

NORTH DORSET LOCAL PLAN 2011 – 2026 PART 1 EXAMINATION

HEARING STATEMENT

ISSUE 8

Gillingham, including Gillingham Southern Extension

March 2015

Gillingham Town

Question 8.1: Is there any evidence that the proposed residential development sites in Gillingham, including the development of land east and south of Ham; Station Road; and south and south-west of Bay, are not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available and have they been satisfactorily considered by the Council?

- 1.1 The Council is not aware of any evidence that the proposed residential development sites in Gillingham are not available, sustainable or deliverable.

Land East and South of Ham

- 1.2 The proposed Strategic Site Allocation (SSA) to the south of Gillingham includes the proposed residential sites of:

- land to the east of Ham, including Park Farm;
- land to the south of Ham, including part of Newhouse Farm; and
- land to the east of Lodden Lakes.

- 1.3 Availability was assessed through SHLAA (MHN007): land to the east of Ham, including Park Farm (2/20/0372); land to the south of Ham (2/20/0368); part of Newhouse Farm (2/20/0048); and, land to the east of Lodden Lakes (2/20/0002, 2/20/0412, 2/20/0544). Sustainability was assessed through studies including: the Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham report, published by Atkins in 2009 (MTC004), as part of 'Scenario 2' which concluded that these sites, in part, formed the most sustainable growth scenario; and the North and north East Dorset Transportation Study (N&nEDTS) (INF009). Deliverability was assessed in consultation with the landowners and through the on-going process of producing the Master Plan Framework (MPF) for the site, as sought by Policy 21 of the Local Plan Part 1 (LP 1). A 'consortium' of landowners and developers has also sought an EIA Scoping Opinion for the SSA (2/2014/1315/SCOEIA) from the Council.

- 1.4 The northern parcel of land to the east of Lodden Lakes is an existing allocation in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030) and is identified as 'land south of The Meadows'. An outline planning application (2/2014/0968) received committee resolution to approve in January 2015 confirming that this area is available, sustainable and deliverable.

Station Road Area

- 1.5 Station Road is proposed to be developed for a mix of uses including retail, employment and residential. This site was allocated for employment use in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). However, it was reviewed in the Employment Land Review (ELR) (SED011) and assessed as a site with potential for mixed-use

regeneration, including residential use given its highly sustainable location at the edge of the town centre.

- 1.6 The sustainability of the Station Road area and the opportunities the site provides for meeting retail needs and improving the town centre are discussed in paragraphs 7.35 to 7.51 of Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004). Figures 7.1 to 7.4 of MTC004 include a set of 'indicative master plan' maps showing: character areas; potential land uses; and building heights. This work built on an earlier development brief for part of the site, which was adopted in 2001. Some of the site has already been developed including:
- the Oakwoods riverside apartments, which were developed during the 2003 Local Plan (COD030) plan period in accordance with the 2001 brief; and
 - two new retail units, including Iceland and Pets At Home, in the north-eastern segment of the site (under planning application 2/2013/0990).
- 1.7 The former Focus / Do It All store in the north-west part of the site is now an Asda supermarket.
- 1.8 The Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan Group is developing a town centre strategy which will include further detail on the development of the Station Road area as a mixed use site.

Land at Bay

- 1.9 The proposed residential development site to the south and south-west of Bay lies within the settlement boundary of Gillingham, as defined in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). Whilst the site is not allocated in the 2003 Local Plan, Policy 2.6 allows infill / windfall development within defined settlement boundaries. It could, therefore, be developed under the currently adopted local planning policy framework.
- 1.10 The site was assessed as being available through SHLAA (2/20/0548) and its sustainability was further assessed through Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004), as part of 'Scenario 2'. Pre-application discussions have recently commenced with the owners of the site.

