Kettering Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan Examination – Matter 2 Statement (Spatial Strategy)

Date: September 2020
For: Persimmon Homes Ltd

Issue: Is the Plan positively prepared and justified, effective and consistent with national policy and the JCS in relation to the scale and distribution of development proposed and the site selection process?

Q1/2: What context does the JCS provide in terms of the scale of development required in Kettering borough? What are the specific requirements for housing, employment and town centres? Is the scale of development in the plan consistent with this? What context does the JCS provide in terms of the distribution of development in Kettering borough? Is the proposed distribution of development in Kettering as the Growth Town and Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell as Market Towns in accordance with the JCS and sustainable development principles?

1.1.1 Policy 28 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2016 (JCS) sets out the housing requirement in Kettering Borough for the period 2011 to 2031. This requirement is 10,400 or 520 homes per annum. According to the Council, there are committed sites, including windfalls, to provide 11,355 new homes to 2031 on a Borough-wide basis. However, the overall housing requirement figure is apportioned in the JCS in Policy 29 to the named settlements (Kettering, Burton Latimer, Desborough, and Rothwell) and the rural area.

1.1.2 The JCS has identified the need for 1,190 homes over the plan period in Rothwell. Against this figure, there are 1,053 completions and commitments in Rothwell thereby leaving a residual need in the town to be met through allocating additional housing land in the Part 2 Plan. We note that at the other named settlements (Kettering, Burton Latimer and Desborough) completions and commitments already outstrip the individual appointment for each settlement. It is sensible to ensure the same level of “headroom” is available at Rothwell in order to realise the JCS’s spatial strategy.

1.1.3 Planning for more homes than the minimum requirement far from threatening the JCS’s spatial strategy is a sensible way to ensure that it is achieved as well as retaining a rolling supply of housing land. This is particularly the case at Rothwell since unlike other identified settlements it has not yet met its strategic housing apportionment through completions and commitments. It is therefore essential for plan soundness that additional land is allocated at Rothwell.

1.1.4 Allocating additional land at the Market Towns and the Growth Town is entirely in line with the JCS’s urban focused strategy and the thrust of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states at paragraph 103 that the planning system should focus growth on locations, which are or can be made sustainable.
Q3: Does the Plan include sufficient flexibility and contingencies to take account of any changes in circumstances, including any review of the JCS?

1.1.5 Yes. The plan offers sufficient flexibility insofar as it will meet and exceed the JCS requirement for housing growth at each main settlement as set out above. The review of the JCS has not formally commenced but it seems likely that this will only deal with high-level strategic issues beyond the scope of the Part 2 Plan and will extend beyond Kettering Borough to the entirety of North Northamptonshire much like its predecessor. The purpose of this plan is not to address strategic issues but to deliver the strategy of the current JCS. Whilst sufficient flexibility should be provided to meet JCS targets, this has been provided through enabling more land to come forward than the minimum JCS housing requirement.

Q4: Was the methodology used to assess and select the proposed site allocations appropriate? Were reasonable alternatives considered and tested? Are the reasons for selecting the preferred sites and rejecting others clear?

1.1.6 The Council’s methodology for assessing site allocations was initially set out in the Housing Allocations Background Paper dated February 2012 [HOU9]. The Initial Assessment sieved sites according to whether they were located within or adjacent to Kettering, Burton Latimer, Desborough, or Rothwell the objective being to discount those that did not lie in these locations, amongst other criteria. Whilst this approach has been refined through subsequent work, it aligns with the urban-focus of the JCS and on that basis, these are correctly identified as the key locations for growth where the Part 2 Plan is considering the release of land.

1.1.7 Most of the substantive assessment work of sites that have been retained for consideration and promoted post-2014 is contained in the Housing Allocations Background Paper dated May 2018 [HOU6]. This presents and applies a clear and consistent framework across the various site options on a settlement-by-settlement basis. The Sustainability Appraisal dated December 2019 [SA1] discusses and tests alternative sites, which, together with the various background papers, provides a clear justification for site selection and rejection according to a consistent methodology.