



## **Gladman Developments Ltd (RN: 367)**

### **Examination of the Ashford Local Plan 2030**

#### **Issue 3 – Are the strategic objectives and the strategic approach to housing delivery and economic development delivery in terms of distribution and location sound having regard to the needs and demands of the Borough, national policy and Government objectives and the evidence base preparatory process? Has the Local Plan been positively prepared?**

(i) Is the strategy selected for the distribution of housing and economic growth, with the emphasis on Ashford town, justified compared to the reasonable alternatives? What is the proportion of development proposed in the urban and rural areas across the plan period? How sensitive are the rural areas to further growth?

1. Gladman understand the focus of development on the urban area of Ashford within the Local Plan, however we retain concern that the current spread of development does not allow for the necessary growth of many rural areas to ensure that the services and facilities in those areas can continue to be viable. These are concerns addressed in detail in our publication representations.
2. Clearly in this regard the findings of the Inspector into the previous Core Strategy are of relevance. The Inspector highlighted his concern in his report to the Core Strategy (under Issue 9) that much of Ashford Borough is rural in nature and that a significant level of the population lived outside of Ashford. The Inspector was unconvinced then of the Councils approach, and whilst some steps have been taken to allocate sites in rural areas Gladman question whether a significant enough number of units are allocated in the rural area, and whether some of those allocations, namely some of the A20 corridor allocations S47 and S48 will actually do anything to help sustain existing rural centres. Indeed some sustainable settlements contain no allocations or minimal allocations, such an approach risks the future of services in these settlements.

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3. At present the plan proposed approximately 84% of its growth in and around Ashford, with 16% going to the rural areas. This percentage has not been arrived at with a meaningful assessment of the sustainability or capacity of the rural settlements, it is merely that the 16% is allowed as it is acknowledged it will come forward and meet the plans development needs in the short term, until the Ashford allocations begin delivery. As Gladman outline in our Matter 4 and 5 statements there is a need to identify additional housing to meet both the 5 year land supply problems and to address an issue with overall plan capacity. In this regard when finding this housing the Council may wish to consider reviewing the distribution percentages outlined above.
4. Clearly a solution needs to be reached which satisfies the balance of ensuring development is located in Ashford as the largest, and most sustainable, settlement in the Borough but also allowing reasonable and proportionate growth in the rural areas which supports those settlements and allows them to flourish. The provision of new housing is essential to maintaining services in those areas.

(vi) Does the Local Plan plan positively for the infrastructure required across the Borough? Does the Local Plan make clear, for at least the first five years what infrastructure is required, who is going to fund and provide it, and how it relates to the anticipated rate and phasing of development in line with the PPG on Local Plan (ID 12-018-20140306)? In particular, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SD10) identifies a need for additional provision in respect of education, waste water, health infrastructure, sports provision, strategic parks, green space and allotments. Where and how is that provision made?

5. Gladman are concerned that the phasing and delivery of certain sites and the needed delivery of infrastructure have not been fully considered by the Council, particularly in relation to the potential transport issues with sites in and around Ashford. The opening date of Junction 10a is discussed elsewhere but Gladman consider that there will be a requirement for further infrastructure improvements to the north of Ashford to support allocations in this location. Whilst solutions are available i.e. through the provision of park and change facilities, they are not currently identified within the plan. Gladman discuss in relation to issue 5 around deliverable supply further the potential problems that these issues may have on the delivery of development.