The site is Grade 3 agricultural land.</p> |

SHEDLAA Appendix B: Employment and mixed use site assessments

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| Heritage impacts (Listed building, conservation area) | None. |
| Archaeology (SAM etc.) | No known archaeology. Scale 4 - Low level archaeology anticipated which could be dealt with through suitable conditions on a planning approval. |
| PROW (within or near site) | None |
| <p>Access/Highways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site access • Impact on wider highway network • Access to strategic/main highway network • Availability of public transport, cycling, walking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site accessed from Grigg Lane. • The site has been promoted for Housing, B1a and B1c uses. • The site is considered suitable for limited housing and B1 class development in view of the restricted nature of Grigg Lane and Oak Lane and its relatively unsustainable location. It enjoys good access to the A274 primary route via Grigg Lane and Oak Lane, which have a good crash record; however forward visibility is poor in places, the road passes close to residential properties and it is not wide enough for two large vehicles to pass. Consequently, the site is not considered useful for uses involving the generation of significant volumes of HGV traffic. Consideration should be given to extending the footway and the 30mph speed limit on Grigg Lane to the site access. • Many of the services within Headcorn village are within walking and/or cycling distance of the site. The A274 is served by Bus Route 12, which provides an hourly service to Maidstone and Tenterden on weekdays, and Headcorn Station, is served by half-hourly train services to Ashford, Staplehurst, Paddock Wood, Tonbridge and London Charing Cross. <p>Grigg Lane connects to the A274 some 650m to the south west via Oak Lane.</p> <p>It is a road that serves a number of dwellings and a soon to be constructed new Doctors surgery. Grigg Lane has footpaths along some of its length and these are currently being extended to the site of the doctors surgery and a local needs housing development.</p> <p>Headcorn Football Club is located immediately to the NE of the proposed site. There are further farmsteads and dwellings further to the NE along Grigg Lane.</p> <p>Grigg Lane is wide enough to accommodate smaller lorries/vans to the site.</p> |
| Impacts on residential amenity (including access to open space) or other incompatible uses | There are three dwellings fronting Grigg Lane these are thought to be occupied in connection with the Nursery. |
| Availability of Utilities infrastructure – e.g. (water/gas/electricity) | Water and electricity and probably gas are available |
| Access to labour supply and distances to services for | Site is located some 230m NE of the edge of the defined boundary of Headcorn. |

SHEDLAA Appendix B: Employment and mixed use site assessments

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| workforce such as shops/bus stops (include GP/schools if proposal is for mixed use residential) | <p>It is some 780m (as the crow flies) from Headcorn Station. It is some 870m as crow flies from the edge of the village centre as defined by policy R10 of the MBWLP.</p> <p>950m or so as the crow flies to the primary school but will only be some 110m from the doctors' surgery when this is completed in due course.</p> <p>As far as new surgery there will be footpath access to village centre and station. This will be lit to this point as well. Remaining section of Grigg Lane has no footpath and is unlit.</p> |
| Air quality/noise | Not in AQMA or hotspot. |
| Land contamination | TBC |
| Flood Risk (zone/drainage) | <p>The majority of the buildings and land to the south of the buildings falls within Flood Zone 3.</p> <p>Surface runoff from all sites should be managed using sustainable drainage techniques, with discharge restricted to no more than runoff from the existing site following the critical rainfall events for a range of return periods, up to an including the 100yr event. An allowance for climate change should also be included the drainage design.</p> <p>Part is within Flood Zone 3. Development within this site should be restricted to areas within Flood Zone 1.</p> |
| Will the sequential test apply to the proposed use? | Yes – for offices |
| Suitability conclusion | Yes – for small scale employment use. |

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| 3. AVAILABILITY | |
| <p>Is the whole site (including access) available for the proposed use: e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No existing uses • Willing landowner • Willing developer • Existing tenancy or lease agreement | <p>Yes under one ownership</p> <p>On site the owner advised that he would consider a partial redevelopment of some of the older/smaller glasshouses which would give him capital to replace the larger older and less efficient glass houses on the remainder of the site.</p> |
| Availability conclusion | Available |

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| 4. ACHIEVABILITY | |
| identification of any abnormal costs or other constraints to development which would prevent or delay this site being delivered | Clearance costs of existing glass houses and associated infrastructure (pipes etc.). |
| Market attractiveness (of proposed uses, site and location) | There is some small scale commercial uses in the existing buildings on site. |
| Achievability conclusion | Potentially achievable |

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| Timing (following assessment – when could the site be delivered?) | |
| now – 2016 | |
| 2017 – 2021 | Given the need to clear and potentially decontaminate areas of existing glasshouses and other industrial/commercial buildings on the site, development is unlikely to commence prior to late 2016/early 2017 |
| 2022 – 2026 | |
| 2027- 2031 | |

5. CONCLUSIONS

There is very limited scope for development, and only on part of this site. Possibly small-scale employment/live work units. There has been some small-scale diversification on the site already which has had no impact on amenities of the area.

Large scale units would not be acceptable in terms of traffic generation/type of vehicles on Grigg Lane.

Purely residential development would not be acceptable due to the flood zoning and also the location of the site relative to the existing settlement. Whilst site is relatively close to village centre (10-15 mins walk from the railway station and 20 mins from the village centre itself), the location would probably mean that private cars would be used. On this basis the site is relatively unsustainable.

REJECT

Approximate yield: 0

APPENDIX 2

PLAN 1 - LAND AT
RINGLES NURSERY,
CRIGG LANE, HEADCORN

