
Examination Statement

Savills on behalf of Countryside

Dartford Borough Council Local Plan

Examination in Public

September 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Examination Statement is submitted by Savills on behalf of Countryside. Countryside Properties is a FTSE 250 top ten housebuilder, recognised as being at the forefront of the delivery of sustainable development and new communities. Countryside Properties has a strong local presence with offices in Sevenoaks and Brentwood and have a wealth of local experience.
- 1.2. Countryside Properties Representations to Dartford Borough Council (DBC) Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation has been given the following reference: **1484**.

2. Response to Inspectors Initial Matters, Issues and Questions

Matter 8 : Transport and Infrastructure

Issue : Whether the Local Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to transport and infrastructure

Q126. Does the plan adequately identify other key supporting infrastructure including, but not limited to, healthcare, waste, community facilities?

Countryside Properties does not consider sufficient attention has been given to the future needs of the Darent Valley Hospital as part of the Draft Local Plan process and the negative impact its continued Green Belt designation will have on its ability to expand to meet future needs during the plan period. Gravesham Borough Council representations recommended that Dartford undertake a Green Belt review to look at this issue. However, despite this formal request no such review has taken place nor has the Council justified its retention within the Green Belt as set out within our Stage 1 Hearing Statement.

The hospital is almost completely surrounded by development and major roads and it will need to expand to meet the projected growth of both Dartford and Gravesham. The continued Green Belt designation of this major developed, and important strategic site is not justified and will impede and set an automatic presumption against future expansion to meet the needs of the 500,000+ residents it serves. Gravesham Borough Council also suggests land to the east of the hospital should be removed from the Green Belt because this land no longer contributes to the openness of the Green Belt and could therefore provide an opportunity to facilitate jobs and economic growth. However, no such assessment has been undertaken by DBC.

Overall, the importance of the Darent Valley Hospital as a healthcare facility, and its contribution to local employment means that it is a regionally significant asset. A more sustainable pattern of development might involve the provision of residential, key worker and care accommodation around the hospital (thereby reducing the number of vehicular trips to the hospital and assisting attracting and retaining staff). Furthermore, and given that DBC is a net importer of labour from the Gravesham Borough, and that this labour is concentrated on the aforementioned areas, then the provision of housing would help to both accommodate housing growth; and ensure the provision of houses are located sustainably close to jobs and services in a strategically advantageous way.

Andrew Watson
Director

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