



PETITION BY EAST MALLING RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE LOCAL PLAN

To: Planning Policy Manager, TMBC

From: Concerned East Malling Residents

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED East Malling residents, wish to record our concerns about the following aspects of the Reg 19 Version of the TMBC Local Plan and to urge the Planning Inspector who will be considering the Plan following its submission to reject the proposals of the Plan set out below and to substitute the arrangements also described below.

We note with regret that this Plan is based on housing figures imposed by central government which are grossly in excess of natural growth from within the Borough. The resulting Plan is contrary to the interests of current and future residents of the Borough and will result in disproportionate urbanisation and intensification of traffic in many areas. We note that such concerns were expressed by TMBC's own Planning and Transport Advisory Board which voted in July 2018 to reject the Plan outright for these reasons.

Notwithstanding this we wish to record that we recognise that TMBC has genuinely attempted to achieve the best possible development plan, within the parameters and constraints imposed by central government. Whilst several of the detailed proposals in the Plan which directly affect East Malling are unsound for the reasons set out below, we consider the broad outline of the Plan meets the standard required by law.

Policy LP11 Extension of the West Malling Green Belt

We welcome the recognition by the authors of the Plan of the crucial importance of maintaining the separation between Kings Hill, West Malling, and East Malling. We believe that the defined expansion of the West Malling Green Belt will be effective to maintain that separation and indeed is essential to maintaining it. **We strongly urge that any efforts by interested parties to**

“nibble away” at this expansion of the Green Belt should be rejected and the expansion as defined in Paragraph 4.8.4 and supported by the detailed evidence contained in Section 4 of the Green Belt Stage Two Report August 2018 should be implemented in full.

Policy LP30: Broadwater Farm (aka Kings Hill North)

We consider the proposal set out in LP30 (page 52-54 of the Plan) to be unsound and in breach of para. 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) because (particularly when taken together with the cumulative effect of other planned developments in and near East Malling) it fails to meet the requirement that it should be “justified” as being the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence.

The proposal to build 900 new homes at LP 30 : Strategic Site Broadwater Farm (hereafter referred to as “Kings Hill North”) will have a very serious negative impact on East Malling for the following reasons:

It is proposed (para. 5.1.19 of the Plan) to build an access road from Kings Hill North to the A228, Ashton Way, at a point opposite the access road to West Malling railway station, which cuts straight through to Lucks Hill, the road linking East and West Malling.

We understand that the reason it is proposed to have an access road onto the A228 is because the developers of the main Kings Hill site will not allow access through the existing Kings Hill road network. We strongly hold that a dispute between two rival developers should not determine the siting of a road which will have a major negative impact on local communities:

The addition of a fourth arm creating a crossroads at the A228 junction would create significant through traffic to Station Road and the poorly configured junction with Lucks Hill/Swan Street (which lacks sufficient sight lines at the Railway Bridge). This in turn will deliver significant additional vehicle numbers to the already inadequate and congested local road network that serves East Malling from the west (comprising Lucks Hill, Winterfield Lane, Clare Lane, Mill

Street) arriving at the High Street/New Road/Mill Street/Church Street junction and thence north to the A20 or south to Teston/Wateringbury/Maidstone/Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells

Mill Street is effectively a single-lane road for c.200 metres due to on-street parking, and is already a local “pinch point” where significant delays occur at peak periods. Exactly the same is true of East Malling High Street, where queues stretching up to 400 metres back north along New Road and south along Chapel Street routinely build up at the beginning and end of the working day. At the northern end of New Road, long queues of vehicles seeking to join the A20 build up during the same periods. The East Malling road network simply could not cope with the volume of traffic which would be generated by a significant number of motorists using what a satnav would instantly identify as an obvious “rat run”. The implications for air quality, noise, and general quality of life for residents of East Malling whose homes are on these roads, as well as for congestion for drivers using this road are dire.

