Matter 13: Rural Areas
Statement by Kettering Borough Council
September 2020

Kettering Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan (SSP2) (2011-2031) Examination

Matter 13 – Rural Areas

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### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RS5 General Development Principles in the Rural Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 1: Are the general development principles for rural areas justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national policy and local context, including meeting the requirements of the JCS?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 2: How does Policy RS5 relate to the principles in RS1, RS2, RS3 and RS4? Would they all apply in some instances? Do they repeat each other? Is the Policy necessary and what does it seek to achieve?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 3: How does this generic policy sit alongside the village specific development principles policies? Is there repetition? And alongside the housing allocation site policies? Could a number of these policies apply to a particular site? Which would take precedence?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 4: In paragraph 13.23 what does the historic core relate to? What other locations are likely to be deemed appropriate? Do the alterations under the Highway Act referred to need planning permission and is the inclusion of what appears to be policy in the supporting text effective?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 5: Is criterion a covered by other generic development management policies in the JCS or elsewhere in the Plan? Is the test at criterion b in line with the Framework and its approach to heritage assets? What is a ‘potential moderate village expansion’ referred to in criterion c? Are criterion d and f repetitive?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 6: Do the criteria apply to historic farm buildings only? Would non-historic farm buildings or other rural buildings generally not fall for consideration here? What is the justification for criterion h and the requirement for an element of employment? Is this in line with national policy and will viability be a consideration? Can criterion i be explained? What is most damaging, to what and why? Is criterion j about materials or design? Do all the villages have a historic core as referred to in criterion j?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 7: Is criterion k required and is it repeated by other policies? Does it apply to car parking or all parking? How is it</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13: Rural Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement by Kettering Borough Council</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>September 2020</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 8: Do all the criteria in each list apply? If so should an ‘and’ be inserted at the end of the second to last criterion?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Village Specific Development Principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 9: Are the development principles policies for the specific villages listed below justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national policy and local context, including the JCS?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 10: Do the policies repeat the general development principles set out in RS5? What is their relationship with the requirements for the housing allocations in the respective villages?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 11: Is it clear that the principles are locally specific to each village? Have the identified improvements identified in some of the policies been costed? Do they raise issues of viability? Do the criteria align with the requirements of the Framework for example with regard to the tests for heritage assets?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matter 13 – Question 12: Do the policy requirements in the specific villages replicate other generic development management policies (in the JCS or elsewhere) which would be required in all instances, such as those requiring adequate off-street car parking etc? Is it necessary or effective for these policies to refer to compliance with other policies in the Plan?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix 1: List of Reference Documents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

1.1. This statement sets out the Council’s response to Matter 13: Rural Areas, questions 1 - 12, in respect of the following issues:

- Whether the Local Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to development principles in rural areas.

1.2. The statement also addresses any representations which the Council considers are of particular significance or concern, where this is the case the relevant respondent number and comment id are provided.

1.3. All documents referred to in this statement are listed in Appendix 1, submission document numbers are provided throughout where applicable.

RS5 General Development Principles in the Rural Area

2. Matter 13 – Question 1: Are the general development principles for rural areas justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national policy and local context, including meeting the requirements of the JCS?

2.1. The general development principles for the rural area are justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national policy and local context. Section 12 of the NPPF recognises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF highlights the importance of being clear about design expectations and paragraph 125 states that plans should set out a clear design vision and expectations and that these should be developed with local communities and be grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each areas defining characteristics. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that the level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances of each place. The general development principles are appropriate in the context of national policy.

2.2. Good design is a key element of the Place Shaping Agenda that underpins the JCS, Policy 8 of the JCS sets out Place Shaping Principles. The development principles in the SSP2 set out additional local detail and have regard to the context of the JCS.

2.3. As set out in paragraph 13.22 of PKB1, the Rural Masterplanning Report - 2012 (RA3) has shaped the development principles for the rural area in Policy RS5. The Rural Masterplanning Report, sought to undertake a detailed analysis of rural settlements, focusing on their needs, aspirations and potential for future development, as set out in section 1.3 of RA3, consultation with Parish Council was undertaken through the preparation of the document.

