

**ROCHFORD SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN
STATEMENT BY ENGLISH HERITAGE**

ISSUE 2: CANEWDON

Hearing session on 4 September 2013:

Representations of Katharine Fletcher (28981)

References:

Pre- Submission Site Allocations Plan Site SER7

Test of soundness for representations:

Consistency with national policy

ROCHFORD SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

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Issue 2 Canewdon Site Allocations

Introduction

1. English Heritage's responsibilities, as the Government's adviser on the historic environment, include the protection and management of England's historic assets. In planning terms, this role includes providing advice to ensure that statute and national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework are reflected in local planning policy and practice. English Heritage is consulted on Local Development Plans under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and on planning applications affecting the site or setting of grade I or II* listed buildings under paragraph 8 of Circular 01/2001, and the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010.
2. English Heritage has made representations in relation to Site SER7, South Canewdon, in the Rochford Pre-submission Site Allocations Document.
3. The tests of soundness require that Local Development Plans should be consistent with national policy. English Heritage's representations in relation to the Pre-submission Site Allocations Plan are made in the context of the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in relation to the historic environment as a component of sustainable development.
4. This statement addresses our concerns regarding the impact of development on the setting and significance of St Nicholas' church within the context of the policies in the NPPF. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are particularly relevant:
 - Paragraph 7 defining the dimensions of sustainable development, including the historic environment
 - Paragraph 126 requiring a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in local plans, taking into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness
 - Paragraph 132 requiring great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets, including their settings.

Inspector's Questions for Canewdon site allocation

5. We address the questions on which English Heritage has a remit to comment below.

Question ii) Would development of Site SER7 conserve the heritage asset of St Nicholas' Church in a manner appropriate to its significance? How could this be achieved by design?

National policy and guidance

- 5.1 The NPPF defines significance for heritage policy¹ as:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'

English Heritage's concern in this case relates to the harm resulting to the setting of St Nicholas' church by development to the southwest. The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF² as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

- 5.2 English Heritage's representation relating to Site SER7 at Canewdon is based on the test of soundness requiring consistency with national policy in the NPPF. Guidance on setting is also contained in English Heritage's publication *'The Setting of Heritage Assets'* (October 2011)³ and the PPS5 Practice Guide, to which the former refers. While these documents require updating in the light of the NPPF they nevertheless continue to be useful in the analysis of setting issues. A copy of English Heritage's Guidance is available as a library document; an extract from PPS5 is at Appendix 1.

Consideration of the setting of St Nicholas' church

- 5.3 It is generally accepted that the part of Site SER7 in the field to the west of St Nicholas' church lies within the setting of the church, but it is necessary to understand whether that would result in harm to the significance of the heritage asset. To establish this, it is first necessary to consider how, in this instance, setting contributes to the significance of the church. The key attributes of the church, its physical surroundings, including its relationship to other heritage assets, the way it is appreciated and the building's associations are relevant considerations.

¹ NPPF, Annex 2, Glossary, p56

² Ibid

³ 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' is available on the Historic Environment Local Management website at: <http://www.helm.org.uk/guidance-library/setting-heritage-assets/>

5.4 St Nicholas' church dates from the 14th century, with its tower added in the early 15th century, and is listed at grade II*. The list description is included as Appendix 2. Rochford District Council's 'Canewdon Church Conservation Area and Management Plan', October 2007, (Evidence base Ref 35.D3) provides detailed information on the church and its surroundings.

5.5 Canewdon is located on a hilltop overlooking the River Crouch to the north and low-lying farmland to the south. Until the latter half of the 20th century the village was in two parts; a linear form collection of houses, pub and school running east/west at the eastern end of the hilltop, and a separate grouping of church, vicarage and Hall at the western end of the village. This pattern is clearly illustrated in the historic maps of the village, such as the late 19th and early 20th century Ordnance Survey maps (see Appendix 3).

5.6 Expansion of housing in the village during the 1960s has resulted in the two parts of the village being merged into a single entity, and the historic linear form eroded, with extensive development to both the north and south of the original single street.