Alternatives

- 1.11 Information on the site selection process and sustainability issues is included in the Market Town Site Selection Background Paper (MTC001) and the Sustainability Assessment (SUD003). Specifically in relation to alternative sites that have been assessed by the Council, nine key sites (based on information from the Council's SHLAA) were identified in the N&nEDTS (INF009) as growth options and an accessibility audit based on quality of access for each site to existing amenities such as food shops, education, GP surgeries and employment opportunities was undertaken. The sites were:

GILL 1 – Land at Bowridge Hill, north east of Gillingham

GILL 2 – Land near Windyridge Farm, east of Gillingham

GILL 3 – Land at Park Farm, south east of Gillingham

GILL 4 – Land at Ham, south of Gillingham

GILL 5 – Land south of The Meadows, Lodden Lakes, south of Gillingham

GILL 6 – Brickfields Business Park, south west of Gillingham

GILL 7 – Land at Station Road, central Gillingham

GILL 8 – Land at Bay, north east of town centre at Gillingham

GILL 9 – Land at Peacemarsh – north-west of Gillingham

- 1.12 The assessed sites in Gillingham which scored highest for accessibility were: Land at Station Road; Land at Ham; Land at Park Farm; Land south of The Meadows (Lodden Lakes); and Brickfields Business Park. However, all of the sites assessed through the N&EDTS (INF009) were further assessed in Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004) as part of a number of future growth scenarios.
- 1.13 The capacity of the highway network is a major issue in Gillingham, as discussed in Chapter 6 of MTC004. There is only one bridge over the railway in the town, which is close to the New Road / Shaftesbury Road junction. This junction and the north / south routes through the town, which are controlled by a linked series of traffic signals is already close to capacity. Whilst significant growth can be delivered if supported by an integrated package of transport measures, it would be difficult to accommodate further growth beyond that already proposed in LP 1.
- 1.14 A further issue is the potential impact of development at Gillingham on the A303. This has been a concern of the Highways Agency, as discussed in Section 5 of the Council’s Duty to Co-operate Statement (SUD019). However, the Highways Agency has confirmed that the proposed southern focus of growth would be likely to be the scenario which would have least impact on the A303.
- 1.15 The work on accessibility, the constraint of the capacity of the highway network and the views of the Highways Agency have all influenced the Council’s strategy of a ‘southern extension’ to the town, rather than expansion to the north-east or north-west.
- 1.16 Three alternative (or additional) sites have been promoted by the landowners through the consultation on LP 1. These are:
- land at Chantry Fields, off Le Neubourg Way;
 - land at Windyridge Farm; and
 - land at Peacemarsh to the north-west of Gillingham.

Chantry Fields

- 1.17 Land at Chantry Fields is located outside the settlement boundary of Gillingham, as defined in the 2003 Local Plan, which identifies a number of different uses for the land including: an 'option site' for a new community hall (under Policy GH 21); a new cemetery (under Policy 22); an informal recreation area (under Policy GH 16); and an extension to the town's sewage treatment works (under Policy 23). The south-eastern part of the site also lies within the functional flood plain. The Council understands that this is being put forward as an additional site (rather than an alternative), which may be available to come forward at an early stage to meet the town's housing needs.
- 1.18 An outline planning application for residential development (2/2014/0916/OUT), which did not include any of the uses sought by the policies of the 2003 Local Plan, was refused by the Council on 9 December 2014 for a number of reasons including:
- impact on the countryside;
 - impact on the amenity of future occupants due to odours from the sewage treatment works. The application was also refused because the proposed development would inhibit the future expansion of the sewage treatment works, which is required to support the growth of the town;
 - impact on protected species and their habitat, principally bats, otters and water voles;
 - insufficient information being provided to assess the implications on archaeology; and
 - no provision for affordable housing or contributions to the off-site provision of infrastructure.

Windyridge Farm

- 1.19 Land at Windyridge Farm was assessed through SHLAA (2/20/0453) and was considered to be suitable and available, but not achievable due to its location outside the currently defined settlement boundary.
- 1.20 In addition to the issues of the capacity of the highway network outlined above, there are problems with providing suitable access to the site, especially in view of the high levels of use and congestion on Hardings Lane, which also provides access to Gillingham School, the Riversmeet Centre and Gillingham Town Football Club.

Peacemarsh

- 1.21 Land at Peacemarsh was assessed through SHLAA (2/20/0387; 2/20/0530 and 2/20/0547) and most of the site was considered to be suitable and available, but not achievable due to its location outside the currently defined settlement boundary. The northern part of the sites was excluded from SHLAA, as the development of this area could result in the coalescence of Gillingham and the village of Milton-on-Stour, much of which is a Conservation Area.

- 1.22 In addition to the issues of the capacity of the highway network outlined above, development of this site would be likely to generate more traffic that would head north and use the A303 to visit Yeovil, Salisbury and other locations further afield. The Highways Agency has been concerned that development in this area, rather than to the south of the town would reduce the reliability and resilience of the A303 as a strategic route.

