



Gladman Developments Ltd

Examination of North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011- 2031

Matter 26 – Villages ‘for growth’

26.1 Main modification MM010 amends the settlement hierarchy in Policy SP2. It removes five villages (Barkway, Codicote, Ickleford, Knebworth and Little Wymondly) from the ‘category A villages’ tier of the hierarchy, identifies them as ‘villages for growth’ and, along with the towns, assigns housing figures to each. This modification was advanced by the Council at my suggestion. I suggested it for two primary reasons:

- For effectiveness – to ensure that the Local Plan’s strategic policies provide a clear indication of the distribution of development proposed in the plan
- To ensure that the hierarchy is justified – as originally drafted, the ‘category A villages’ tier of the hierarchy included villages with significantly different levels of new housing development

In suggesting the modification, it was never my intention that the actual distribution of development between the villages concerned should change, or that the Local Plan should permit a greater level of growth than that originally proposed. Rather, my concern related to the soundness of the way in which Policy SP2 illustrated the housing already proposed through the Local Plan.

The Council’s response to my letter of 9 August 2019 confirms that these changes simply reflect in a clearer way what the Local Plan as submitted already proposes, and does not confer any sort of new ‘status’ on the five villages. It also confirms that the modification does not result in a more (or less) permissive approach to windfall development, and does not allow for further growth at the five villages than if they were identified under the ‘category A villages’ tier. This is in line with both my intention for and reading of the main modification.

Given the above, it will be necessary for anyone who objects to these changes and wishes to be heard at the hearing session to clearly demonstrate:

- a) why they are not necessary for soundness;

b) why separating out the ‘villages for growth’ from the ‘category A villages’ is not justified;

c) why including the level of new housing proposed through the Local Plan (as originally submitted) at each of the five ‘villages for growth’ does not assist the effectiveness of Policy SP2; or

d) that the proposed main modification does alter the level of new housing that may be delivered at each/one of the five villages involved.

26.1.1 Gladman does not object to main modification MM010 and the proposals to amend Policy SP2 to identify five settlements (these being Barkway, Codicote, Ickleford, Knebworth and Little Wymondly) as essentially, villages for growth.

26.1.2 In our initial representations to Policy SP2 (dated November 2017), Gladman raised concern that the Policy did not have due regard to the range of services and facilities in settlements. To remedy issues with soundness, Gladman’s suggestion was that Category A settlements should include a sub-category to make it easier to differentiate between those settlements that were more sustainable than others. Gladman noted that adopting such an approach would better highlight how the distribution of housing had been derived between settlements.

26.1.3 The modification as proposed takes account of these representations and allows readers of the Plan to better understand how housing has been distributed between the District’s main towns and settlements, as well as its larger villages.

26.1.4 The villages that have been identified as the ‘villages for growth’ are generally larger villages that include a greater quantity of existing services and facilities, although there are examples of other villages in the District that could accommodate a more growth than has been proposed in the Plan.

26.1.5 Focusing on, for example, Knebworth. The settlement houses a population of over 4,000 and has a railway station, range of shops, post office, library, surgery, existing primary school with further land reserved for a secondary school that is to be implemented through policy elsewhere in the Plan. The settlement thus has better ‘sustainability credentials’ than some of the other originally identified Category A villages. The modifications simply allow for a better understanding of how much growth can be expected in Knebworth over the Plan period.