

Statement in Response to the Inspector's Matters and Issues for Examination.

Matter 12 The Environment

Eversley Storage ®

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bell cornwell

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

Bell Cornwell LLP, Unit 2, Meridian Office Park, Osborn Way,
Hook, Hampshire RG27 9HY

01256 766673 | info@bell-cornwell.co.uk | bell-cornwell.co.uk



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On behalf of our client, Greenfords Ltd[®], trading as Eversley Storage[®], we set out additional representations in response to the Inspector's Matter 12 which sets out a list of issues to be considered further for the Examination into the Hart District Local Plan with regard to the Environment. We are only replying to those questions which are of relevance to our client's site and have, as requested, kept our responses concise and relevant.
- 1.2 Our client owns the Eversley Storage[®] site on Brickhouse Hill, Fleet Road, Eversley, RG27 0PY, which is a long established and successful storage business, employing local people. As well as the existing site, our client also owns additional land (which wraps around the existing site), which is included within the area proposed for allocation under Policy ED2: Employment-land.
- 1.3 We note that as the Local Plan is being prepared under the transitional arrangements, it has to show conformity with national policy as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework of 2012, rather than the updated NPPF of 2018. We therefore refer to the paragraph numbers of the 2012 NPPF and if appropriate cross reference to the 2018 NPPF.
- 1.4 We confirm that we currently wish to attend the Examination hearing session on Matter 12.



2 RESPONSE TO MATTER 12

INSPECTOR'S QUESTIONS: POLICY NBE1

- 2.1 **Question 12.1** Does Policy NBE1 unreasonably restrict development in the countryside?
- 2.2 **Question 12.2** Is Policy NBE1 justified and consistent with national policy, most notably (but not limited to) Paragraph 55 of the NPPF, 2012?
- 2.3 **Question 12.3** Are each of the criteria set out within Policy NBE1 Justified?
- 2.4 **Question 12.4** Is the supporting text at Paragraph 267, justified and consistent with national policy, insofar that it states that applications which are primarily made on the grounds of providing security will not generally be supported?

RESPONSE TO INSPECTOR'S QUESTIONS ON POLICY NBE1

- 2.5 In response to the Inspector's question 12.1, we have assessed that Policy NBE1 does unreasonably restrict development in the countryside.
- 2.6 Firstly, we stated in our representations to the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan that the introductory paragraphs to the policy (paragraphs 260 and 261) could usefully be expanded to include employment use as an appropriate use within the countryside. This would be a sound approach as it is consistent with national policy set out within the NPPF which supports economic growth in rural areas (paragraph 28 of the NPPF 2012, paragraph 83 of the NPPF 2018).
- 2.7 Our assessment is that policy NBE1 conflicts with some parts of policy ED2, which could cause confusion during the planning application process. To avoid this issue, we strongly recommend that policy NBE1 be modified to make clear that it does not apply to those areas outside settlement boundaries which are defined as Locally Important Employment Areas.
- 2.8 With regard to question 12.2, we have previously stated that Policy NBE1 is not in accordance with paragraph 55 of the NPPF (2012). Paragraph 55 of the 2012 NPPF sets out a positive approach to sustainable development in rural areas.
- 2.9 Policy NBE1 sets out at criteria (a) that development proposals within the countryside will only be supported where they are "meeting the proven essential need of a rural worker to live



permanently at or near their place of work”. The Eversley Storage ® site is supported by the provision of a residential flat which provides on-site accommodation for the site security personnel. This is to ensure the security and safe operation of the business.

- 2.10 Whilst criterion a) in its own right is consistent with paragraph 55 as it directly replicates the first bullet point, the wording of the supporting text goes beyond paragraph 55, setting out at paragraph 266 that “for the purposes of this policy, rural workers are defined as workers engaged primarily in farming, forestry or other rural based industries”. There is no reason to provide such a restrictive definition. The NPPF paragraph 55 refers purely to a ‘rural worker’, therefore there is no justification for this definition, it is not consistent with national policy and the Local Plan is therefore unsound in this regard.
- 2.11 Additionally, paragraph 267 goes beyond national policy and is not justified. The last sentence of the paragraph sets out that “Applications which are primarily made on the grounds of providing security will not generally be supported”. We have made clear representations to the Council through the consultation of the Regulation 19 Local Plan on this issue, but unfortunately, they have not been taken into account. See particularly paragraph 3.17 of that response.
- 2.12 We explained through those representations that The Eversley Storage ® site is supported by the provision of a residential flat which provides on-site accommodation for the site security personnel. This is to ensure the security and safe operation of the business. We are therefore strongly opposed to paragraph 267 of the Plan. This is unnecessary. Rural businesses can be particularly vulnerable to theft due to their remote location. In these cases, it can be wholly necessary to have a worker on site at all times to provide security for the business. Again, it is unnecessary to include this caveat within the Plan. It is not justified by any local evidence nor national policy from the NPPF and its associated Planning Practice Guidance. If there is a functional need for a worker to be housed on site, this should prove sufficient justification and can be considered on a case by case basis. It is also inconsistent with the broader aims of the NPPF and inconsistent with other parts of the local Plan as it conflicts with the principle of supporting the rural economy.
- 2.13 There is also an unnecessary degree of repetition within the criterion of NBE1 with other policies of the Local Plan; a number of the criterion directly replicate other policies of the Plan.



Criterion b) as set out within our statement in response to Matter 9 repeats Policy ED3, and criteria e) and f) repeat Policies H3 and H4.