Question 8.2: Is there any evidence that the proposed economic development sites in Gillingham, including in Station Road; south of Brickfields Business Park; at Kingsmead Business Park; and at Neal’s Yard Remedies, Peacemarsh; are not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available to the Council?

- 1.23 There is no evidence that the proposed economic development sites in Gillingham, including Station Road; south of Brickfields Business Park; at Kingsmead Business Park; and at Neal’s Yard Remedies, Peacemarsh; are not available, sustainable or deliverable.

Station Road

- 1.24 Station Road was allocated for employment use in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). The site was reviewed in the Council’s Employment Land Review (SED011) and assessed as a site for mixed-use regeneration and is in a highly sustainable location at the edge of the town centre. A recent planning application 2/2013/0990 for two retail units has just completed development. More detail is provided in response to Q8.1.

Brickfields Business Park

- 1.25 Brickfields Business Park was allocated for employment use in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). The site remains ‘fit for purpose’ as it meets the needs of the market and is in a sustainable location, as demonstrated in the Council’s Employment Land Review (SED011).

- 1.26 The site is owned by Sigma Aldridge, a global life sciences company, which has a presence on the existing Brickfields Business Park. Outline consent (2/2011/0749) was granted for a new UK headquarters building (B1 use) for the company on part of the site, but this has now lapsed. The company are now actively engaged in the preparation of a master plan for the development of the employment land as part of the SSA.

Kingsmead Business Park

- 1.27 Kingsmead Business Park was allocated for employment use in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). The site remains ‘fit for purpose’ as it meets the needs of the market and is in a sustainable location, as demonstrated in the Council’s Employment Land

Review (SED011). Recent discussions between the landowner and the Council have highlighted the landowner's goal in trying to achieve value for the site.

Neal's Yard Remedies

- 1.28 Neal's Yard Remedies was allocated for employment use in the 2003 Local Plan (COD030). The site remains 'fit for purpose' as it meets the needs of the market and is in a sustainable location, as demonstrated in the Council's Employment Land Review (SED011).
- 1.29 Part of the site has been built out and part received planning permission (2/2014/0640) in September 2014. Permission was granted: to extend the current business on the site; to erect extensions to manufacturing and warehousing facilities, biomass boiler plant room extension and new offices with reception and integral retail outlet; install photovoltaic panels on roof; form additional car parking spaces; and amend parking / landscaping layout.

Question 8.3: Can the proposed development be satisfactorily assimilated into the town without significant detriment to the character of the environment and the living conditions of nearby residents?

- 1.30 The proposed development can be satisfactorily assimilated into the town without significant detriment to the character of the environment and the living conditions of nearby residents.
- 1.31 Gillingham Town Design Statement (TDS) (MTC016) was finalised in June 2012 and endorsed by the Council. The TDS has been developed to safeguard the local characteristics of the town, and to encourage sensitive, high quality design where new development occurs. It details distinctive local features and policies to inform those applying for planning permission what should be considered when preparing a scheme for submission.
- 1.32 Policy 21 for the SSA includes a concept statement, a concept plan and a set of design principles which have been derived from detailed technical work undertaken by the developers of the site and engagement with the community. In particular, the design principles for the SSA have been developed from the design guidelines in the Gillingham TDS, facilitated through the Gillingham Southern Extension Concept Plan Workshop (COD031).
- 1.33 Policy 21 will provide the policy brief for the preparation of the MPF. Through that process, integration of the proposed development with the existing town and the landscape of the surrounding countryside will be achieved, as envisaged. Through the development process of the MPF, statutory consultees have had the opportunity to review an early draft document and future iterations will reflect this input which includes improvement to infrastructure, such as highways.

- 1.34 Land at Station Road is located on the edge of the town centre and its conservation area in a predominantly commercial environment. A development brief was produced and adopted by the Council in 2001 for part of the site, which has informed further work in Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004). The 2001 development brief and the work in MTC004 have informed Policy 17 in LP 1. This earlier work will be used to take forward more detailed proposals for the area in the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.35 Land at Neal's Yard Remedies, Peacemarsh is located on the northern edge of Gillingham. The current and proposed expansion of development is of high quality design, and where the site integrates with the existing town it does so initially with front-line health service provision lessening the interaction of the site with the nearby residential site.
- 1.36 Land to the south and south-west of Bay is proposed for the development of about 50 dwellings. The infill site is located adjacent to the hamlet of Bay, which the 2003 Local Plan (COD030) Policy GH3 identifies as an 'area of local character' within the settlement boundary of Gillingham. The Gillingham TDS also recognises it as an area of character in the town. Local Plan Policy GH3 will be retained and used for development management purposes along with the TDS until it is reviewed through the neighbourhood planning process or the Local Plan Part 2 (LP 2). This policy and the evidence base will be used in the design and approval process for planning applications on the site. Discussions with, in particular DCC Highways, have raised no highways related issues with the development of the site.

