

Langley Parish Council

A representation dated 26 June 2016 has been received from Langley Parish Council and the main summary has been presented on the 28th June Urgent Update.

It has been noted that the Parish Council raise the issue that 'best most versatile land' has not been addressed in the report as follows:

- Development involves the loss of 7.9 hectares of land which is classified as best and most versatile contrary to para 112 of the NPPF.
- No evidence that the application has sought to avoid the loss of higher quality land.
- No mention is made of the loss of Grade I agricultural land in the Officers Report to Committee.

Officer Response

The Council has undertaken strategic housing and economic development land availability assessments to assess the boroughs capacity for delivering its targets. The assessments have considered the availability and suitability of land and site constraints. The studies show that the local housing target can be met from within the existing built up area and on sites with the least constraints at the edge of Maidstone and at identified strategic locations.

The housing allocation sites set out in Policy SP3 of the draft MBLP are located on the Maidstone urban edge in the most sustainable location in the settlement hierarchy which is a strategic location for housing growth with supporting infrastructure. At this location, the intention is to limit the extension of development further into the countryside to ensure the more sensitive landscapes in this area will remain protected and development consolidated around the urban edge to make best of new and existing infrastructure.

The site has been rigorously tested through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, sustainability appraisal and the draft Local Plan testing to be suitable for housing development in a sustainable location. As such, the loss of best most versatile agricultural land within this site has been taken into consideration in its designation for housing in order to provide much needed housing to meet housing needs and the Councils 5 year housing supply target. Whilst material to the consideration of the application it does in my view weigh heavily against the benefits of the proposal in the planning balance.

Recommendation remains unchanged