5.7 The church of St Nicholas now stands at the western extremity of the village, with its castellated tower forming the last built element of the village, and visible over the surrounding farmland for a considerable distance in all directions (exploiting its location on the highest ground in the area). The setting of the church is today formed in part by the more recent 20th century housing (to the northeast, east and southeast), and in part by its more longstanding agrarian setting of open fields (to the northwest, west and southwest), together with Canewdon Hall Farm to the north, and the Old Vicarage (and associated paddock) to the south. The appraisal for the Canewdon Church Conservation Area (ReF 35.D3) identifies a number of key views out, particularly to the west and southwest.

5.8 A medieval church tower fulfilled a number of roles; as the tallest structure in the locality it signalled the pre-eminence of the Church in medieval society whilst also providing a symbolic link between earth and heaven. At a more everyday and practical level it provided housing for the bells, so that they could be heard over a wide distance when summoning the community to prayer.

5.9 To the contemporary observer, a church tower signals the presence of a village, when the village itself might remain unseen, and irrespective of one's beliefs, this medieval church is an object of aesthetic (or artistic) value. That aesthetic value maybe enhanced or diminished by its setting, but in this instance, to see the church tower rising above a field of corn, free of all other manmade structures, adds substantially to the aesthetic experience.

5.10 The conservation area appraisal provides some further information on the associative attributes of St Nicholas' Church. As noted above, it stands at the western extremity of the village and was historically detached from the main body of the village. The reasons for this are unclear. The conservation

area appraisal intriguingly notes that Canewdon church is a possible candidate for the site of the Minster built by King Canute in 1020 to commemorate the war-dead following his battle with the Saxons lead by Edmund Ironside, though this is a matter of academic dispute. However a pre-Conquest church is thought to have existed on this site and the parish church of St Nicholas is known to have been in existence in 1100. Historically there would also have been a close relationship between the church and Canewdon Hall, the moated site which was immediately northeast of the church. The surviving remnants of the hall were demolished and the moat levelled in 1966, when the current housing at Canewdon Hall Close was built.

5.11 It is also relevant to note that the commanding location of St Nicholas' tower resulted in it being used as a look-out post during World War I (providing early warning for Zeppelin raids on London). It may have performed a similar function in World War II working in conjunction with the nearby network of pillboxes in the event of an invasion onto this part of the Essex coast.

Impact on setting

5.12 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF is particularly relevant to this case. Not only does it require 'great weight' to be given to an asset's conservation, with the greatest weight given to those assets of the highest significance, but also notes that significance can be harmed or lost through development within the setting of an asset.

5.13 The significance of St Nicholas' church and the contribution of its setting to that significance are discussed above. Its physical surroundings (topography and open agrarian context to the west and southwest), the manner in which the church is experienced (in views from and towards the church, its visual dominance and role as a focal point, and the rarity of such a setting) and its associative attributes are all important contributors to its significance.

5.14 The proposed development to the west of the lane leading up to St Nicholas' church would intrude on these important attributes. In terms of the views and glimpses gained as the traveller approaches from the south and west, these are of value in a cumulative, kinetic sense, not just as static viewpoints. That the proposed development may not be visible from certain distant viewpoints is welcome, but the exceptional preservation of the rural setting of the church on the western edge of the village that can currently enjoyed closer-to makes the experience of arrival particularly rewarding.

5.15 The erosion of the historic setting of the church to the east by modern development places more significance on the surviving agrarian setting to the west, and in the view of English Heritage, any expansion of the village to the west of the lane leading up to the church would compromise the setting of the church and result in harm to its significance.

Design

5.16 In English Heritage's view the introduction of any built forms on Site SER7, west of the lane up to St Nicholas' church, would result in harm to the significance of the church. It would not be possible to mitigate that harm through design (though poor design and inappropriate scale, form and massing would exacerbate the harm).