Question 8.4: Are all the infrastructure requirements listed in policy 17 justified and deliverable?

- 1.37 All the infrastructure requirements listed in policy 17 are justified and deliverable. To support growth in Gillingham the grey, social and green infrastructure proposed has been developed with the 12 core planning principles set out in Paragraph 17 of NPPF in mind. The issue of 'reasonable alternatives' has been explored through the Infrastructure Background Paper 2013 (INF002).
- 1.38 The Council has planned positively for the development and infrastructure in Gillingham to meet the objectives, principles and policies of the NPPF. The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SUD020) (IDP) sets out what infrastructure is needed to enable the development proposed to be delivered, how much it will cost and who will deliver it.
- 1.39 Appendix A of INF002 sets out the various categories of infrastructure and their significance in respect of the Plan and Appendix B contains a schedule of infrastructure currently programmed/needed to support new development.
- 1.40 The IDP will be regularly reviewed and updated because development and funding arrangements are likely to change over time and so infrastructure requirements and costs will need to be realigned.

Question 8.5: Is the development of land at Neal’s Yard Remedies, Peacemarsh, for high value business use justified (criterion m)?

- 1.41 The development at Neal’s Yard Remedies, Peacemarsh for high value business use is justified. The site containing the existing high value business of Neal’s Yard Remedies on the northern edge of the town already has a building of high quality design and there are consented plans to significantly (but sensitively) expand over a larger portion of the site (2/2014/0640). As part of the application the landowner has indicated the intention to accommodate like-minded business with a similar ethos to Neal’s Yard Remedies on the site.
- 1.42 The need for Gillingham’s economy to diversify towards high value business is set out in Section 5 the Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004), in particular paragraph 5.13.

Question 8.6: Is the Council’s approach to retail development in Gillingham justified and will it result in appropriate regeneration of the town centre?

- 1.43 The Council’s approach to retail development in Gillingham is justified and should result in appropriate regeneration of the town centre.
- 1.44 The Nathaniel Litchfield Joint Retail Assessment (SED007b) and the local community recognise that there is a limited retail offer in Gillingham Town Centre, which needs to be improved. The town centre is characterised as one which is ‘polycentric’ with several ‘hubs’, which are not integrated into a coherent whole. The nature of the town centre, together with the opportunities in the Station Road area provide the potential to “*create an expanded, more integrated and vibrant town centre capable of offering a better range of shops, services and facilities to the local population*” (Paragraph 8.82 of LP 1). The development of 1,800 homes on the SSA will also provide greater demand for town centre uses from the increased population.
- 1.45 The 2003 Local Plan defines the primary and secondary retail frontages in the town centre and these boundaries will be retained until replaced in the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan or LP 2. These documents will also define the town centre boundary and potentially also a primary shopping area, if required, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 1.46 All four main towns in North Dorset are producing neighbourhood plans and the regeneration of town centres is one of the key issues that neighbourhood plan groups are likely to want to tackle. Creating “*a flourishing and diverse local economy, with a wide range of jobs and training opportunities*” is one of the key elements of the draft vision for the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan which came out of the visioning workshop facilitated by the Homes and Community Agency’s Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS) (See the draft vision on page 13 of COD032). Under this element of the vision, one of the outcomes, the community

hope to achieve is “*new businesses and sociable uses (e.g. cafes) have significantly improved the quality and vitality of the town centre*”. A more detailed retail strategy for the town centre will be worked up in the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan.

- 1.47 It is considered that the strategic approach set out in LP 1; together with the work that will be taken forward through the neighbourhood plan (and / or LP 2) will result in appropriate regeneration of the town centre.

Gillingham Strategic Site Allocation

Question 8.7: Is there any evidence that the proposed Gillingham Strategic Site (or any part of it) is not available, sustainable or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available to the Council? Is the proposed boundary of the SSA justified?