2.2. Part 2 of the Rural Masterplanning Report recognises that the issues, opportunities and character of each rural settlement are unique, however from undertaking this analysis it was evident that a number of common themes
became apparent. These are set out in Part 2 of the report (RA3), and are as follows:

- Farm buildings
- Materials
- Parking
- Highway standards

2.3. More general considerations have also been given to scale and form of development in the rural settlements, as reflected in criteria a) to f) in Policy RS5. Criteria g) to k) reflect the common themes identified through the Rural Masterplanning Report (RA3).

2.4. The Council considers that the criteria set out in Policy RS5 are sufficiently generic to enable them to be applied to all rural settlements, whilst providing a locally specific policy, providing greater detail, to shape development in addition to existing policy in the JCS, primarily Policy 8 – North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles. The criteria within Policy RS5 must be applied to all development in the rural area, along with Policy 8 of the JCS, as set out in paragraph 13.22 of PKB1 and settlement specific development principles.

2.5. For this reason, the Council considers that Policy RS5 has sufficient regard to local policy, in the form of the JCS, and national policy. The Rural Masterplanning Report provides a robust evidence on which this policy has been based. The Council considers that the results of the analysis undertaken remains relevant and appropriate to inform the content of Policy RS5 of PKB1.

3. Matter 13 – Question 2: How does Policy RS5 relate to the principles in RS1, RS2, RS3 and RS4? Would they all apply in some instances? Do they repeat each other? Is the Policy necessary and what does it seek to achieve?

3.1. Policy RS5 seeks to provide general criteria which all development in the rural area should follow where the criteria are relevant to the proposal. Policies RS1 – 3 provide more specific criteria, related to the category of the villages, as identified in the Categorisation of Villages Background Paper (RA1). Policy RS4 seeks to provide additional detail in relation to development in open countryside.

3.2. The criteria within Policy RS5 maybe not all be applicable or relevant to a specific proposal, the criteria would be applied where relevant to the proposal. Policy RS5 applies to all development in the rural area, whereas policies RS1-4 are applied depending on where the proposal is located.

3.3. The criteria in Policy RS5 provide general development principles which are applicable across the rural area whereas Polices RS1-4 provide location specific guidance which provide further guidance for proposals within each of these locations. The criteria in Policy RS5 cover a wider range of design issues than those included in Polices RS1 to RS4. In cases where the policies cover
similar issues it is considered that Policy RS5 provides general policy and policies RS1-4 provide greater emphasis on the varying specific considerations for these factors with the different categories and the open countryside.

4. Matter 13 – Question 3: How does this generic policy sit alongside the village specific development principles policies? Is there repetition? And alongside the housing allocation site policies? Could a number of these policies apply to a particular site? Which would take precedence?

4.1. Policy RS5 provides general development principles, which are applicable to all development in the rural area. Whilst the village specific development principles policies provide local development principles specific for each of these villages, these relate specifically to the characteristics of the individual village and are not considered to repeat the general development principles but to provide village specific development principles.

4.3. The housing allocation policies seek to provide a greater level of detail to that already provided for through Policy RS5 and the relevant village specific development principles. The criteria within the site specific policies have been informed by a robust site assessment process, including consultation with statutory consultees, and, by definition and the level of detail, are only applicable to the development of a particular housing allocation site.

4.4. The policies should be read alongside each other, and a number of the policies could apply to a particular site, where this is the case the more detailed development principles should take precedence as these provide more detailed criteria in relation to the specific location of the proposal.

4.5. The housing allocation site policies will be the most important consideration when assessing proposals for these sites. This is because of the level of detail within these policies to ensure that development of these sites is appropriate, especially in terms of scale, form, materials and setting, as set out in paragraph 13.22 of PKB1. The criteria within these policies has, to some extent, already considered the more general development principles and village specific development principles. Nevertheless, these policies should be applied to proposals for these sites alongside the housing site policies.