We note that no effort whatever has been made to assess the impact of this part of the Plan on traffic and on air quality and noise in New Road and East Malling High Street. In other words, the NPPF requirement that decisions should be based on proportionate evidence has not been met, and the Plan is unsound in this respect. (Neither the Transport Assessment nor its Addendum submitted as evidence with this draft Plan contain any evidence regarding traffic through East Malling - and in any event this Assessment has limited objectives which exclude consideration of the impact of traffic on the communities through which they pass. The A20 Baseline Study, also submitted as evidence, does refer to the junction of New Road with the A20, but only with regard to the focus on traffic flows on the A20. Again there is no evidence regarding the East Malling Village pinch points).

Furthermore, this aspect of the Plan fails to meet the requirements of the NPPF to protect the Green Belt where less damaging and practical alternatives exist.

The NPPF makes it clear that that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special

circumstances. The evidence of exceptional circumstances that justify this area of Green Belt extension is in stark contrast with the lack of evidence of any circumstances (special or otherwise) to then justify building this road across this new Green Belt area. It would be harmful and is self-defeating.

It is also the case that the New Barns Conservation Area “Heritage Asset” would be severely compromised by the proposed link road, which would sever it in two. This flies in the face of the NPPF core principle to conserve heritage assets so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

Finally, this area has an established network of “quiet lanes”, set up under the Transport Act 2000. To build this new road, serving 900 houses, in such close proximity to this network of lanes would at a stroke destroy the quietness of that network

When the alternatives to the proposed link road are examined, it is immediately apparent that this part of the Plan fails to meet the requirement that it should be the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives. There are two such alternatives, neither of which appears to have been properly considered, namely

either:

- a) Using compulsory purchase powers to acquire and adopt the Kings Hill road network and to make it accessible to the residents of Kings Hill North, enabling access to the wider road network via the Tower View roundabout.

or

- b) Building a short link road from Kings Hill North to the Tower View roundabout. Because this would be shorter than the proposed link road to the A228 it would sacrifice much less land resource and be significantly cheaper to build. The option of using East Malling as a “rat run” would largely fall away.

We ask the TMBC and the Planning Inspector to identify one of these two options as the preferred choice, and to revise the draft Plan to incorporate it into the final Plan

Policy LP 25 p : Housing Allocations - East Malling Research Station (Parkside)

The proposal to build 205 houses in a “ribbon development” along the eastern side of New Road in East Malling is unsound for similar reasons, relating to the failure to consider the impact of increased traffic through the East Malling village pinch points, to those which apply to LP 30 (as above) and the failure to consider reasonable alternatives which would greatly reduce that impact.

The proposal is that the new development will access New Road through what is currently a private road c. 50 metres north of the junction of New Road/Church Walk/Mill Street/ East Malling High Street. This end of New Road is already grossly congested at peak times, and running at capacity for most of the day. It cannot absorb the traffic from 205 new homes and that traffic will add significantly to what are already unacceptable levels of pollution and congestion. No attempt has been made to measure the impact of this component of the Plan on congestion and pollution in and around the centre of East Malling despite the clear need to do so before reaching a decision. This aspect of the Plan cannot be said to be based on proportionate evidence and it fails to meet the requirement that it should be justified by reference to such evidence.

Moreover it should be noted that the policy LP5, designates East Malling Village as an “Other Rural Settlement”, and as such states that “development will be restricted to development that is proportionate to the scale and appropriate to the character of the settlement”. It is self-evident that 205 new houses in this location is not proportionate. Therefore this housing allocation in LP25 is in direct conflict with LP5 and should either be excluded entirely from the Plan or very significantly reduced in scale. We consider that the number of houses to be built on this site should be a small high quality

development of, say 20 to 40 houses, compatible in scale to, for example, the “Grange” development further south or the older cluster of houses of 14 to 24 New Road which the proposed 205 houses would swamp. Furthermore, a development of 40 or fewer houses would have a far less damaging effect on the setting of Bradbourne House, the grade I listed building in the park – laid out in the late 17th century – of which this development is proposed to be built.