- 1.48 There is no evidence to suggest that the proposed Gillingham SSA (or any part of it) is not available, sustainable or deliverable. Availability was assessed through SHLAA (MHN007); sustainability was assessed through Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004); and deliverability was assessed in consultation with the landowners and through the on-going work on the production of the Master Plan Framework (MPF), as sought by Policy 21. The proposed boundary of the SSA is justified through SHLAA, advice from the lead developers on capacity, and consideration of environmental issues, including appropriate existing boundaries.
- 1.49 A ‘consortium’ of developers is leading the process of the production of the MPF, as sought by Policy 21. The ‘consortium’ includes: C G Fry & Son; Taylor Wimpey; Welbeck Land; and a local land owner, Mr Pike, who is represented by Chestertons. An initial draft MPF has already been prepared and has been discussed internally by NDDC and DCC officers, ATLAS, and statutory consultees with feedback being provided to the ‘consortium’. A further iteration of a draft MPF, which is anticipated to be available shortly, should respond to the previous internal consultation. It is planned to put forward this next iteration of the draft MPF for review by the South West Design Review Panel in March 2015.
- 1.50 There have been discussions and correspondence between the Council and the owner of Kingsmead Business Park, Mr Bill Hopkins. As the ‘consortium’ undertook a due process to confirm available parcels of land within the Shaftesbury Road corridor on which to deliver the local centre, discussions between the parties led to Mr Bill Hopkins signalling his intention to pursue an approach to achieve best value on his land. Subsequently Mr Bill Hopkins has re-confirmed to the Council the availability of the vacant area of Kingsmead Business Park to be developed with local centre uses, on the basis that a suitable equalisation agreement can be reached with the consortium. For Kingsmead Business Park the allocation in the adopted 2003 Local Plan is for employment uses. The proposed allocation in LP 1 is

for local centre uses, but reverting to an employment allocation if local centre uses are not delivered on the site.

- 1.51 Policy 21 is written to provide flexibility in its approach to the delivery of the local centre by identifying a number of sites within the Shaftesbury Road corridor, all of which are within the proposed SSA boundary, and which are capable of accommodating local centre uses, at the appropriate scale, and in different layouts. Additionally the 'consortium' informs the Council that it has secured control of land just south of the proposed allocation of the local centre, adjacent to the western edge of Shaftesbury Road, but still within the SSA boundary, to enable delivery of local centre uses on land within the 'consortiums' control.

Question 8.8: Are all the infrastructure requirements related to the southern extension (as set out in policy 21) justified, viable and deliverable? For example the off-site highway improvements; other off-site measures and the improvements relating to social infrastructure, including the proposed local centre. Is it sufficiently clear how a decision maker should re-act to a proposal – the 'what, where, when and how'¹.

- 1.52 All the infrastructure requirements listed in Policy 21 are justified and deliverable. To support growth in Gillingham the grey, social and green infrastructure proposed has been developed with the 12 core planning principles set out in Paragraph 17 of NPPF in mind. The issue of 'reasonable alternatives' has been explored through the Infrastructure Background Paper 2013 (INF002) and through a specific consultation exercise in 2012, as set out in Public Consultation on Options for the Southern Extension of Gillingham (COD003).
- 1.53 The Council has planned positively for the development and infrastructure in Gillingham to meet the objectives, principles and policies of the NPPF. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SUD020) sets out what infrastructure is needed to enable the development proposed to be delivered, how much it will cost and who will deliver it.
- 1.54 Appendix A of SUD020 sets out the various categories of infrastructure and their significance in respect of the Plan and Appendix B contains a schedule of infrastructure currently programmed/needed to support new development. The IDP will be regularly reviewed and updated because development and funding arrangements are likely to change over time and so infrastructure requirements and costs will need to be realigned.
- 1.55 The Council and a consortium of land controllers and developers have initiated a viability discussion through joint work on a site-specific Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the SSA that supports the MPF and provides more detailed information on the

¹ Planning Practice Guidance Para 10 under Local Plans

quantum and quality of infrastructure required to mitigate the effects of development at the SSA.

