

Written Statement – Session 10A – Yalding Parish Council

1. Draft Policies SP2, SP3, GT1, EMP1, DM1, DM5, DM7, DM8, DM10, DM13, DM16, DM20, DM28, DM29 and DM40 – we offer no further representations on these policies in this session and we have delegated any such representations to the Co-ordinating Team within other sessions. We also concur with Teston Parish’s comments on the Draft DM Policies.
2. We offer outline answers to the Inspector’s published questions.
3. We then offer the background that informs our views.

Inspector’s Questions

4. Numbering is the Inspector’s.

Question	Our Comment
<p>Qn10.1 With what strategic local plan policies for housing and employment provision would a neighbourhood plan for Yalding need to generally conform?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An addition to policy SP11.1 should be: <i>when it is a site agreed within a Neighbourhood Plan.</i> Sites can continue to come forward through the Neighbourhood Planning process that may not have been considered at Local Plan level. 2. Policy SP16 should be removed from the Local Plan. 3. Policy SP17 should also contain an additional section in relation to Neighbourhood Plans. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yalding’s Neighbourhood Plan seeks to encompass the entire Parish of both Yalding and Laddingford villages and their environs. b. Under the Spatial Policies currently contained in the Local Plan, Yalding Parish is divided between SP11, SP16 and SP17. c. Under a revised SP17, Yalding Parish could provide its share of houses in smaller densities in sympathy with the existing countryside and with less impact on highways and flooding.
<p>Qn10.2 Would MBC respond to the specific objections to the proposed H1(67) allocation and clarify where on Vicarage Road the footway is to be extended?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Vicarage Road Residents’ Group will offer direct objections to the allocation. 2. In discussions with the developer at the Public Consultation Event held on 10 October 2016, there appears to be no proposal to extend the footway. We were advised that a footway from within the proposed site to Vicarage Road would terminate opposite the footway on the other side of the carriageway to allow pedestrians to cross over and continue down Vicarage Road to the High Street on that footway.

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<p>Qn10.3 Having regard to national policy, would the residual traffic impacts of the H1(67) development be 'severe' after mitigation?</p>	<p>We are unaware of any traffic mitigation that will improve traffic movements through Yalding village, which can be severe at peak times. The impact of H1(67) will exacerbate this congestion.</p>
<p>Qn10.4 Is there scope to improve Hampstead Lane in association with new development and should that be a policy criterion?</p>	<p>We do not believe there is any scope to improve Hampstead Lane and to create a new road to the bypass would result in the need for a new crossing over the railway.</p>
<p>Qn10.5 Would MBC please provide an update on progress on the flood risk issue?</p>	<p>We have not been able to ascertain whether JBA have updated the FRA and are therefore unable to offer any comment.</p>
<p>Qn10.6 Would the Syngenta allocation be consistent with national policy for flood risk in the National Planning Policy Framework?</p>	<p>No Comment</p>
<p>Qn10.7 Should the FRA conclude that suitable flood risk mitigation is not available, what would be the implications for:</p> <p>a) The viability and deliverability of redevelopment on the Syngenta site?</p> <p>b) The delivery of housing to meet strategic Local Plan targets?</p>	<p>a) Without suitable flood risk mitigation, redevelopment on the Syngenta site is unviable.</p> <p>b) No comment</p>
<p>Qns10.8 and 10.9</p>	<p>We concur with Teston Parish's comments and will not repeat.</p>

5. Below we summarise the background to our views.

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6. SP16 – YALDING AS A LARGER VILLAGE

6.1. Consultation with Maidstone Borough Council (MBC)

In 2011, consultation began in respect of Rural Service Centres (RSC); at no time was Yalding included in this consultation as an RSC. In November 2014, MBC announced, without any consultation whatsoever, that Yalding would now qualify as a RSC as the former Syngenta site was within its hinterland.

Following a one-hour meeting with MBC planning officers, they agreed to remove the RSC status but insisted instead that we met the criteria for a Larger Village. No further dialogue was entered into despite our protests and calls for sites were sent out on the basis that Yalding would be a Larger Village and was able to sustain development.

