Gravesham Borough Council

Response to Issues:

ISSUE 5: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE/GREEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION – Policies CS12, CS13
ENVIRONMENT POLICIES – Policies CS18, CS19, CS20

Issue 5 Questions (i) and (v)

Library Reference: MS/5/v/GBC

Date: 23 August 2013
Issue 5: Environment Policies – Policy CS19

i) Is the policy consistent with the NPPF and/or justified by clear and robust local evidence and if not, what needs to be changed and why?

v) Is Policy CS19 reasonable, realistic and appropriate for a Local Plan Core Strategy, including in relation to water systems, heritage assets and landscape/townscape?

Relevant Background Documents

- SCS-01: Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy December 2012
- SCS-02: Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Appendices December 2012
- SCS-05: Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Representations Report May 2013
- SCS-08: Conformity of the Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites May 2013
- SCS-14a: Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Schedule of Proposed Minor Amendments May 2013
- SCS-14b: Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Document May 2013 (tracked changes version)
- SCS14c: Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Appendices May 2013 (tracked changes version)
- HER-01: Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment May 2009
- HER-02: Gravesham Townscape Appraisal June 2008
- HER-03: Urban Baseline Study November 2010
- HER-04: Gravesham Heritage and Character December 2009
- GRAV-01: Gravesham Local Plan First Review and Proposals Map November 1994

i) Is the policy consistent with the NPPF and/or justified by clear and robust local evidence and if not, what needs to be changed and why?

1. The Council is of the view that the Local Plan Core Strategy’s approach towards design is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (NAT-01).

2. Design is an integral aspect in securing sustainable development and high quality design is one of the 20 core planning principles underpinning the planning system (paragraph 17). The Conformity of the Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites May 2013 (SCS-08) sets out how the Local Plan Core Strategy is consistent with each paragraph of the NPPF (NAT-01). Section 7 (paragraphs 56 to 68) set out the key messages that inform Policy CS19, along with paragraphs 96 and 125.
v) Is Policy CS19 reasonable, realistic and appropriate for a Local Plan Core Strategy, including in relation to water systems, heritage assets and landscape/townscape?

3. The Council submits that Policy CS19 provides a reasonable and appropriate set of design criteria for the Local Plan Core Strategy in line with the increased importance placed on the raising the quality of design in the built environment set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and given the age of policies in the currently adopted Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994.

4. In view of the level of change that will take place in the Borough over the Plan period, the Council considers that it is important to have an up to date, robust policy basis that provides sufficient certainty and clarity to guide developers and inform decision making. In view of the age of policies in the adopted Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994, the Local Plan Core Strategy seeks to replace the more obsolete and unhelpful Development Management policies with more useable and appropriate design criteria that draw together the design requirements from the other thematic policies. The policies that CS19 will replace are set out in Appendix 2 of SCS-02 (Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Appendices).

5. The Council considers that the criteria in Policy CS19 strike a careful balance between providing sufficient detail and clarity for developers and decision makers without being overly prescriptive. The criteria are considered to be realistic in their aspirations, responding to the key design principles set out in the NPPF as demonstrated in the Conformity of the Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites May 2013 (SCS-08). They provide policy direction for developers which are appropriate to different contexts, taking account of the different characteristics of the Borough, without placing unrealistic requirements that would make schemes unviable.

6. The Council is aware of policy gaps that have resulted from the replacement of Planning Policy Statements (PPS) with the NPPF (See SCS-14c Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Appendices May 2013 (tracked changes version) Appendix 5 Policy CS19 – Policy Delivery). A particular example is the loss of detailed guidance on noise by the withdrawal of PPS23 which the Council is currently addressing through a Supplementary Planning Document. Policy CS19 seeks to address this issue by providing sufficient policy hooks to support the preparation of future Development Management policies and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Water Systems

7. The NPPF at paragraph 119 seeks to ensure new development does not contribute to or is affected by water pollution. Groundwater pollution is an issue for both urban and rural areas within Gravesham as they contain significant areas within groundwater source protection zones 1, 2 and 3. The Council considers it is reasonable and appropriate that Policy CS19 seeks to ensure that groundwater vulnerability is taken into account at the early stages of development planning.

8. Representations made by the Environment Agency seek a detailed amendment to Policy CS19 to support some of the objectives of the Water Framework Directive. The Council considers this amendment is reasonable and has proposed a minor modification to the policy (See SCS-14a Proposed Submission...
Other Issues

Heritage Assets, Landscape and Townscape

9. The Council recognises the importance of design in achieving successful
neighbourhoods and gaining community acceptance of change. To achieve this
it is important that new development is derived from an informed and robust
evaluation of key features that contribute to local context and the character of the
Borough. Specific reference (in bullet point 1 and 10) is made to the need to take
account of heritage assets and the Council’s green infrastructure network (as
defined in paragraph 5.7.21 of the Core Strategy) when considering the design,
layout and form of new development.

10. The background text contains pointers to additional sources of information to
assist developers understand the landscape, townscape and historic character of
the Borough and the significance of key features (See HER-01, 02, 03 and 04).
The background text also directs developers to the other policies in the Local
Plan Core Strategy to provide further clarity and guidance on the Council’s
approach to a particular area or type of development proposal.

11. Urban Gravesham has raised the point that the policy is too generic which the
Council does not accept. Taken together, the policy criteria and additional
sources of information provide a reasonable basis for ensuring that future
development takes account of important features and assets which define the
Borough’s character and form the basis upon which to create or enhance a sense
of place.

12. The Council however considers that the policy references to heritage assets,
landscape and townscape could be strengthened to provide consistency of
approach with Policies CS13 and CS20. Further proposed minor changes are
suggested to paragraph 5.15.14 of the Core Strategy below.

Safeguarding the Amenity of Occupants

13. Southern Water state that policy CS19 is unsound as it neglects to protect the
amenity of the occupants of potential in line with paragraphs 17 and 120 of the
NPPF, particularly for development in proximity to the wastewater treatment
works at Gravesend and Northfleet. The Council does not accept this point.
Specific reference is made to the wastewater treatment works in policies CS03
and CS06 and the need to take account of the potential odour nuisance in
locating sensitive developments (see paragraphs 4.5.39 and 4.7.28 of SCS-01).
This is considered sufficient to address the concerns of Southern Water in
respect of their operations in the Borough.

14. The Council however accepts the more general point that its approach to
protecting the amenity of occupants of future development requires clarification.
An amendment is therefore proposed to clarify the policy position on amenity
(See SCS14a Proposed Submission Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy
Schedule of Minor Amendments, A158, paragraph 5.15.14 bullet point 3).
Further Proposed Minor Changes

15. The Council is suggesting the following further proposed minor changes shown in blue:

5.15.14 New development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will reinforce conserve and enhance the character of the local built, heritage historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards. The design and construction of new development will incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques, be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles, and be resilient to the effects of climate change. This will be achieved through the criteria set out below:

- Using the collaborative approach advocated in Building for Life 12 and in line with the guidance set out in Kent Design, the design, layout and form of new development will be derived from a robust analysis of local context and character and will make a positive contribution to the street scene, the quality of the public realm and the character of the area. Account will be taken of the scale, height, building lines, layout, materials and other characteristics architectural features of adjoining buildings and land. Account will also be taken of the wider site context, including strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value natural features which contribute to local character and sense of place;