- 1.56 For example, the off-site highway improvements have been identified and justified through the N&nEDTS (INF009) and Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004). Specifically, the provision of the Enmore Green Link Road appears in the Local Transport Plan 3 and the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan. Further extensive work has been developed through a site-wide Transport Assessment commissioned by the consortium of land controllers and developers. This has helped to clarify mitigation measures (on and off-site) and it is anticipated that it will inform subsequent discussions about proportionate contributions to off-site transport initiatives.
- 1.57 The requirements of the key elements of social infrastructure (i.e. public open space, education provision, front-line health care, community meeting space, and convenience retail) are based on proportionate evidence as provided by DCC, NHS England, best practice advice from ATLAS and the local community, with the objective of creating a sustainable place. In addition to a specific consultation exercise in 2012 on options for the Southern Extension of Gillingham (COD003), the community were also engaged on how best to integrate these elements into the overall scheme through the concept plan workshop in 2013 (written up in COD031).
- 1.58 It is sufficiently clear how a decision maker should re-act to a proposal – the 'what, where, when and how'. Policy 21 provides the policy context and framework that clearly sets out the 'what' and the 'where' for on and off-site infrastructure provision. Policy 21 also provides the brief for the production of a MPF which, along with a supporting site-specific IDP, will provide the detailed information on the 'when' and 'how'.

Question 8.9: Are the proposals identified on the Concept Plan (Fig 9.3) justified and sufficient to ensure the provision of a sustainable development?

- 1.59 The concepts presented on the Concept Plan (Fig 9.3 in LP 1) are justified and sufficient to ensure the provision of sustainable development as part of Policy 21. The concept plan encapsulates the outputs from a consultation workshop, (COD031), which focussed on how the outputs of the public consultation on the Options for the Southern Extension of Gillingham (COD003) might be accommodated on the site.
- 1.60 Representatives of the lead developers participated in the concept plan workshop, together with other delivery stakeholders and members of the community. Survey and early master planning work commissioned by the lead developers informed the workshop. The design concept was based on the evidence available at the time, and on views expressed at the consultation workshop and they reflect the Atkins Report (MTC004) in its analysis of sustainable development.

- 1.61 Policy 21 describes the concept plan as indicative, and makes it clear that certain aspects of the concept plan may change as the master planning work progresses. The Council does not propose to rely on the concept plan to ensure the provision of a sustainable development. Rather the Council has initiated a discussion with the lead developers about a proportionate and appropriate master planning and approval process, which could be agreed by the parties and included within the proposed MPF.

Question 8.10: Are the contents of the Concept Statement (Fig 9.2) and the Design Principles (Fig 9.4) justified?

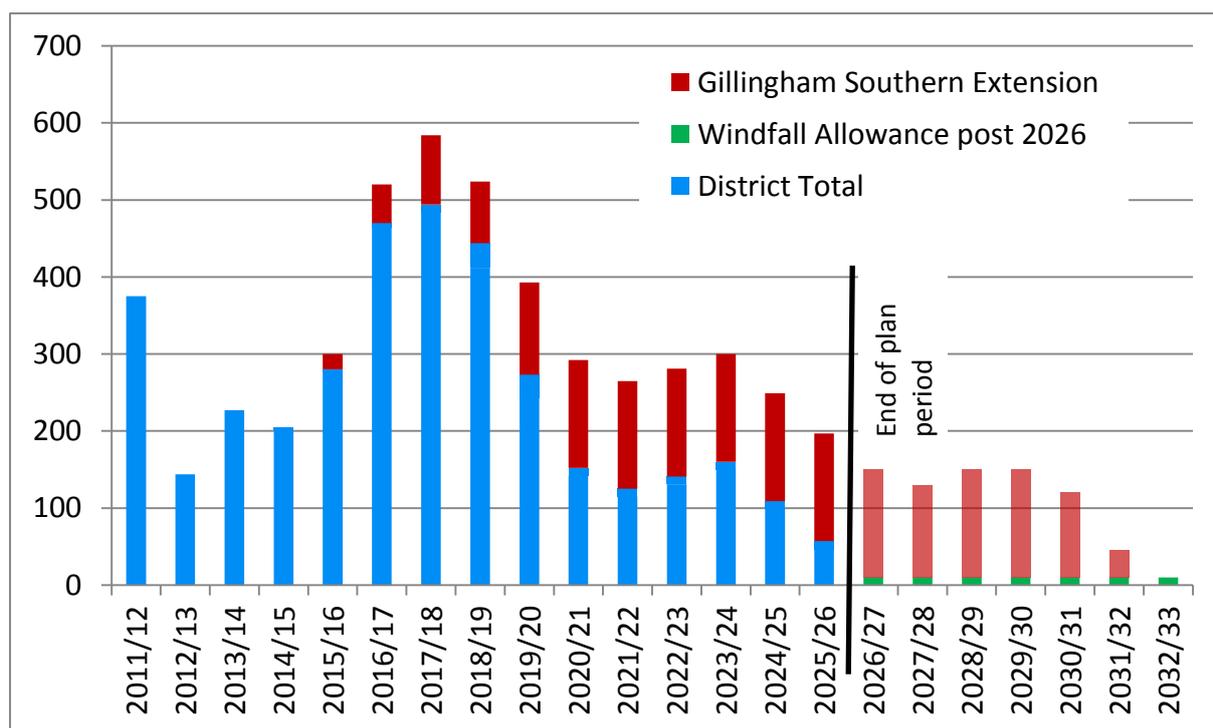
- 1.62 The contents of the Concept Statement (Fig 9.2 in LP1) and the Design Principles (Fig 9.4 in LP 1) are justified. The Concept Statement (Fig 9.2), the Concept Plan (Fig 9.3) and the accompanying Design Principles (Fig 9.4) encapsulate the outputs from the Concept Plan Workshop Report (COD031), which focussed on how the outputs of the public consultation on the Options for the Southern Extension of Gillingham (COD003) might be accommodated on the site. Representatives of the lead developers participated in that workshop, together with other members of the community. Survey and early master planning work commissioned by the lead developers informed the workshop.
- 1.63 The Design Principles (Fig 9.4) were informed by the adopted Gillingham TDS (MTC016). Policy 21 makes it clear that the design principles should be used to inform the urban design strategy within the MPF. Hence the lead developers have a degree of flexibility in how they choose to interpret the design principles in formulating their urban design strategy.