5. Matter 13 – Question 4: In paragraph 13.23 what does the historic core relate to? What other locations are likely to be deemed appropriate? Do the alterations under the Highway Act referred to need planning permission and is the inclusion of what appears to be policy in the supporting text effective?

5.1. The reference to the ‘historic core’ relates to the Rural Masterplanning Report (RA3) and is the area of the settlement which contains the historic core of the village. These areas are shown on the maps contained in the Rural Masterplanning Report and identified in the character areas for each village. Other locations where this may be appropriate could include locations on the edge of the historic core or areas where a particular character exists. Within the historic core paragraph 13.23 expects the alterations listed to be of
5.2 This is included in the supporting text rather than the policy because it is recognised that these alterations often do not need planning permission, the text therefore seeks to encourage the use of traditional materials and design in these instances. This seeks to ensure areas are enhanced through other forms of development which support other policies which seek to ensure high standards of design.

6. Matter 13 – Question 5: Is criterion a covered by other generic development management policies in the JCS or elsewhere in the Plan? Is the test at criterion b in line with the Framework and its approach to heritage assets? What is a ‘potential moderate village expansion’ referred to in criterion c? Are criterion d and f repetitive?

6.1. The Council recognise that criterion a) covers issues similar to those addressed by other development management policies in PKB1 and the JCS, especially Policy 8. However, the inclusion of this criterion within Policy RS5 is to ensure that sufficient emphasis is placed on considerations for height, scale and mass in relation to neighbouring properties, especially in the rural area, where settlements have more sensitive character.

6.2. Criterion b) seeks to provide protection and enhancement of the character of settlements in general in the rural area and recognises that this is particularly important in settlements with Conservation Areas, however the criterion does not seek to specifically address development within Conservation Areas which is already addressed by Policy 2 of the JCS and national policy. Paragraphs 8.26 to 8.36 of the SSP2 (PKB1) set out the approach to heritage assets.

6.3. The term ‘potential moderate village expansion’ mentioned in criterion c) originates from RA3. Although this term is not explicitly defined in the Rural Masterplanning Report, the Council considers a moderate village expansion would involve 20 or more dwellings.

6.4. Although the Council acknowledges that criteria d) and f) of Policy RS5 are similar, they are subtly different and seek to achieve different things. The former focuses on accessibility, while the latter considers the character of the settlement.

7. Matter 13 – Question 6: Do the criteria apply to historic farm buildings only? Would non-historic farm buildings or other rural buildings generally not fall for consideration here? What is the justification for criterion h and the requirement for an element of employment? Is this in line with national policy and will viability be a consideration? Can criterion i be explained? What is most damaging, to what and why? Is criterion j about materials or design? Do all the villages have a historic core as referred to in criterion j?
7.1. The criteria only apply to historic farm buildings, Part 2 of the Rural Masterplanning Report (**RA3**), page 9, sets out the background to the inclusion of these criteria. The purpose of the criteria is to seek to retain a record of the role of farm buildings historically in villages.

7.2. Farms have historically provided an important role in providing employment in villages and therefore criterion h seeks to retain an element of employment provision through redevelopment where this is possible. The NPPF, section 6, seeks to support a prosperous rural economy and this criterion supports this aim. The Whole Plan Viability Assessment (VIA1) assessed the impact of this policy on viability as low, however viability would be a consideration when considering proposals.

7.3. Criterion i seeks to ensure that, prior to considering redevelopment for residential uses, alternative non-residential uses are considered. Residential uses are likely to involve the most significant alterations to historic farm buildings and therefore are likely to be most damaging in terms of the retention of historic character and appearance of historic farm buildings. The Council considers a modification is required to this criterion to clarify this. The Council will update the Schedule of Proposed Changes to the Publication Plan and will add this to the Examination webpage before the hearing sessions commence.

7.4. Criterion j relates to materials, the Rural Masterplanning Report (**RA3**), page 9, sets out the background to this criterion.

7.5. Most villages have a historic core or historic area identified in the Rural Masterplanning Report, exceptions include Mawsley which is a new village where the whole village has its own unique character and Newton which is a very small village where there are no distinct character areas.