6.2. Flooding

As the Inspector is probably already aware, Yalding village is situated at the confluence of the Rivers Medway, Beult and Teise and a large part of the village is prone to serious flooding of homes and businesses. The frequency and spread of flooding events is increasing, the last serious flood in 2013 following on from that of 2000.

In November 2014, the Deputy Prime Minister visited Yalding to announce a £17m grant from Central Government, being 50% of the cost to build flood storage areas (FSAs) on the Rivers Beult and Teise and to increase the flood storage on the River Medway. This would have provided flood protection for all but about ten built homes.

The Environment Agency (EA) commissioned a series of river modelling and feasibility studies on the Beult and Teise to ascertain where these storage areas should be built to provide the maximum protection to surrounding villages; the work was completed in Summer 2016. The EA also looked at erecting flood protection walls around Yalding village itself.

In August 2016, the EA issued the devastating news to local residents that the modelling had shown that neither the FSAs nor the Yalding walls were either viable or feasible. This has been a huge disappointment to residents, including our Chairman who had some two to three feet of water standing in her home over Christmas 2013. It appears the only option available to mitigate flooding of properties is individual property resilience measures, which will not be effective on any of the many older properties in the village.

The knock-on effect of flooding to non-flooded properties is the lack of ability to travel freely through the area with the roads in Yalding and neighbouring villages being under water. During a flood, the doctors' surgery, the post office and the village shop are all cut off by flood water, the shop and post office also being flooded.

Yalding's Emergency Flood Plan and database covers the whole Parish, including Laddingford, which also has its main road flooded.

6.3. Traffic

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Yalding village is divided by the River Beult, which is spanned by a single track bridge, the longest medieval bridge in Kent known as Town Bridge. There is a narrow cobbled footway on one side. To the south of the bridge is the surgery, pre-school, post office, the village hall and shop and to the north the school, the library, the church and the youth centre. The bridge carries much foot traffic as well as vehicles.

The junction improvements proposed in the local plan will have no benefit for Yalding where the traffic crossing the bridge, particularly at rush-hour, brings the whole village to a standstill; it can take up to 20 minutes to cross. This will be exacerbated with the proposed developments in Marden, Coxheath and other areas to the south of Maidstone as traffic tries to avoid the town centre and rat-runs through Yalding as well as traffic looking to avoid the Wateringbury junction on the A26, which is outside the scope of this plan.

The areas of Yalding High Street and Benover and Lees Road, giving access onto the bridge, have little or no off street parking exacerbating the congestion. Introduction of traffic lights to the bridge has been dismissed by KCC as not being viable.

The bus company, Nu-Venture, has recently been in touch with regard to the congestion on Town Bridge as this is resulting in the buses running late in the morning peak and children arriving at school late.

6.4. Public Transport

We are told at 5.63 of the local plan that the village (Yalding) is served by a nearby train station....” and “Yalding also has sustainable connections to nearby Paddock Wood.....”. This connection cannot be classed as sustainable when the station is 1.5 miles from the village and, without a car or bicycle, the only access is on foot along unlit footways and, in part, across a very busy, single track, medieval road-bridge with no footway or lighting.

Reference is also made to local bus services which are non-existent after 6pm or at all on a Sunday or bank holiday.

6.5. Yalding Parish

Yalding Parish comprises the villages of Laddingford and Yalding and their respective catchment areas. There is a footway between the two villages. Yalding is a much larger area than Laddingford and although Laddingford has its own primary school and pub, residents look to Yalding for all other services.

The Parish operates as a whole rather than as two separate villages coming together for Parish events, football and cricket, choir, Scouts, WI and many other social and fund raising activities.

6.6. Conclusions to this Section

6.6.1. We believe reference to Yalding should be Parish-Wide and the local plan should not endeavour to divide what is a vibrant community that the Parish has built and maintains itself.

6.6.2. Boxes have been ticked regarding services but nowhere is the quality of these services quantified.

6.6.3. Flooding has had a devastating effect on all parts of the Parish and continues to do so. Only last week, the EA held a series of exhibitions in the

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church to explain to local residents why the expected flood defences could not be built and what the alternative mitigation measures might be.