Question 8.11: What are the risks to the delivery of the southern extension at Gillingham and does the Council's approach ensure that they are, as far as possible, minimised? What is the trajectory for the provision of the housing and what is the Council's fall-back position should the southern extension not deliver housing at the rate currently anticipated?

- 1.64 The risks to the delivery of the southern extension are associated with the fact that the site is controlled by more than one landowner. Potential risks to delivery include: lack of collaboration and co-ordination between the various promoters; recalcitrant landowners; and viability issues.
- 1.65 The Council has sought to address the first two potential risks through discussions with all of the landowners and through the proposed MPF (and associated site-specific IDP). Work on the site-specific IDP has initiated a discussion about viability, and there will be opportunities to continue that discussion when the promoters are in a position to share their viability work (in the pre-application period). This discussion will also inform any decision by the Council as to whether CIL should be charged on development within the SSA or whether it should be zero-rated.

- 1.66 The Council's approach to ensure, as far as possible, that the potential risks are minimised also include bidding for funding to support taking the scheme forward. The Council has been awarded £123,639 of Large Sites Infrastructure Programme Capacity Funding over two years and has recruited a Major Projects Officer to provide additional capacity to progress the SSA through the development management process. The funding will also support additional work on urban design and viability. As part of this scheme, the Council has also secured the on-going support of ATLAS in progressing the southern extension.
- 1.67 The Council has set up a monthly technical officers' group meeting where technical issues are discussed with a view to progressing the development of the MPF and move through the design and approval process. The Council has also set up a Gillingham Growth Board which is chaired by the Portfolio Holder, who is also a Town, District and County Councillor, and at which NDDC and DCC officers, the consortium of land controllers and developers of the SSA, ATLAS, and community representatives of Gillingham Town Council (GTC) and Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan Group (GNPG) discuss any issues which require co-ordination between the participants and any other stakeholder representatives as appropriate to establish an agreed way forward.
- 1.68 The trajectory for the SSA assumes a range between 120 and 140 dpa across the southern extension (Figure 1.1). This reflects both past delivery rates at Gillingham, and the delivery rate of 150 dpa suggested in Assessing the Growth Potential of Gillingham (MTC004). This range allows for flexibility in the development meeting market demands up to and beyond the end of the plan period.
- 1.69 The Council anticipates the delivery of about 500 dwellings by 2020 with 1,240 dwellings being delivered by 2026. The remainder of the site will therefore be delivered after the end of the plan period.
- 1.70 The trajectory for the SSA is shown as part of the overall trajectory for housing development in North Dorset. This indicates that relatively high levels of development are likely to occur in the period up to 2018/19 as other sites identified in LP 1 come forward and are developed. Whilst the SSA will make some contribution to delivery up to 2020, it is from 2020 onwards that the Council anticipates the SSA delivering at its maximum rate.
- 1.71 In this context, the Council's fall-back position is that should the southern extension not deliver housing at the rate currently anticipated in the early years, there should be sufficient time to undertake a review and consider the need for remedial action prior to overall housing delivery falling significantly below target. In the light of the Council's approach to planning policy such remedial action could be delivered: in LP 2; in the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan; or, if required, through a more fundamental review of LP 1.

