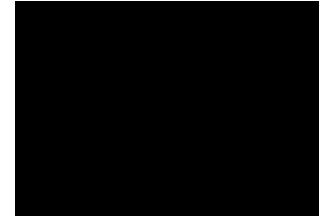


Date 19th April 2024
Our Ref: 24.3013

South Kesteven District Council,
Council Offices,
The Picture House,
St Catherine's Road,
Grantham
NG31 6TT



Dear Sir/Madam

Re: South Kesteven Local Plan Review Preferred Options Consultation – Land between School Lane and Abbey Lane, Sedgebrook

These representations have been prepared by Boyer on behalf of our client J E Wade & Sons in respect of the South Kesteven Local Plan Review – Preferred Options consultation. The primary focus of this letter has been the proposed changes to Policy SP3 Residential Development within Settlements, and the Settlement Hierarchy Review which forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan review.

These representations make specific reference to land between School Lane and Abbey Lane, in Sedgebrook which represent two separate small scale infill opportunities for residential development within the built up area of Sedgebrook. Both sites were separately submitted to the Council's Call for Sites in 2021 and are shown on the below plan.



Whilst it is too early in the Local Plan process to comment on the soundness of the Plan, as the Local Plan review progresses it will need to be prepared in accordance with paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) including whether the plan is:



- a) Positively prepared;
- b) Justified;
- c) Effective; and
- d) Consistent with national policy.

Policy SP3 Residential Development within Settlements

We welcome the proposed changes to Policy SP3, which now supports residential development in all settlements provided that it is within a substantially built up area, rather than within a “substantially built up frontage or re-development opportunity (previously developed land)” as was previously proposed.

Our representations to the Issues and Options consultation in 2020 had suggested that the Council should review this policy as it was too prescriptive and unnecessarily restricted development to come forward. The policy would not have facilitated windfall development which would have met the Council’s vision or the latest NPPF requirements of allowing for 10% of housing supply to be delivered through small sites. The proposed changes to the policy allows for windfall development which is appropriate in relation to the surrounding built-up form and character of villages throughout South Kesteven to come forward to meet the windfall requirements of the Local Plan review. Small scale growth in villages is important to allow for the vitality of villages and viability of the services and facilities within them, and thus we are pleased to see the changes to policy SP3.

Our client’s land present an excellent opportunity which could come forward as windfall development within the Local Plan period. It would create a logical, but small scale, extension to the village of Sedgebrook.

Settlement Hierarchy Review

Part of the Evidence Base for the South Kesteven Local Plan review is the Settlement Hierarchy Review (February 2024). This document reviews the settlement hierarchy in the adopted South Kesteven Local Plan, and identifies any changes which have happened in the settlements in the District since 2017, to determine which are currently the most sustainable and where the Local Plan review should direct growth. The Settlement Hierarchy in the Local Plan review will influence where development can occur, and what is appropriate in each location.

We note that the methodology for the Settlement Hierarchy review included reviewing each of the settlements in South Kesteven based on a questionnaire sent to the Parish Councils, and a desk top study. Each settlement was then given an overall score through on the Village Survey Scoring matrix which reflected the services and facilities in the settlements, with each service being given a weighted score based on their importance. Following the scoring, each settlement was assessed on the below criteria to determine which category the settlement was most suited too;

1. Does the settlement have a primary school and a local shop? (if yes, it would be classified as a Large Village)
2. Does the settlement have more than 30 dwellings? (If no, it would be classified as Open Countryside)
3. Does the settlement have at least one primary facility? Assessed to be one of the following: local shop, school, public house, and village hall. (If yes, it would be classified as a Small Village, otherwise Open Countryside)
4. Is the settlement within a 10 minute walking distance from another settlement with a primary facility? (If yes, it would be classified as a Small village, otherwise Open Countryside)

We have concerns with the Council's rather binary approach of classifying the settlements in South Kesteven, which relies solely on four yes or no questions. It does not seem that the score given to each of the settlements through the Village Survey Scoring matrix has had any impact on their given settlement category. The Council must recognise that there are multiple aspects which should be considered when determining how a settlement should be classified within the settlement hierarchy, and especially when it comes to Small Villages where the facilities present differ from settlement to settlement. We consider that the four questions used do not reflect a robust approach to categorising each settlement as it does not provide a comprehensive view of the sustainability of each settlement. We propose that the Council should use the Village Survey Scoring to determine how to classify a settlement, as it provides a better view of the sustainability of each settlement and how suitable they would be for further growth, especially since the Council has already adopted a weighted approach to the scoring matrix which scores facilities such as a primary schools higher than nurseries.

We are disappointed to see that following the 2024 Settlement Hierarchy Review, Sedgebrook is no longer classified as a Smaller Village, which the review attributes to the loss of facilities (which we are assuming to be a public house based on the 2017 Settlement Hierarchy Review), and is now classified in the Local Plan review as open countryside.

The Village Survey Scoring Results has given Sedgebrook a cumulative score of 21. Out of all settlements assessed in the Settlement Hierarchy review, Sedgebrook scores relatively well, and sits well within the top half of settlements, at a shared 19th place, which demonstrates the sustainability of the settlement. Furthermore, Sedgebrook scores higher than 45 other settlements which have been classified as "Small Villages" simply due to them having one of the key facilities required in the above questions. According to the Settlement Hierarchy Review, the Plan would therefore favour growth / development in for example the settlement of Oasby which only scored 3 points in the Village Survey Scoring but has still been identified as a Small Village due to it having a Public House.

We consider Sedgebrook to be a sustainable location for small scale growth during the Plan period. Sedgebrook has approximately 200 homes, well above the 30 dwelling requirement for Small Villages, and has regular bus services from the village to the nearby town of Grantham. The village has a range of services such as a tea and coffee shop, nursery, offices, church, open space / park and a social club.

The social club is open to the public Fridays and Sundays, and hosts a variety of activities throughout the week, such as a book club, pilates, and dog training sessions. The Sedgebrook Social Club is also the meeting place for the Parish Council. We consider that the Sedgebrook

Social Club provides the village with similar facilities as either a pub or a village hall would, and Sedgebrook should therefore both score higher in the Village Survey Scoring, but also be considered to have a key facility, and therefore be classified as a “Smaller Village”.

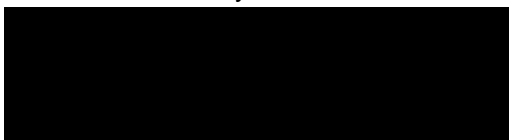
Conclusion

We welcome the changes to policy SP3 in the Local Plan review. These changes will allow for the windfall development required throughout the Plan period to come forward within appropriate and sustainable locations.

We urge the Council to reconsider the methodology of their Settlement Hierarchy review to ensure that a more encompassing approach is used, which recognises the sustainability of each settlement, without discounting settlements which lack specific facilities but have plenty of others. We suggest that the Council should base their Settlement Hierarchy review on the Village Survey Scoring results, rather than the four questions, to allow for a more balanced and comprehensive view of the sustainability of each settlement.

We consider that Sedgebrook is a sustainable location and has the facilities required for it to be classified as a Smaller Village. We hope that the Council reassess the methodology used for their settlement hierarchy to ensure that the Local Plan review has a robust evidence base to produce a Local Plan which can be found sound at examination.

Yours sincerely



Alice Salomonsson
Planner