8. **Matter 13 – Question 7: Is criterion k required and is it repeated by other policies? Does it apply to car parking or all parking? How is it envisaged that car parking would affect the existing network of streets in a village?**

8.1. Criterion k seeks to ensure that the car does not become the focus of the street scene, this was a particular issue which was identified through the Rural Masterplanning Report (**RA3**) and the inclusion of this criterion seeks to address this issue in the rural area. The criterion applies to all vehicular parking. Within villages street networks are often informal in layout, criterion k seeks to ensure that parking is incorporated in a sensitive manner and that new development does not introduce urban style layouts. Page 9 of the Rural Masterplanning Report (**RA3**) provides some examples of how this can be achieved.

9. **Matter 13 – Question 8: Do all the criteria in each list apply? If so should an ‘and’ be inserted at the end of the second to last criterion?**

9.1. The criteria in each list should apply to any relevant proposals, under the headings within Policy RS5, ‘and’ should be inserted at the end of the second
to last criterion to clarify this. The Council will update the Schedule of Proposed Changes to the Publication Plan and will add this to the Examination webpage before the hearing sessions commence.

Village Specific Development Principles

(ASH1 Ashley, BRA1 Braybrooke, CRA1 Cranford, GED1 Geddington, GRA1 Grafton Underwood, GRC1 Great Cransley, HAR1 Harrington, LOA1 Little Oakley, LOD1 Lodddington, MAW1 Mawsley, NEW1 Newton, PYT1 Pytchley, RUS1 Rushton, STA1 Stoke Albany, SUT1 Sutton Bassett, THM1 Thorpe Malsor, WAR1 Warkton, WEK1 Weekley, WES1 Weston by Welland, WIL1 Wilbarston)

10. Matter 13 – Question 9: Are the development principles policies for the specific villages listed below justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national policy and local context, including the JCS?

10.1. The village specific development principles have been derived from the Rural Masterplanning Report (RA3). The Rural Masterplanning Report involved a detailed analysis of the rural area. The project took a holistic look at each of the Borough’s village’s needs, aspirations, opportunities for improvement and their capacity for future development and sought to ensure that any new development in villages respects and enhances the qualities of that village which makes it special. Paragraph 1.5 of RA3 provides the methodology used for undertaking the assessment. For each of the villages consideration was given to the following:

- Movement
- Isochrones
- Footpaths
- Gateways
- Key Buildings
- Open Space
- Character/Character Areas
- Public realm and landscape

10.2. The analysis resulted in the identification of, development principles for each of the rural settlements in the Borough. In addition to those considerations set out above, the capacity and opportunities for development have been taken into account. The development principles identified through the Rural Materplanning Report have been subject to consultation through the preparation of the SSP2 and have been amended to take into account representations received. Detail of the consultation undertaken is set out in the Regulation 22 Consultation Statement (CON1).

1.1. The Council considers that the Rural Masterplanning represents a robust local evidence document, which has informed the settlement specific development principles policies in PKB1. These development principles, alongside the general development principles and housing allocation development principles
will ensure that new development respects and enhances the qualities and characteristics of individual villages.

1.2. These policies are considered to have regard to existing policies in the JCS, paragraph 13.22 of PKB1 sets out that these policies should be applied in conjunction with Policy 8 (North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles). The settlement specific policies supplement this strategic level policy as well as other policies in PKB1 such as Policy RS5 (General Development Principles in the Rural Area). Paragraph 2.1 above sets out the approach to design in the NPPF, the settlement specific development principles are considered to have regard to this approach. The Council, therefore, considers that these policies have regard for the local policy context as well as the NPPF.

11. Matter 13 – Question 10: Do the policies repeat the general development principles set out in RS5? What is their relationship with the requirements for the housing allocations in the respective villages?

11.1. These policies provide settlement specific development principles which provide location specific development principles, in some cases they provide additional detail to the general development principles contained in Policy RS5. The settlement specific policies provide further emphasis on specific elements which relate to the local context within specific settlements.