6.6.4. Traffic in the centre of Yalding village has come to a saturation point at peak times and according to MBC's Head of Planning, Town Bridge is the most serious concern when looking at new development.

6.6.5. The serious congestion at Town Bridge could cause Yalding station to become unviable. Many people from north of Yalding village now use Watlington Station rather than have to cross the bridge, sometimes twice in one journey.

6.6.6. Yalding Village should not be designated as a Larger Village.

7. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT H1(67) VICARAGE ROAD

7.1. We will not repeat many of the comments from the Vicarage Road Residents Group but support their concerns and objections.

7.2. Traffic is the greatest objection to this development, both the impact on Vicarage Road itself but also on Town Bridge.

7.3. It is interesting to note that, during a conversation with the developers at the Consultation Event, a comment was made that they could not believe the results of the traffic survey and the speeds of the traffic along Vicarage Road (in excess of the 30 mph regulation) past the school and the youth centre.

7.4. The site impinges onto the openness of the Kintons, the Parish's sports field.

7.5. We object to the density proposed on this site.

8. YALDING PARISH-WIDE DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NHP) – INITIAL REPORT

8.1. We did not embark on a NHP at the start of the Local Plan process as, at that time, Yalding village was not designated as a Larger Village. We decided, along with other parishes, to wait to see what benefits a local plan could bring to a parish, bearing in mind the cost of producing a plan (circa £30k for a full plan).

8.2. We did not embark on a NHP to try to stop the planning process nor to divert development away from the Parish; we embarked on the NHP early this year because we are in need and this was a good way of bringing everyone together to remedy that need, including improved school facilities, Yalding, improve school catchment, Laddingford, new village hall, new sports pavilion, enlarged sports playing area, better public transport facilities, improved local shop, mitigation of traffic on Town Bridge and rat-running through the Parish, more out-of-school activities, activities for the young working residents, accommodation for both the young and the elderly.

8.3. Our final public engagement evening included residents from both villages, children of primary school age (who, not only designed a very well equipped community centre, but also had room for a KFC in the garden of the most prestigious house in the High Street), Yalding Scouts and representatives of other local groups.

8.4. It became clear that, as a Parish, we could achieve all of this by working together to produce a NHP.

8.5. It became clear that MBC's requirement of Large Village Status for Yalding to achieve 65 new homes on an urban style "housing estate" was unnecessary.

8.5.1. It became clear that we, as a Parish, could provide those 65 homes across the Parish, in small numbers at sites on Kenward Road, Claygate Road, Blundon Lane and a greatly reduced number at H1 (67).

8.5.2. We had identified further sites, which have now been dismissed due to the EA's announcement that FSAs on the Rivers Beult and Teise will not be going ahead.

9. RMX1 (4) – FORMER SYNGENTA WORKS, YALDING

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Sections 1 & 3 – 8,600m² Employment Floorspace and 200 Dwellings - Whilst it is accepted that this is a brownfield site, it is dangerous at this time to determine how much, how many and where any development might be sited without a full Flood Risk Assessment having been undertaken.

Section 7 - Access:

- a. Hampstead Lane from the junction of the B2015 to the site is totally unacceptable for use by HGVs due to its width and sharp bends. Before being returned to an extensive B1/B2 use, proposals to improve the access must be submitted. We believe this can only be achieved with a new access road to the site but this would involve a further crossing over the railway.
- b. It must be noted that a 7.5 ton weight restriction applies to Yalding and Laddingford villages and this site lies outside of the restriction so there should be no through traffic of vehicles over this weight.

Section 9 - Flooding & Water Quality - It is essential that the comments and advice of the Environment Agency are adhered to at all times.

Section 10 - Adequate Site Drainage - This is essential.

Section 11 - Land Contamination - The site was remediated to a depth of 1 metre. No development shall be permitted that disturbs the underlying land without a further investigation and possible further remediation. It is essential that the comments and advice of the Environment Agency are adhered to at all times.

The site has been vacant for some 10 years and is a complete eyesore. We urge MBC to ascertain what, if any, development can take place here with all urgency to allow the site to be put to another use if necessary.

We believe the site should be excluded from the local plan.