Should development on this key village gateway site be permitted, there is an obvious alternative point for access to and from New Road, at the northern end of the development, a little to the north of Chapman Way, where a former estate road was closed off some fifty years ago (the gate piers set into in the stone wall are still there, 27 feet apart, more than wide enough for an access road, and all that would be required to re-open the gateway is to demolish the brick infill between the piers). This access point is well away from the New Road/High Street/Mill Street junction, the sight-lines for traffic joining New Road are far better and pollution from queuing traffic will be reduced because this is not a “choke point”.

The draft Local Plan currently over-delivers against assessed housing need, and reduction in the size of this site by about 165 houses would not result in the Plan falling short of the target number of houses. However if TMBC and the Planning Inspector wish to, “compensate” for this reduction we note that this could in part be achieved by bringing forward the final allocation of 75 houses at King’s Hill North by one year into the Plan’s timeframe.

We ask the TMBC and the Planning Inspector either to reject this policy or to amend the draft Plan to reduce the total number of houses to be built to fewer than 40, and to require an Impact Assessment of the two possible access points to the development before any planning permission is granted.

Policy LP25 y: Kings Hill - remainder

There is no objection to the development of this site to provide 65 dwellings, but again the issue is its potential impact on traffic through the East Malling Village pinch point. Currently there is no direct traffic route from Kings Hill to

Wateringbury Road (which leads to East Malling). We understand that this has been a long standing planning decision by TMBC through the period that Kings Hill has been developed, to its current size of, in 2018 c. 7,700 residents in 2,700 homes (which is about three times the size of East Malling).

The Kings Hill - remainder site is an extension of the SW corner of Kings Hill and it will extend nearly as far as Teston Road, which is currently a cul-de-sac (as regards vehicular traffic) from Wateringbury Road.

We are extremely concerned that the Plan does not exclude the possibility of this road being opened up to the Kings Hill-remainder site, which would then link it to the rest of Kings Hill (which comprises over 2,700 homes). This raises the prospect of a huge increase in traffic from Kings Hill travelling along Wateringbury Road to reach the A20 main road via East Malling Village.

We are dismayed that there is no explicit statement in the Plan that such a road link will not be allowed - despite explicit assurances to that effect given to Councillors in a publicly-attended meeting of the TMBC Transport and Advisory Board in July 2018 and despite the existence of a simple, cheap, alternative, namely connecting this small site to the existing Kings Hill Road network, and only that network.

Whilst the possibility of this vehicular traffic link being allowed by the Plan remains, this part of the Plan (like LP30 Kings Hill North and LP25 Parkside) is unsound, since no impact assessment has been made of the effect this increase in traffic would have on East Malling High Street and New Road. Accordingly, this part of the Plan fails to meet the requirement that it should be justified when considered against the reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence.

We ask TMBC and the Planning Inspector to amend the draft Plan to stipulate explicitly that there will be no vehicular access from Kings Hill Remainder to Teston Road or Wateringbury Road, but that access will be via the existing Kings Hill road network only.

Policy LP36 - Employment Land Allocations - East Malling Research Station (East and West).

For the same reasons as the above objections to LP30 and LP25, this proposal is unsound. Clearly, the proposed employment sites would exacerbate peak time traffic problems with commuter journeys and with larger vehicles that service such sites. We note also that the current proposed access route to the proposed 205 houses at Parkside would in future be shared with traffic to the existing EMR employment site and to these two additional sites. Despite all this, no assessment of the impact of traffic to and from these proposed new employment sites on the East Malling Village traffic pinch point has been made and this part of the Plan does not meet the requirement that it should be justified as being the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence.

The Research Station (East) site does at least have an obvious alternative access route eastwards to Kiln Barn Lane, however the West site would inevitably access New Road adjacent to the current East Malling Village pinch point.

We ask the TMBC and the Planning Inspector to amend the draft Plan to require access to the Research Station (East) site to be via Kiln Barn Lane and to remove the Research Station (West) Site.

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