South Kesteven District Council

Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document Hearing Statement

Session Two - Main Modifications to Provisions Relating to Harlaxton and Site ADD17

Prepared on behalf of The Welby Estate

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Contact details

The Welby Estate

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1 Introduction

1.1 Knight Frank LLP is instructed by the Welby Estate to submit a Hearing Statement in relation to South Kesteven’s Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (SAP DPD) (July 2013).

1.2 This statement relates specifically to the Harlaxton Local Service Centre (LSC) and Site ADD17.

1.3 Knight Frank will appear at Hearing Session Two, Main Modifications to Provisions Relating to Harlaxton and Site ADD17, on behalf of the Welby Estate on Tuesday 10 December, at 9.30am to expand on the issues set out in this statement.

2 Scope of Statement

2.1 This Statement has been prepared in response to the Post Main Modifications Agenda for the Examination as issued by the Programme Officer.

2.2 The issues identified and commented on in the statement are:

- Council’s review of the Core Strategy
- Scope of Objection
- Harlaxton as a LSC
- Site ADD17 details

2.3 A further written statement has been prepared for Session One, Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) Addendum Report June 2013.

3 Harlaxton and Site ADD17

3.1 Harlaxton is an identified LSC in the adopted South Kesteven Core Strategy (2010). The settlement is well served with facilities including:
• Primary school
• Food and local shops
• Post Office
• Village hall
• Church
• Public house
• Doctors

3.2 The village benefits from a regular bus service to both Grantham and Melton Mowbray and is considered a sustainable settlement capable of accommodating an appropriate level of future development.

3.3 Site ADD17 is approximately 4.19 ha, located west of Swine Hill at the southern boundary of the village of Harlaxton. Our earlier Representations have demonstrated that the site could be delivered for circa 30 dwellings, but has access capacity for around 50 dwellings.

3.4 Since submitting our last Representations in August 2013, we have engaged in pre-application discussions with Officers at the Council. This is due to the high level of housebuilder interest in the site, and our client’s intention to submit an early planning application and ensure the site’s deliverability within 0-5 years.

3.5 Whilst we note that Officers object to the principle of the development, we have agreed planning application requirements (for a detailed application to enable full consideration of the impact of the proposal on heritage assets) and likely S106 contributions (including 35% affordable provision).

3.6 The pre-application discussions have also confirmed that access to the site is feasible and that the reduction in speed on the approach to the village (from the south), and the proposed car parking provision for the primary school would be welcomed. We also have feedback in relation to drainage which does not confirm drainage as a ‘showstopper’ and indicates that off-site improvement works would be welcomed (this supports the SA/SEA paragraph 3.17 which states drainage will not be a show stopper for up to 40 units).
4  **History of Local Plan Representations and Allocations**

4.1 South Kesteven District Council issued a Site Allocations and Policies DPD Suggested Sites Consultation Document in 2009, which had eight suggested sites for housing allocations in Harlaxton. Following this consultation response, a further consultation document in Summer 2010, entitled, Site Allocation and Policies DPD Additional Sites Consultation presented an additional site, ADD17, Land West of Swine Hill, which was part of a previously larger site considered as HARLO7.

4.2 South Kesteven District Council then undertook a review of these sites. Two suitable sites for residential development within Harlaxton remained under the site analysis demonstrated in the evidence base for the site Allocation and Policies DPD. HARLO6 – Adjacent to the doctors surgery, Swine Hill and the land owned by the Welby Estate under reference ADD17 – Land west of Swine Hill.

4.3 The Submitted SAP DPD (October 2011) identified just one housing allocation in Harlaxton; HARLO6. At the Examination, it became apparent that site HARLO6 was located within the setting of Harlaxton Manor (Grade I Listed Building) and associated Parks and Gardens (Grade II* Listed) (its Local Plan status is Historic Parks and Gardens).

4.4 Due to the above becoming apparent, and other concerns regarding the SA / SEA, the Examination was adjourned by the Inspector. The Council then issued their Main Modifications SAP DPD (July 2013) which stated that Harlaxton was no longer considered as suitable for growth. This was supported by a new SA /SEA (July 2013) and Supplementary Evidence Document (July 2013). Representations were submitted in relation to these documents.

5  **Matters and Issues for Examination**

**Council’s Review of Core Strategy**

5.1 The South Kesteven Core Strategy was adopted in July 2010. Policy **SP2** identifies Harlaxton as a Local Service Centre. We consider the following policy and text is of importance:

- *In those villages, which have been identified as Local Service Centres, development will be allowed in accordance with the Spatial Strategy and subject to the following:*

  *Support will be given to proposals and activities that protect, retain or enhance existing community assets, or that lead to the provision of additional assets that improve community well-being.*
Proposals involving the loss of community facilities, including land in community use* will not be supported. There will be a presumption against the change of use of existing retail, service and employment premises.

* including facilities such as community/village halls, village shops, post offices, schools, health services, care homes, public houses, playing fields and allotments.

- Paragraph 3.2.4 states “Local Service Centres are those settlements which offer a range of localised services and facilities and which act as a focal point for the rural communities and their surrounding hinterlands. Some limited development in these villages will prevent local services from becoming unviable and help to create more mixed and balanced communities.”