Figure 1.1: Gillingham Southern Extension Housing Trajectory



Question 8.12: What is the relationship between LP1, the Neighbourhood Plan (paragraph 9.7) and the Master Plan Framework? Should it be made clearer?

- 1.72 The Local Plan Part 1 sets out the strategic policy for the SSA, including the brief for the MPF. The Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan complements the strategic policy for the southern extension and has scope to provide planning policy on planning issues of a local nature and that are not of a strategic nature, for example providing more detail on the qualitative aspects of green infrastructure, design, and community space.
- 1.73 The Council has worked with all neighbourhood plan groups to try and integrate neighbourhood planning into the overall planning policy framework for the District. This is explained in more detail in the response to Q1.11. Appendix 1 of Hearing Statement 1 (NDDC Issue 1A) also includes an early 'neighbourhood planning framework' for Gillingham setting out the relationship between the policy for Gillingham (now Policy 17), the policy for the SSA (Policy 21) and the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.74 It is accepted that paragraph 9.7 of LP 1 could be made clearer by the deletion of the existing text and replacement with the following:

A neighbourhood plan is being produced for the town and the Neighbourhood Area covers the entire parished area of Gillingham, including the SSA site. The Local Plan Part 1 contains the strategic planning policy for the SSA, including the brief for the MPF. The Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan complements the

strategic policy for the southern extension and has scope to provide planning policy on planning issues of a local nature. The Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with Policy 21 and all other policies in the Local Plan Part 1.

Question 8.13: Are the requirements set out in paragraph 9.20 (including a Habitats Regulations Assessment), and in paragraph 9.57 (alternative use for the local centre site) justified?

- 1.75 The Council's response to the requirements of the PPG is proportionate and the most appropriate strategy to deliver a proportionate and reasonable master plan.
- 1.76 Paragraph 9.20 sets out a specification for the MPF. The components of that specification reflect the Council's position that the MPF ought to fulfil a similar role to a single outline planning application for the SSA proposals (i.e. in the event that any of the developers are unable to agree on a single outline application).
- 1.77 The Government supports the use of master plans for large-scale or complex developments. National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) describes how master plans *"can set out the strategy for a new development including its general layout and scale and other aspects that may need consideration. The process of developing masterplans will include testing out options and considering the most important parameters for an area such as the mix of uses, requirement for open space or transport infrastructure, the amount and scale of buildings, and the quality of buildings. Masterplans can show these issues in an indicative layout and massing plan where the shape and position of buildings, streets and parks is set out. Masterplans can sometimes be submitted for outline planning permission or they can be adopted as local policy requirements."*
- 1.78 Significantly the PPG goes on to describe how master plans should be robust and avoid ambiguity in so far as possible. *"Care should be taken to ensure that masterplans are viable and well understood by all involved. In particular graphical impressions of what the development will look like should not mislead the public by showing details not yet decided upon as certainties."* The Council's overall requirements for the South Gillingham MPF, which focus on strategies for coordinating subsequent planning applications and development, are broadly consistent with national planning policy guidance.
- 1.79 The intention of a Habitats Regulations Assessment is to maintain the integrity of the network of internationally designated wildlife sites and protect them from the harm that could result from development. The internationally protected wildlife sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar Sites of which there are a number within a reasonable distance of Gillingham. The requirement for a detailed Habitats Regulations Assessment for the southern extension of Gillingham was a direct recommendation from the Habitats

Regulations Assessment (SUD005) undertaken to support the production of the Local Plan.

- 1.80 The Council's approach to the Kingsmead Business Park (as described in paragraph 9.57) reflects a degree of uncertainty about whether the landowners would be able to conclude a collaboration or equalisation agreement, which would facilitate the location of local centre uses within that particular part of the SSA.
- 1.81 It is the Council's view that the requirements as set out in paragraph 9.20 are the most appropriate strategy given the available evidence. The approach is therefore justified.