

## SPATIAL POLICY (AREA) TEAM RESPONSE

FAO: Henry Jones

**Case References:** DM/14/00261 & DM/14/00263

**Proposals:** Residential schemes for approx:

- 115 units (ref 00261) full planning application
- 300 units (ref 00263) outline application

**Location:** South Eden Drive, Sedgefield

**Date:** 01 Apr 2014

**Policy Officer:** Stuart Carter, Senior Spatial Policy Officer

### 1. Summary of relevant planning policies and guidance

Source	Policy Refs.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	
County Durham Plan	Pre Submission Oct 2013
Local Plan for area	Sedgefield Local Plan
Other Background Documents	SHLAA, SHMA, SFRA, OSNA

### 2. Scope of this response

This response comments upon the acceptability of two schemes for residential development on land in Sedgefield. The sites lie within an allocation site known as 'South of Eden Drive' in the latest draft of the County Durham Plan (CDP). It is the Council's intention that the sites are developed as a comprehensive scheme and it is for this reason that I have prepared a single response for both sites.

### 3. Summary of the key planning policy considerations

- Acceptability of the proposals within the context of the existing planning policy framework in terms of:
  - Whether the schemes can be supported through the current policy framework for the area i.e. Sedgefield Borough Local Plan (LP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
  - Whether the sites are needed now to secure a 5 year housing land supply.

- Acceptability of the proposals within the context of the emerging County Durham Plan in terms of:
  - Whether the approval of the schemes now - in advance of the Plan - would prejudice the emerging strategy for the area.
  - Whether the proposals represent sustainable development or are capable of becoming so through the Development Management process.
  - Whether other benefits - which would be required by the forthcoming Plan - could be secured through the Development Management process.
  - Whether there is local support for the proposals.

#### 4. Detailed response

When considering the acceptability of the pre-application queries, in advance of the adoption of the CDP, the following planning policy issues are relevant.

#### Acceptability of the proposals within the context of the existing planning policy framework

- **Site context in relation to 'Saved' Policies of the Sedgefield Borough LP and the NPPF**

The sites are located on the edge of the built up area of Sedgefield, to the north of the A689 which bypasses and forms the southern extent of the village. The sites are well related in terms of access to a range of services and facilities in the settlement, including schools, shops and health facilities.

Policy H8 of the LP defines a series of Residential Frameworks for Larger Villages, including Sedgefield. The implication is that housing development will normally be approved where it lies inside of the framework, to help to contain settlements and prevent sprawl into the surrounding countryside.

The sites are within an area of land that is regarded in the LP as forming a 'Green Wedge' to the edge of the settlement. Policy E4 states that proposals for built development will normally be refused in Green Wedges, except for certain uses including outdoor leisure, wildlife reserves and other appropriate open space uses.

While the LP remains a statutory tool for determining applications, it can only be afforded material weight where it accords with the NPPF. In this context for example residential frameworks/boundaries are not fully supported by the Framework, which instead takes a more flexible approach to settlement growth and development.

In terms of open space classifications and needs assessment the designations set down in the LP have been updated by the Council's Open Space Need Assessment

(OSNA). This document categorises the various typologies of open space throughout the County and also appraises the quality and supply of the different types of open space, according to defined geographical areas. Green Wedges are not carried over into the OSNA and as such the Green Wedge in question is not defined for specific open space use within the auspices of this document. As such it is considered that the 'Green Wedge' LP designation carries limited weight in formal NPPF terms.

The NPPF observes three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The planning system must perform a number of roles:

- an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. This means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

The document sets out a positive framework for evaluating schemes i.e. development should be approved where it is sustainable (and where it does not conflict with the Development Plan).

- **Site in the context of whether it is needed now to secure a 5 year housing land supply**

The NPPF sets out the Government's objective of ensuring that the planning system delivers a flexible, responsive supply of land. The NPPF requires Local Planning