

TM/19/00014/OAEA Land North Of Lower Haysden Lane Tonbridge

The proposed development of 125 houses forms part of the strategic allocation LP25(ac) South West Tonbridge: 480 units in the Borough's draft Local Plan. The proposed level of growth within this allocation combined with LP25(ad) & LP25(af) will place additional demand for primary school places that will necessitate the commissioning of additional provision.

The existing schools within the area do not have the scope to accommodate expansion and therefore it is proposed that a new school be established to accommodate the growth. In its representations to the Local Plan the County Council has expressed that it anticipates establishment of the school later in the local plan period. There is currently a small surplus in Year R places in the vicinity which is expected to diminish over time. The current small surplus is largely as a result of the opening of a new 2FE primary free school offering 60 Year R places; the lumpy nature of provision means that primary schools typically must open offering either 30 or 60 places, providing a fixed level of capacity whilst demand rises more gradually with time. The establishment of the free school followed many years of Year R deficits in Tonbridge Town; demand rose significantly in response to the construction of apartment units and existing schools could not expand to accommodate the growth, resulting in a change to what were established travel patterns, for example additional pressure on schools in North Tonbridge was in part attributed to this.

Viewed in isolation and assessed against the shorter term forecasts, the construction of 125 houses will not necessitate additional primary places being commissioned. Viewed alongside the other proposed growth in the town then it would. We understand that the Local Planning Authority has little scope to view this planning application in a strategic manner and due to planning law must currently process individual proposals in a piecemeal manner. Individual proposals when combined will still have the same impact on infrastructure but will not bring with them the solutions to mitigate this impact.

In response to the long term need for a new primary school in this area, the draft local plan includes a requirement for LP25(ac) to make available a site of 2ha to the County Council in order for a school to be constructed on. TM/19/00014/OAEA forms part of the proposed allocation but will not make provision for the school land, therefore assuming the rest of the site comes forward in a period where proposals can be viewed against the site's policy this will mean the school site would be located in a later part of the allocation, potentially not the best part of the site for a school to be situated on.

We assume a mechanism is in place that will reassess whether the infrastructure planned for in the draft local plan is still deliverable, both in terms of practically deliverable and financially, should developments be granted consent outside of the Local Plan.