11.2. The housing allocation policies have been informed through a robust and through site assessment process and consultation with statutory consultees, which seeks to shape development of the specific sites where consideration has been given to scale, form, materials and setting, set out in paragraph 13.22 of PKB1.

11.3. The housing allocation development principles provide specific policy for these allocations but should be read alongside the settlement specific development principles to ensure that proposals fully address the development principles for that particular settlement.

11.4. The settlement specific development principles ensure that where development comes forward on sites which are not allocated in the SSP2 development principles are set out to ensure that proposals respect and enhance the characteristics of that settlement.

12. Matter 13 – Question 11: Is it clear that the principles are locally specific to each village? Have the identified improvements identified in some of the policies been costed? Do they raise issued of viability? Do the criteria align with the requirements of the Framework for example with regard to the tests for heritage assets?

12.1. The Council considers that the principles within these policies are locally specific. This is because they are primarily based on the analysis of the rural settlements in the Rural Masterplanning Report (RA3). The themes within these policies are evidently similar, based on the methodology of RA3, however
consideration is given to specific features, characteristics and buildings within each of villages. In addition, particular opportunities for enhancements have been identified through this work.

12.2. The identified improvements within these policies have not been costed, nor have they been considered through the viability assessment (VIA1). However, the purpose to identifying these enhancements/improvements, in some of the rural settlements is to give an indication of potential enhancements/improvements which exist should the opportunity/finances become available through development in the village. However, there is an element of flexibility to this part of these policies, because the Council recognises that not all development will be able to contribute to the facilitation of these enhancements, primarily because of viability.

12.3. The development principles identify particular issues in relation to the historic environment but do not seek to specifically address requirements relating to historic assets which are already addressed by Policy 2 of the JCS and national policy. Paragraphs 8.26 to 8.36 of the SSP2 (PKB1) set out the approach to heritage assets.

13. Matter 13 – Question 12: Do the policy requirements in the specific villages replicate other generic development management policies (in the JCS or elsewhere) which would be required in all instances, such as those requiring adequate off-street car parking etc? Is it necessary or effective for these policies to refer to compliance with other policies in the Plan?

13.1. The settlement specific development principles identify particular issues within that individual settlement and seek to highlight the importance of these where a particular issue has been identified, for example the need for adequate off road parking has been identified in settlements where particular issues have been identified with on-street parking. It is not considered necessary for these policies to refer to compliance with other policies in the Plan, however if the Inspector considers this is necessary the Council would support modifications to the relevant policies.

14. Conclusion

14.1. The general development principles in Policy RS5 seek to ensure that development in the rural area in founded on the principle of good design, which forms an important element of sustainable development as set out in Section 12 of the NPPF and at a more local level in Policy 8 of the JCS, which provides a strong emphasis on place shaping.

14.2. The categorisation of the villages and the associated policies (RS1-3) focus on the principles behind this categorisation, ensuring that the characteristics that have been identified in these settlements through the Rural Masterplanning Report, in terms of design, character and capacity for growth are reflected in these policies. Whilst Policy RS4 provides further policy guidance for development in the open countryside and recognise the importance of farming
and agriculture in accordance with Section 6 of the NPPF, in the context of forming an important part of the rural economy.

14.3. The Rural Masterplanning Report (RA3) provides a useful and detailed evidence base to justify and inform the village specific development principles policies, recognising the unique characteristics of these settlement, and ensuring that further development in these settlements is reflected of these characteristics.

14.4. The Council considers the site assessment process which informed the site policies to be robust and thorough, to ensure that development on these sites is suitable in terms of scale, character and design. Collectively therefore, the combination of policies RS1-4, RS5 as well as the village and site specific policies provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to shaping development in the rural areas within Kettering Borough.

14.5. Therefore, the Council considers that the Local Plan has been positively prepared and is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to development principles in rural areas.
Appendix 1 – List of Reference Documents

- PKB1 – SSP2 Publication Plan
- NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework
- PPG – Planning Practice Guidance
- JCS1 – North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-20
- RA3 – Rural Masterplanning Report
- VIA1 - Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan Viability Study
- CON1 - Regulation 22 Consultation Statement