



**Ashford Local Plan to 2030  
Public Examination Hearing – Site S20, Eureka Park  
16 May 2018**

The examination was conducted by Inspector Stephen Lee of the Planning Inspectorate.

Mr Lee said that the Plan had been submitted by Ashford Borough Council on the basis that it was sound. The hearing would allow challenges which would need to state why the Plan was unsound and what changes would be necessary to make it sound. There was no need to repeat anything which had already been submitted in writing.

### **Discussion**

Site S20 was for 375 homes (increased from 300) and 20 ha of commercial development. Quadrant Homes said that, at the current rate of take-up, 20 ha would provide for the next 75 years. They submitted that some of this commercial area should be turned over to more homes.

BA&E PC (Spencer Phillips) was seriously concerned about the impact on infrastructure and local residents.

Winston Michael was worried that with mixed development the whole dynamic of the site would change.

ABC (Ian Grundy) responded: Even 375 homes is still relatively low density. The Quadrant submission for over 600 homes is far too high.

Stephen Lee asked if the 20 ha was deliverable. ABC said that the main issue was that this was not a traditional estate but a parkland setting which provided opportunity for a different style of commercial development. This would be lost if more homes were substituted.

Quadrant responded: If 20 ha is retained, we could still build 500 homes. Our submission of 670 homes was for partial substitution of the 20 ha commercial by homes.

Winston Michael: I have concerns about the suitability of the site. It is an important wildlife corridor. Kent Wildlife Trust says there are some very rare plants there, including Deptford Pink. The local school is already at capacity. The road traffic report from 2015 ignored the school run and is badly out of date. Since 2015 there has been an extensive increase in traffic on Trinity Road, with queues at peak times back to Junction 9 of the M20. Given that only 20% of the commercial development at Eureka has taken place, this can only get worse. Also the A251 is used as a link between the M2 and M20, putting further pressure on Trinity Road.

CPRE (Christine Drury): Housing should be high quality with access to high quality green space – very important to avoid high numbers. Agree that Trinity Road (not Sandyhurst Lane) should be used for access, but need a proper transport assessment. The “buffer” at

the back of Sandyhurst Lane is very important in the context of the AONB, which should be mentioned in the S20 Policy.

Stephen Lee asked ABC to respond on

- Infrastructure: ABC referred to para 4.236 which calls for financial contributions for off-site facilities for education, play facilities and sport.
- Biodiversity: ABC said there was nothing to suggest that the site should be protected and that the constraints suggested by the Kent Wildlife Trust could be overcome
- Impact on Trinity Road: ABC agreed that more traffic would be generated but KCC had said (in their response to the “Main changes” consultation) that this will not give rise to a “severe impact”.
- AONB (SLRA having asked for more detail on the “buffer”): ABC said that not many parts of the site could be seen from the AONB
- Is “generous” sufficiently specific to describe the “buffer”? ABC said yes, and that you could even argue that the “buffer” was unnecessary because back garden would be adjacent to back garden.

CPRE: There are important habitats on this site. It would be wrong to assume that the pressure on biodiversity was only recreation facilities. With reference to the “generous landscaped buffer”, there is a green lane at the back of Sandyhurst Lane with a very important line of trees (without tree protection orders). Preservation of this is very important and will help to protect views from the AONB.

BA&E PC: Traffic on Trinity Road is frequently stationary back to Junction 9. The traffic survey is seriously out of date.

Winston Michael: The public footpaths need to be preserved. Also the site is subject to a lot of flooding. What will mitigate the effects on natural drainage?

ABC: Agree that an ecological survey should be conducted.

There was then a discussion about the number of vehicle access points from Trinity Road. Winston Michael was concerned that there was only one. ABC pointed out that there were two. Quadrant said they had suggested three.

Stephen Lee asked if the Golf Club, mentioned in para. 4.237, should be included in the S20 Policy. ABC said that the deliverability of the site was too uncertain for this.

BA&E PC called for the resurfacing of the M20; noise levels were up to 60 to 70dB.

Winston Michael repeated his concerns about the capacity of Trinity Road; if the Golf Course were eventually included, this would be even worse and unsustainable.

ABC commented on the commercial deliverability issue: it would be possible to broaden the scope beyond offices to include functions such as health care (as stated in para 4.227).

Quadrant said that they were proposing 26 ha of housing with an average density of 26 per ha. This compares with 20 ha in the Plan, with an average density of 18-19 per ha. They said they need flexibility to support higher numbers.

Winston Michael: All very well seeking high density but infrastructure must go hand in hand. Numbers are being floated but there is no due diligence assessment.

BA&E: Local doctors are full, schools are full, the trains are full – infrastructure is already creaking.

ABC: It is a low density development, that is the intention and we are not shying away from that.