- Paragraph 3.2.5 sets out “Local Service Centres have been identified by an assessment process, which takes account of those services and facilities considered to be essential or desirable, to meet the daily needs of the communities, as well as the public transport links with the main urban areas. Proximity to large towns for employment purposes and to satisfy needs not being met locally is an important factor in determining the sustainability of a community. Whether a village is on, or within easy reach of, one of the major transport corridors of the District is also important.”

We consider the Council’s assessment of Harlaxton undermines the above, which was considered as sound and legally compliant during the Core Strategy examination.

Scope of Objection

5.2 Status of Harlaxton

Harlaxton is clearly identified within the Core Strategy as being a LSC. Whilst we accept not all LSC will have capacity for growth, we consider Harlaxton is one the most sustainable LSC (of the 16 identified), and does have capacity for growth which would also contribute to the viability of Harlaxton as a LSC. The Council also supported this approach through the Core Strategy and earlier work on the SAP DPD in which they proposed a preferred site for development. We object to the Council’s assessment of Harlaxton as a Tier Three LSC.

5.3 Objections at Earlier Plan Stages

We are not aware of any significant objections to the identification of Harlaxton as a LSC within the Core Strategy (e.g. no objection from statutory consultees such as English Heritage).
We suggest that the Council’s objection to Harlaxton and site ADD17 relates to their realisation that their preferred site, HARL 006, was located within a Historic Park and Garden (at Harlaxton Manor) as opposed to the general sustainability credentials of the LSC.

**Harlaxton as a LSC**

5.4 **Service Availability**

Our earlier Representations included a detailed assessment of local services and amenities within Harlaxton (in comparison to the other LSC which had been identified for growth). This demonstrated the availability of the following:

- Post office
- Local shop
- Primary schools
- Doctor’s surgery
- Village Hall
- Mobile Library
- Sports and social club, cricket club, football club, bowls club & recreational ground
- Public House
- Church
- Business Park
- Bus services to Grantham (hourly) and Melton Mowbray
- Three miles to Grantham – connected via pedestrian footpath

Given the number of services and facilities available within Harlaxton, coupled with the fact it is only three miles from Grantham, we question the Council’s assessment that Harlaxton has a poor range of local shops, services and employment opportunities.

5.5 **Effect of Heritage Issues on the Settlement – Council’s Assessment**

The Council fails to analyse the relationship of the site to the specific character and appearance of the Conservation Area and Manor House and Registered Park and Garden.
5.6 **Effect of Heritage Issues on the Settlement – Representor’s Assessment**

Our assessment, undertaken by an ex-English Heritage Officer at KM Heritage, is set out in our Representations, but to summarise:

'It is considered that should the development of Site ADD17 be perceived to the east, it would be minimal, and the design of buildings, layout and screening could be used to considerably reduce the sense of built form in the landscape, even if perceptible through the visual barrier of the existing properties on Swine Hill. Screening to the south could prove an effective device in reducing the effect of new development when approaching the site from the south, and new development would not be visually dominant.'

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**Site ADD17 Details**

5.7 **Traffic and Highway Safety Assessment**

Our earlier representations have adequately demonstrated that a viable access point can be created. Our pre-application discussions also revealed that access to the site should be feasible and that aspects of the proposal appear to be attractive (e.g. the proposed car parking provision).

5.8 **Effect on Heritage Assets**

Subject to suitable design, the site could be developed without causing any adverse impacts on heritage assets.

Any impact on the setting of the heritage assets would be less than substantial.

Public benefits of the proposal relate to:

- Housing to meet demand – market and affordable
- Car parking provision for the local primary school
- Financial contribution to off-site drainage improvements

5.9 **Car Park Provision**

As stated above, car parking provision for the local primary school can be incorporated into a future development proposal. We understand his will help resolve a longstanding issue with car parking along Swine Hill, and is welcomed by the Council’s highways Officers (in our pre-application discussions).
6 Summary and Conclusions

6.1 We have prepared this Statement on behalf of The Welby Estate in relation to the Agenda issued for Session Two, Main Modifications Provisions Relating to Harlaxton and Site ADD 17 and supplements our earlier Representations.

6.2 We have consistently supported the identification of Harlaxton as a LSC with capacity for growth and demonstrated the deliverability of site ADD17 throughout the plan making process. Harlaxton is identified by the Core Strategy as a LSC, and we consider it is a sustainable location which would benefit from further development (in terms of off site benefits and ensuring the viability of existing services and facilities).

6.3 We consider the Council’s new assessment of Harlaxton, as having a lack of local facilities and services and being constrained by heritage assets to the extent that it could be a showstopper undermines their Core Strategy and the previous work they have done in term of promoting Harlaxton for growth and site HARL 006.

6.4 We have undertaken an assessment of the likely impact of the proposed site (ADD17) on heritage assets and found that through a sensitive layout and screening, impact on views to the Listed Harlaxton Manor and associated Registered Parks and Gardens would be minimal.

6.5 Site ADD17 can be delivered within 0-5 years and deliver wider benefits to the wider area. Benefits include the provision affordable housing, car parking provision for the primary school and off site drainage improvements.

6.6 There has been significant interest in the site from house builders and this has promoted pre-application discussions to begin at this early stage. Applications requirements have been agreed and our client is keen to submit a planning application and their earliest opportunity.