5.17 Furthermore, it is noted that the land immediately to the north of the proposed housing is to be kept open for public use. The potential introduction in this area of play equipment, or other structures reasonably associated with open spaces such as seating, bins and lighting, would further urbanise the setting of the church, thereby compounding the harm rather than providing a buffer between the church and the new housing.

iii) Is the allocation contrary to the Policy H2 of the Core Strategy which refers to "South Canewdon" whereas at least part of the site lies to the west?

5.18 The part of Site SER7 to which English Heritage's representation relates is to the west of the village. We note the complexity of the evidence base for appraisal of sites adjoining Canewdon, but that several options to the south have been assessed.

iv) If Site SER7 is found unsound, would Option SC1 (Representation 28760) be sound?

5.19 Site SC1 lies on level ground at the base of the hill on which Canewdon is sited. It is on the south side of an east/west lane that currently forms the limit to the village, with post-war housing spilling down the hill on the north side of this lane.

5.20 In the view of English Heritage, due to the intervening post-war housing, development of this site would not result in harm to the significance of St Nicolas' Church, nor harm the character and appearance of either of the Canewdon conservation areas. Indeed, since the existing 20th century development is clearly visible over the medium distance from the south, a well designed development incorporating appropriate local species hedging and planting to the south, might provide a degree of enhancement.

5.21 English Heritage also notes that this site would be closer to the existing services and facilities in the village (including the public house, village store, school and village hall). It may also provide better opportunities for open space with fixed equipment, in accordance with the core strategy policy CLT7.

6. What change would English Heritage request to make the plan sound?

6.1 In our representation on the pre-submission plan English Heritage requested that the part of Site SER7 west of the lane to St Nicholas' church should be deleted from the plan allocation. We have commented above that a

site to the south of the village may be suitable to provide an appropriate alternative allocation, and many other combinations of sites to the south have been appraised during the planning process. None of these sites present the heritage concerns outlined above in relation to Site SER7. However, we acknowledge that we cannot judge the deliverability or other relevant aspects which will need to be considered in making a decision in this case.

6.2 We note that changes to the explanatory text to Site SER7 have been made by the Borough Council in the submitted Site Allocations Plan in response to English Heritage's representations. However, for the reasons explained in this statement, we do not consider that the harm resulting to the significance of St Nicholas' church could be mitigated by design or masterplanning.

7. Conclusion

7.1 English Heritage considers that proposed site allocation SER7 would be contrary to policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, and in particular, paragraphs 126 and 132. The harm to the significance of St Nicholas' church should be carefully considered in the context of the definition of sustainable development in paragraph 7 of the NPPF and the core planning principles in paragraph 17.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Extracts from: Planning for the Historic Environment:
Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, March 2010

Appendix 2:

List description for the church of St Nicholas, Canewdon

Appendix 3:

Historic Ordnance Survey map of Canewdon – 1891 to 1921

APPENDIX 1

Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, March 2010

The practice guide was issued with the publication of Planning Policy Statement 5, and remains extant following publication of the NPPF. The purpose and status is explained in the introduction. It is intended 'to assist local authorities, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing PPS5 and to help in the interpretation of policies within the PPS'. The practice guide does not constitute a statement of Government policy itself. It remains relevant in respect of the references to the setting of heritage assets in the NPPF, paras 132 and 133.

The following extracts are relevant:

Understanding setting and its contribution to significance

113. Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance, or may be neutral.

114. The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration; by spatial associations; and, by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each. They would be considered to be within one another's setting.

115. Setting will, therefore be more extensive than curtilage and its perceived extent may change as an asset and its surroundings evolve or as understanding of the asset improves.

116. The setting of a heritage asset can enhance its significance whether or not it was designed to do so. The formal parkland around a country house and the fortuitously developed multi-period townscape around a medieval church may both contribute to the significance.

117. The contribution that setting makes to the significance does not depend upon there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. This will vary over time and according to circumstance. Nevertheless, proper evaluation of the effect of change within the setting of a heritage asset will usually need to consider the implications, if any, for public appreciation of its significance.