

MEETING NOTES

Project: Rochford Allocations Document

Policy SER7 – South Canewdon

Date/Time: Wednesday 24th July 2013 2:30pm

Location: English Heritage offices, Cambridge

Attendees: Katharine Fletcher, Historic Environment Planning Adviser, English Heritage

David Grech, Historic Places Advisor, English Heritage

Sam Hollingworth, Planning Policy Team Leader, Rochford District Council

James Firth, Senior Planner, Strutt& Parker

John McLarty, Head of Regional Planning, Strutt& Parker

Welcome and introductions.

JM and JF provided information on the background to the site at South Canewdon, the previous representations made by Strutt and Parker, and how the site layout had evolved in response to the English Heritage representations.

English Heritage clarified at the outset of our meeting that they did not feel their fundamental concern relating to the encroachment of development to the west of the lane up to St Nicholas's church could be overcome by masterplanning. They indicated that the proposals were discussed on that basis.

EH stated that their concern relates not only to specific views of St Nicholas's church, but to how the church on the high ground is experienced on routes approaching it, and on arrival. In the opinion of KF and DG the setting of the church, on the extreme western edge of the village, makes a clear contribution to its significance. It was stated that St Nicholas's church also contributes to the significance of the conservation area and to the definition of the settlement.

EH clarified that while development on the east side of the lane up to the church could be seen as a rounding-off of the village this land was still sensitive. While EH does not object to the principle of development here the nature of development, including the number of dwellings, would need to respect the setting of the nearby listed buildings and conservation area.

JF explained that the supporting work carried out on the site included the detailed Landscape and Visual Appraisal prepared by James Blake Associates (JBA) and previously provided to English Heritage.

JF stated that Strutt & Parker had also reviewed English Heritage guidance in the 'Setting of Heritage Assets' and 'Seeing History in the View' documents.

JF circulated a potential illustrative layout plan demonstrating how development on the area to the west of the lane could be orientated so as to enhance and provide additional views up to the Listed Church. Views in this area at present were already restricted by the existing development along Lark Hill Road and by mature hedgerows. Views up the lane towards the church would be retained under the proposed scheme and it was now proposed to set back any built development from the lane to ensure this view was maintained. The proposed scheme includes an area of open space extending up towards the church which would add to its setting.

The English Heritage objection to Policy SER7 of the Rochford Allocations submission document was discussed.

KF and DG considered this to be a sensitive site and stated that development should be directed elsewhere if possible. However, the Planning Inspector will weigh the public benefits of alternatives. It was stated that the church currently had a rural setting.

DG stated that the main built up area of Canewdon was quite dense and there would be negative impact by extending over the road to the west. DG stated the existing buildings there are intermittent and on large plots with an out of village character.

JM asked English Heritage in which specific areas they felt harm would be caused by the proposed development.

DG stated that development to the west of the lane may lead to further incremental development in the future.

SH stated that he felt the Council had a defensible boundary and pointed out that the proposed open space area closest to the Church would remain in the Green Belt.

JM stated that the client would be willing to consider offering up the open space area of the site to the Parish Council or other suitable management body to secure it for the future if there were concerns about potential future development.

JF stated that long distance views toward the Church would remain unaffected as demonstrated in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal prepared by JBA and as previously discussed with KF. The important viewpoint from the bends on Lark Hill Road when Canewdon is approached from the west would also remain unaffected by development. From Lark Hill Road closer to the site, views were already restricted by the existing development as shown in the JBA report, further to the east there is a mature hedgerow on the north side of the road that prevents views from the road up towards the church. The proposed development provides an opportunity to enhance views to the Church and make the view a feature of the proposed development.

KF stated that it was a matter of weighing up the harm. KF also pointed out the need to consider the reverse view from the church outwards, including from the top of the church tower, to which there is understood to be occasional public access.

DG stated that if development proceeds the feeling will be that the village has jumped the road and that has to result in some harm.

KF enquired whether fewer dwellings could be accommodated in Canewdon.

SH pointed out that the adopted Core Strategy states that Canewdon will be extended to provide 60 homes and that these homes will be provided in south Canewdon. This was the result of a five year preparation and consultation process. SH referred to the significant constraints on development in other areas of Canewdon. He also stated that smaller available sites within existing residential boundaries had already been accounted for, and that the Rochford Core Strategy commits the Council to reallocating Green Belt land within this general location to accommodate 60 dwellings. Site SER7 was the site which the Council considered to be most suitable taking into account all material planning considerations.

KF stated that English Heritage had not identified a preferred site to accommodate Canewdon's dwelling allocation. English Heritage can comment on the heritage aspects of alternative sites in Canewdon, as invited to by the Planning Inspector.

It was agreed that this is a matter to be considered by the Planning Inspector as part of the forthcoming examination in public and it was accepted that a balance would have to struck taking into account all relevant considerations.

Notwithstanding the discussion outlined above, JM enquired what form of development English Heritage would like to see should the site come forward. JF stated that it would be very beneficial to discuss this in order to ensure that Strutt & Parker had sought to address the issues raised by English Heritage as far as is possible. JF also stated that a development brief approach was supported and could be a mechanism to help ensure only appropriate high quality development could proceed.

DG explained that any opinion he gave on this was inevitably framed subject to the caveat that EH do not feel development is suitable on this area of land due to its contribution to the rural setting of the settlement and its most prominent heritage asset, the church. There would appear also to be a likely knock-on effect for the number of homes required for the site to the east of lane if the intensity of development were reduced to the west.

DG outlined a number of issues that he considered should be taken into account should development proceed:

- Explore the possibility of a single bank of housing rather than two rows as part of the new allocation
- Link detached or bridge linked dwellings were considered to be less appropriate for this location. Detached cottage style homes are more likely to be appropriate.

- This is not a location where a quasi-farmyard type group of buildings is appropriate as the site would have more of an edge of village character.
- Seek to ensure the development does not take on an urban character. For example careful consideration should be given to the need for street lighting
- Principles should include shared access where possible. The existing lane for example should not be urbanised with a pavement.
- Consideration should also be given to the development on the east side of the lane which also has potential to impact on the church. KF / DG stated they do not believe that density should be increased on the east side of the lane in order to reduce the density to the west.
- Views down from the church should also be given consideration.

JF asked whether the principle of orientating development around views to the Church would be supported.

DG stated that if the existing hedge is to be broken then he considered it was appropriate to do this in such a way as to allow for a view up towards the Listed Church.

JF stated the he would prepare a note of the key points raised for circulation and potentially for submission to the Planning Inspector.

KF stated that further discussion, if needed, should take place following submission of statements to the Examination.